



Yukon Legislative Assembly

1st Session

34th Legislature

Index to **HANSARD**

January 12, 2017 (Special Sitting)

NOTE

The 2017 Sitzings of the First and Second Sessions of
the Thirty-Fourth Legislature occupy two volumes

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Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 1

1st Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, January 12, 2017 — 3:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Special Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, January 12, 2017 — 3:00 p.m.**

**THE FIRST SESSION OF THE 34th LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY OF YUKON, CONVENED IN THE
ASSEMBLY CHAMBER AT 3:00 P.M. ON THURSDAY,
JANUARY 12, 2017**

Proclamation

Clerk: “To the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Yukon and to all others whom this may concern

“Greetings

“A Proclamation

“Know ye that under and by virtue of the power vested in the Commissioner of Yukon under the *Yukon Act* (Canada), the Legislative Assembly of Yukon is summoned to meet for dispatch of business in the Legislative Assembly Chamber, Yukon Government Administration Building, Whitehorse, Yukon on Thursday, January 12, 2017, at the hour of three o’clock in the afternoon, all of which all persons concerned are required to take notice and to govern themselves accordingly.

“Given under my hand and seal of Yukon, at Whitehorse, Yukon, December 28, 2016.

“Doug Phillips,

“Commissioner of Yukon”

REPORT ON MEMBERS ELECTED

Clerk: Honourable members, the following letter, dated November 18, 2016, was sent by the Chief Electoral Officer of Yukon to the Commissioner of Yukon, the Hon. Doug Phillips:

“Dear Sir:

“As required by section 308 of the *Elections Act*, I am pleased to advise you that candidates have been declared elected in all 19 electoral districts for the November 7, 2016 general election of members to the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

“The return to the writ for the electoral district of Mountainview was completed on November 18, 2016 following a judicial recount. Candidates were declared elected in all other electoral districts on November 14, 2016, the date fixed for the return to the writ.

“The returning officers state in their returns that the following candidates have been declared elected:

“Copperbelt North, Ted Adel;

“Copperbelt South, Scott Kent;

“Klondike, Sandy Silver;

“Kluane, Wade Istchenko;

“Lake Laberge, Brad Cathers;

“Mayo-Tatchun, Don Hutton;

“Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, John Streicker;

“Mountainview, Jeanie Dendys;

“Pelly-Nisutlin, Stacey Hassard;

“Porter Creek Centre, Paolo Gallina;

“Porter Creek North, Geraldine Van Bibber;

“Porter Creek South, Ranj Pillai;

“Riverdale North, Nils Clarke;

“Riverdale South, Tracy McPhee;

“Takhini-Kopper King, Kate White;

“Vuntut Gwitchin, Pauline Frost;

“Watson Lake, Patti McLeod;

“Whitehorse Centre, Liz Hanson;

“Whitehorse West, Richard Mostyn.

“Sincerely,

“Lori McKee

“Chief Electoral Officer”

Commissioner Phillips enters the Chamber accompanied by his Aides-de-Camp

Clerk: I am commanded by the Commissioner, in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to state that he does not see fit to declare the causes of the summoning of the present Assembly of this Territory until the Speaker of this Assembly shall have been chosen according to law, but today, at a subsequent hour, he will declare the causes of the calling of this Assembly.

Commissioner Phillips leaves the Chamber accompanied by his Aides-de-Camp

Motion No. 1 — Election of Speaker

Clerk: Honourable members, nominations are invited for the Office of Speaker of this Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move, seconded by the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Third Party House Leader:

THAT Nils Clarke, Member for Riverdale North, do take the Chair of this Assembly as Speaker.

Clerk: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier, seconded by the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Third Party House Leader:

THAT Nils Clarke, Member for Riverdale North, do take the Chair of this Assembly as Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Clerk: The ayes have it, and Nils Clarke, Member for Riverdale North, is, by direction of this Assembly, duly elected as Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Motion No. 1 agreed to

SPEAKER’S ADDRESS TO THE ASSEMBLY

Speaker: Commissioner Phillips, Premier Silver, Members of the Legislature, colleagues and visitors, I would like to express my thanks to the Assembly for the great honour it has given me by electing me to be its 25th Speaker.

In preparing this brief address to the Assembly, I have had the benefit of meeting with two-term Speaker of this Assembly, Mr. Ted Staffen, as well as having reviewed and adopted some of both Speaker Staffen’s and Speaker

David Laxton's previous observations and comments, for which I thank them both.

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly have graciously provided me with some compelling Speaker-related historical background information as well, which I will provide you with right now. When William Lenthall became Speaker of the British House of Commons in 1640, he politely advised the monarch of three fundamental requirements of the Parliament: access to the Sovereign, privilege from arrest and freedom of speech. In return, the Speaker promised on behalf of the Parliament fidelity and fiscal responsibility.

Two years later, when the King entered the House demanding the identity of five disruptive members and asking their whereabouts, Lenthall, with good sense, told them the Speaker had neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak, but only as members direct. This reinforced the Speaker as Parliament's spokesperson for conveying its resolution to the Sovereign and, equally importantly, confirming the Speaker as a neutral servant of the House. This remains true these many centuries later, as you have witnessed in our federal House of Commons.

There is an ancient tradition that the Speaker nominee has taken on this role with a certain degree of reluctance, albeit now somewhat feigned reluctance, as they were actually historically assuming some personal physical peril should they fall into disfavour with the ruling monarch of the day.

This is where I had a few examples of what befell prior Speakers, so just bear with me briefly. Sir John Bussy I'm sure was a fine Speaker between 1394 and 1398 in the constituency of Lincolnshire. He was a supporter of Richard II; however, unfortunately, he was executed by Henry IV for treason. Death was deemed to be more political than procedural.

The second example we have is one William Catesby in the constituency of Northamptonshire just yesterday in 1484. He was beheaded on August 25, 1485. He fought at the Battle of Bosworth Field beside King Richard III. He was captured and executed by the King's enemies.

The final example — which is, of course, the most famous example most of us will be familiar with — is Sir Thomas More who was also Speaker of the House from the constituency of Middlesex in 1523. He was beheaded in 1535. As you know the story, he lost favour with his best friend at one time, King Henry VIII, apparently not for anything he did as Speaker, but as we know, with respect with how he dealt with Mr. More and how he dealt with a few of his spouses, he did not dawdle where the execution of enemies was concerned.

Those are some examples of why Speakers might have been reluctant in the past to assume this position. Although today's Canadian federal, provincial and territorial Speakers are unlikely to suffer such unfortunate and sometimes rather dramatic and untimely demises, it nevertheless confirms the importance of the Speaker's role in ensuring the business of the Legislature is conducted in an independent, fair and respectful manner. To that end, it is the Speaker's duty to be impartial and to treat all members equally and without favour.

This high standard must be met in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the Legislature, and I commit today to make my best efforts to do so.

To the honourable members, I ask that you conduct yourselves in debate not only with vigour, creativity, industriousness and passion — which is expected of you — but also with the decorum befitting the special public office that you have been elected to by your fellow citizens. Ultimately, how you treat one another will, in large measure, determine the worth that Yukoners convey upon you and on this Legislative Assembly.

To conclude, I would like to thank my dedicated team of volunteers and of course my constituents in the electoral district of Riverdale North. I am humbled by your support and look forward to serving you to the best of my ability.

Finally, I would of course be remiss in not expressing my gratitude to my wife Janet, as well as our sons Max and Angus, who have been a constant and immeasurable source of support for me. Thank you very much.

Mr. Clerk, will you please advise the Commissioner, in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor, that the Assembly is now prepared to hear the Speech from the Throne.

Clerk withdraws to ask Commissioner to return

Speaker: We are now prepared to hear the Speech from the Throne.

Commissioner Phillips enters the Chamber announced by his Aides-de-Camp

SPEAKER'S ADDRESS TO THE COMMISSIONER

Speaker: Mr. Commissioner, the Members of the Legislative Assembly have elected me to be their Speaker and I recognize the important duties now given to me. If, in the performance of those duties, I should at any time make a mistake, the fault is mine and not that of the Assembly, whose servant I am. At this time, so that all members of the Assembly can best carry out their duty to Yukon, to their country and to the Queen, I would claim for them their undoubted rights and privileges, especially freedom of speech in their debates, access to your person when necessary and your favourable consideration of their proceedings.

RESPONSE BY THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to declare to you that I believe in the duty of the Assembly and, not doubting that the Assembly's proceedings will be conducted with wisdom, temper and care, I grant and allow the Assembly's constitutional privileges. I assure you that the Assembly shall have ready access to me and that the Assembly's proceedings, words and actions will receive from me favourable consideration.

Please be seated.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Commissioner: Mr. Speaker, Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, honoured guests and visitors, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the First Session of the 34th Legislature.

I first want to acknowledge that the opening of this new Legislature is occurring on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. I also want to recognize that Yukoners this year will be joining others across this great country in celebrating Canada's 150th birthday. As well, in the Yukon, we will also be commemorating the 75th anniversary of the building of our Alaska Highway.

On behalf of all Yukon citizens, I want to thank the members of this Assembly for your commitment to serve the public. I want to give a special welcome to the members on both sides of the House elected for the very first time. I know the feeling that must be here today with your family members in the audience and others who you have told that you are now an official member of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, representing your constituents.

Our system of government depends on the willingness of people to put their names forward and put their time and effort into working on behalf of the Yukon people. This is the 10th Legislature since the Yukon achieved responsible government in 1979. It is time to reflect on what we have achieved in the Yukon in the past 35 years. The responsibilities of this Legislature have grown in this period. With the devolution of jurisdiction for natural resources more than 10 years ago, these responsibilities now are largely the same as those of a province.

Most Yukon First Nations are self-governing, having reached their First Nation final and self-government agreements over the course of the last three decades. Yukon First Nations play a key role in our economic, social and cultural life in the Yukon and our community recognizes the importance of advancing reconciliation.

Our system of government has matured and our ability as a jurisdiction to speak on the national stage about issues important to the people here has grown. All parties represented in this Legislative Assembly have contributed to the progress the Yukon has made since 1979. I want to acknowledge the efforts of the many involved in that over the years.

Over the next two months, my government will be carrying out a review of spending priorities. This review will provide the basis for an appropriation bill for the coming fiscal year, which the government will present to the House in March, along with the supplementary estimates for the current year. At that time, my government will also present a Speech from the Throne that will set out in more detail the government's priorities and its legislative proposals.

The agenda for this Session is to put the machinery of the Legislative Assembly in place. You have elected a Speaker to preside over discussions in this House. You will be asked to elect the other two House Officers — the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole. As well, you

will be asked to appoint members to the Assembly's standing committees. These decisions will allow the work of the legislative committees to get underway before the House meets again this spring.

On a personal note, being rather early in the New Year, I want to take this opportunity to wish all members of this Legislature, as well as all Yukoners, a very happy, prosperous and healthy New Year.

Honourable members, thank you. May fairness and wisdom guide your deliberations.

Commissioner Phillips leaves the Chamber accompanied by his Aides-de-Camp

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

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: Please be seated.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the legislative pages who will be serving this House today. They are Clodagh Berg and Vincent Ménard. I would ask members to welcome them to the House at this time.

Applause

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**Bill No. 1: Introduction and First Reading**

Mr. Gallina: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 1, entitled *Act to Perpetuate a Certain Ancient Right*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek Centre that Bill No. 1, entitled *Act to Perpetuate a Certain Ancient Right*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 1 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to move a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne at this time.

Unanimous consent to move a motion re Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne

Speaker: The Hon. Premier has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of this Assembly to move a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne at this time.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**Motion No. 2 — Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne**

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT the following address be presented to the Commissioner of Yukon:

MAY IT PLEASE THE COMMISSIONER: We, the Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, beg leave to offer our humble thanks for the gracious Speech which you have addressed to the House.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier:

THAT the following address be presented to the Commissioner of Yukon:

MAY IT PLEASE THE COMMISSIONER: We, the Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, beg leave to offer our humble thanks for the gracious Speech which you have addressed to the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a different view over here. I have to say that I've always had friends in this Legislative Assembly; it's nice to have colleagues on this side. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in reply to the Speech from the Throne on behalf of the government side at this opening of the 34th Legislature. I want to echo the Commissioner's remarks in congratulating the honourable members on their election to this House.

For those elected for the first time, this is a new experience. I know that you can rely on the staff of the Legislative Assembly to help you learning the ropes. I'm extremely proud of the members of my team who have been elected for the first time. They bring a wealth of experience and expertise to this House, including skills and knowledge that they have gained from working for and with First Nation governments and with municipalities, in the business world, non-profit societies and in public service.

I would also like to congratulate the Honourable Member for Porter Creek North on her election as a first-time member of this Legislative Assembly. The honourable member has already contributed much to this territory as the Yukon's Commissioner and also as the Chancellor of the Yukon College. I know that she will continue her tradition of service in her new role.

To other colleagues, I extend my congratulations on your re-election. I and the other members of our caucus look forward to working with you over the next coming sittings, months and years. I want to say a special word about the honourable Leader of the Third Party. I'm sure that I speak for all honourable members in conveying our support and good wishes to her at this difficult time for her family.

I am truly honoured that Yukoners have entrusted us with a mandate to govern the territory. In the coming years, we will work with energy and diligence to fulfill our commitments to the people of Yukon. We have committed to a respectful and collaborative relationship with Yukon First Nations. Tomorrow, I, along with other ministers and government

MLAs, will meet with the Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nation chiefs from across the territory for our first Yukon Forum. We look forward to productive discussions about shared priorities and how we will work effectively together over the next coming months and years for the benefit of all Yukoners.

We will work to create jobs for Yukoners and a more diverse economy, balanced with stewardship of the environment. We are committed to building vibrant communities that benefit from community and economic development, where local solutions to local issues are valued. We want to help Yukoners lead healthier, productive lives supported by coordinated programs that meet their needs.

As a government, our responsibility is to bring to this Legislative Assembly budgetary and legislative proposals for it to consider that address these commitments. Our responsibility as ministers is not only to explain and to defend choices that we make and proposals that we advance, but also to listen to the ideas and the opinions from the other side of this House. We understand that it is the role of the opposition to question and to critique the proposals that we put forward in this House. This is a fundamental part of parliamentary democracy. We will not always agree. That is to be expected.

Appreciating that there are different views and perspectives among members of this Assembly, I have made a personal commitment to govern in a respectful manner. I have asked the same of my colleagues on this side of the House, and they share that commitment. In that vein, I look forward to vigorous and principled debate on the proposals being put forth in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the support of the caucuses on the other side of this House in meeting earlier this Sitting to talk about this session. I also want to congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the House.

We will have the opportunity later today to elect another two House officials — the Deputy Speaker, who also functions as the Chair of Committee of the Whole, and also the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole. We will also appoint members from both sides of this Assembly to the standing committees of this House. This will allow the work of these committees to get underway now before a full Sitting of the Assembly, which will begin in March.

Mr. Speaker, I know all members of this Assembly are very proud of the individual ridings that they represent. I am no exception. Dawson City is my home and I represent the Klondike region with great pride. I am incredibly proud and honoured to be the MLA for the Klondike for a second term. Dawson is never far from my mind. Wherever I may be, it is always in my heart.

Other members in this House, I'm sure, feel the same about their communities. I'm sure of that because they wouldn't be in this House if they didn't. They would not have been elected. We have the good fortune as Yukoners to live in a territory of great beauty, a rich place of culture and history, which has communities full of spirited and talented people — one might actually even say “colourful” — communities where looking out for each other is just a way of life.

We all want a territory where people live productive, fulfilled lives; where our economy creates and sustains jobs without compromising the ability of our environment and to do the same for future generations; where the diversity of our population is respected and celebrated; and where Yukoners from infants to seniors and elders have a social safety net when needed. Mr. Speaker, we will disagree at times on the ways to achieve and to sustain these goals. At the same time, we are all here to represent the people of Yukon and to act on their behalf.

So I look forward to working with all representatives here today, both in times of agreement and in times of challenge. I am confident that all members will keep in mind our collective commitment to Yukoners in the place that we all love and call home — the Yukon.

Many thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to begin by congratulating you as well on your new role here as Speaker of the House. I would also like to begin by thanking all of my constituents for the continued support and for entrusting me with the job of representing them in this Assembly one more time.

Mr. Speaker, the key role of the Official Opposition is to hold the government to account, to ensure that they are governing responsibly and that they are following through on what they have promised. It's for that reason that we feel a longer Sitting would have been more appropriate. As you know Mr. Speaker, Question Period is a critical part of our democratic system here in Yukon and allows us, as members of the Legislative Assembly, to ask questions that are important, not only to our constituents, but to all Yukoners. However, the government has requested a shortened Session to allow for more time to get briefed and prepare to govern. In the interest of collaboration and constructive working relationships, we have agreed to this.

Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech that we heard here today, the government has set out priorities over the next few months and I would like to address a few topics that I felt were notably missed. I believe that the Speech from the Throne failed to mention words such as "economy", "jobs", "growth", "mining", "information technology", "agriculture", "education" and "families". We're in a time where a downturn in the commodity markets and an uncertain economy are on the horizon and these topics are of the utmost importance to all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, the mining sector will continue to be critical to the economic future of this territory, and the thousands of Yukoners who benefit from it both directly and indirectly will be looking for a government that has their interests at its core. As the government prepares its first budget over the next couple of months, we would like them to consider what they will do to support economic growth, create jobs, stand up for the mining sector and support families. For example, will this government consider jump-starting mineral exploration in the territory through a creation of a mineral exploration tax credit and the investment of additional monies into the Yukon

mineral exploration program? Further, will the government commit to continued support to the Yukon Chamber of Mines, Klondike Placer Miners' Association and the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board? Such moves would have a great benefit for the entire territory, and if the government were to act on such initiatives, we would be supportive.

I would hope that the government would also consider investment in energy-efficiency retrofits of schools, First Nation government buildings and Yukon government buildings. Increasing the amount available in the good energy residential incentive program would only improve these programs that have successfully supported our local construction industry while helping to create super-efficient homes that reduce greenhouse gases.

Another sector that has become an important contributor to the Yukon's economy is the IT sector. Will this government consider working with and investing more money in this industry? These are areas that we see as being beneficial to the local economy. Another benefit to the local economy and to food security would be to take steps to increase the production of local food and agricultural products. Would the government consider improving childcare services in the communities?

In terms of education, will this government continue the work of the previous government by developing a made-in-Yukon curriculum? A made-in-Yukon curriculum focused on improving fundamental skills while introducing modern subjects, such as financial and computer literacy, and emphasizing the importance of our northern perspectives — including the integration of Yukon First Nations' culture and values — would be a worthy initiative for this government to act on. Again, these would be areas that we would support seeing the government move on.

There is another issue of importance to Yukoners and their families that the Yukon government will have to consider over the course of their mandate. The Speech from the Throne rightly references the importance of devolution to Yukon. Mr. Speaker, as you know, successive governments of all political stripes have fought to expand the Yukon government's responsibilities to give Yukoners the right to choose their destiny rather than having it decided for us by someone in Ottawa. However, a concerning trend has arisen out of Ottawa where Yukon's devolution and jurisdiction is being challenged. We have seen that with the recent unilateral decision by the federal government to ban offshore drilling without consulting with Yukon. We have seen that with their unilateral cuts to the territorial transfer payments, with the Yukon now receiving somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$6 million less than originally planned. We have seen it with their decision to make changes to the Canada Pension Plan without giving a say to the territories. We have seen it in the fact that they took northern health care off the table at the recent health ministers' meeting, and we have also seen it with Ottawa's decision to force through a carbon tax, which will only increase the cost of goods here in the north.

Mr. Speaker, in the short time that this government has been in power, we have seen either silence or defence of Ottawa's decisions. I believe that this is dangerous and may in

the long term weaken the powers that so many territorial governments have fought for previously.

As the government begins to govern, they must remember that Yukoners elected them to stand up for Yukon, not Ottawa. By standing up for Yukon, by growing the economy, by supporting the mining sector and creating jobs, we will all ensure that Yukon prospers and that our families and future generations can continue to enjoy our great territory.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. White: It might surprise some to know that five years ago there was no mention of the two First Nations on whose traditional territory we are privileged to stand together and I am so proud of how far we have come together. I thank both the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council for allowing us to conduct the territory's business here on their traditional territory. I am extremely thankful for their contributions and for those of all of Yukon's 14 First Nations to our territory and I thank the new Premier for acknowledging that.

Thank you to my constituents in Takhini-Kopper King for placing your trust in me for a second time. It's an honour to be here on your behalf and it's with you in mind that I will continue to work to fulfill my duties as a member of this Legislature.

Merci du fond du coeur aux résidents de ma circonscription de Takhini-Kopper King qui ont renouvelé confiance en moi comme députée. C'est un honneur de vous représenter. Jour après jour, soyez assurez que vos intérêts et vos besoins sont ma priorité.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners participated in last fall's election in droves. Our neighbours have shown us the importance of robust, democratic participation and I take great pride in our community for that leadership and that lesson. I look forward to using the opportunity given to us by a new government to pursue new ways to strengthen our democracy. But you know, Mr. Speaker, Yukon is at a crossroads.

First Nations are looking to government to finally fulfill their obligation to make reconciliation and meaningful consultation whole in government priorities. They're ready for action and not just words. All Yukoners are looking for leadership that takes real action to reduce income inequality; that addresses the ongoing housing shortage and takes a long-term stance on environmental protection. With continuing changes to the global climate we must work together harder than ever to keep our territory's water clean and protected for future generations. A strong first step toward that goal is to ban fracking in Yukon forever.

The world is turning to renewable energy at an unprecedented pace. Yukoners, like in most things, would much rather be visionaries than stragglers, and they've proven that in their ongoing investments in solar, geothermal and other renewable energies and it's time for government to catch up. I'm sure that this new government is up to that new challenge and we look forward to working together toward that goal.

Over my years as an MLA — whether helping constituents who come to my office, meeting them at their door or out in the community — I've seen both sides of government action. I have seen government get in the way. I have seen government policies make life really hard for people who are already struggling and I have seen programs ignore the realities of people who already feel like they are up against a wall. But I have also seen government lift people up. I have seen people's lives transformed by meaningful help from a government program that actually works. I have seen the care and compassion shown by civil servants that can make all the difference in someone's life.

So, in my view, if there is one thing that any government, no matter their political stripe, must make a priority, is to make life better for the people we represent — the people of the Yukon. That's what it comes down to. All of us here today — no matter on what side of the room you stand or are currently seated — have the ability to do good for the people we represent. So I wish all of us to keep that at the very top of mind every day as we come to this Legislative Assembly to do the people's work in the people's House. As we begin a new term, the Yukon NDP caucus' ongoing commitment to the people of Yukon is to work collaboratively on any initiative that will make life better for Yukoners. The little guy's voice must always be heard and we'll be here to amplify that voice if it's missed.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to meeting and getting to know all of my new colleagues. I wish us luck in this mandate.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: D'accord.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 2 agreed to

Motion to engross Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to the Commissioner in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to the Commissioner in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: I will now ask whether the House is prepared to elect a Deputy Speaker.

MOTIONS

Motion No. 3 — Election of Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT Don Hutton, Member for Mayo-Tatchun, be elected Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT Don Hutton, Member for Mayo-Tatchun, be elected Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Motion No. 3 agreed to

Motion No. 4 — Election of Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole

Speaker: I will now ask whether the House is prepared to elect a Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT Ted Adel, Member for Copperbelt North, be elected as Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT Ted Adel, Member for Copperbelt North, be elected as Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Motion No. 4 agreed to

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling the Conflict of Interest Commission annual report for the period ending March 31, 2016. This report is tabled pursuant to section 19 of the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*. It was distributed to members and made public on June 23, 2016. Mr. Clerk has also kindly advised me that the throne speech has to be tabled as well.

I wish to inform the Assembly that I have received a copy of the Speech from the Throne, which I will now table.

As well, the Chair has also for tabling the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office 2015-16 Annual Report. This

report is tabled pursuant to section 24 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*.

Further, the Chair also has for tabling the Yukon Human Rights Commission 2015-16 annual report. The annual report is tabled pursuant to section 18 of the *Human Rights Act*.

The Chair also has for tabling the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees of the 33rd Yukon Legislative Assembly, dated August 10, 2016, and the first report of the Members' Services Board of the 33rd Legislative Assembly, dated June 29, 2016.

Finally, the Chair also has for tabling the *Report from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees*, dated January 12, 2017. This report is tabled pursuant to the direction of the Members' Services Board.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I have for tabling, pursuant to subsection 8(2) of the *Financial Administration Act*, the Public Accounts of the Government of Yukon, 2015-16. The Public Accounts were made public on October 31, 2016.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Pursuant to subsection 22(3) of the *Yukon Development Corporation Act*, I have for tabling the 2015 annual report for the Yukon Development Corporation.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have for tabling, pursuant to subsection 16(3) of the *Yukon College Act*, the Yukon College annual report, financial statements and auditors report for 2015-16.

Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as Minister of Justice, I also have for tabling, pursuant to section 9 of the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act*, the 2015-16 annual report of the board of trustees.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Pursuant to section 16 of the *Liquor Act*, I have for tabling the 2015-16 annual report of the Yukon Liquor Corporation.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Pursuant to subsection 4(11) of the *Child Care Act*, I have for tabling the Yukon Child Care Board 2015-16 annual report.

I also have for tabling, pursuant to subsection 13(3) of the *Hospital Act*, Yukon Hospital Corporation financial statements and auditor's report for 2015-16.

In my capacity as minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation, I also have for tabling, pursuant to subsection 23(2) of the *Housing Corporation Act*, the Yukon Housing Corporation annual report for 2015-16.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* review report, which is tabled pursuant to section 69 of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

I also have for tabling the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board annual report for 2015-16, which is tabled

pursuant to section 103 of the *Education Labour Relations Act*.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board annual report 2015-16, which is tabled pursuant to section 101 of the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the Yukon Heritage Resources Board annual report for 2015-16, which is tabled pursuant to subsection 7(7) of the *Historic Resource Act*.

Mr. Speaker, I also have for tabling the Yukon Arts Centre Corporation annual report for 2015-16, which is tabled pursuant to subsection 12(3) of the *Arts Centre Act*.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter from me to the Premier regarding the Takhini River bridge on the north Klondike Highway.

I also have a letter for the Minister of Community Services from me regarding civic addressing for the Mayo Road and Hot Springs Road areas.

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

May I have your further pleasure at this time?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are an awful lot of folks in the gallery here today and I'm sure there are a lot of people in the Legislative Assembly who want to welcome them here today, so I will just pick out three for now.

Mr. Speaker, with the indulgence of my colleagues I would like everybody of the Legislative Assembly to help me in welcoming Dr. Karen Barnes, the president of Yukon College; Jacqueline Bedard, the executive director of external and government relations at the college; and also Jessica Thompson, the executive director of the Yukon Human Rights Commission.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to thank those who came out to be here for our first Sitting. I would like to acknowledge my brother, Jerry Asp. He has been beside me through this journey — thank you for coming — and my other family member, Maureen Johnstone. We represent the family of John Edzerza, and I just want to say that as well.

I would like to acknowledge a couple of constituents — Marie Martin and Shayne Fairman. Thank you.

Applause

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker — again, many individuals in the gallery who are worth mentioning and I too will mention but a few. First of all I would like to welcome Annette King, the Child and Youth Advocate, as well as Jonas Smith, the executive director of the

Klondike Placer Miners' Association, and two colleagues from the 33rd Legislative Assembly who I see — David Laxton, former member for Porter Creek Centre and Jan Stick, former member for Riverdale South.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thanks very much. I rise today to recognize — we've talked a lot about democracy today — but I would like to recognize Stu Clark. He ran in the last territorial election in the wonderful riding of Whitehorse West and I just wanted to draw attention to him and thank him for his efforts during this last election.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to those in the gallery — my husband and my brother — for being beside me and supporting me through the election. Thank you.

Applause

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge my sister in the audience, Joyce Van Bibber. She was a surrogate mother to me when I was a child; my parents worked so hard. I wouldn't be here without Joyce today.

I also see someone who has been a dear friend of mine for many years and who helped me out greatly with my campaign as well — former Chief of Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, Eric Fairclough.

Applause

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I also would like to acknowledge friends and family in the gallery today and constituents who helped elect me in Copperbelt North. A special thanks to my wife, who was on my team; and to Kirk Cameron, who also helped. Devin Bailey — also very important to my campaign and in our Liberal victory. Thank you very much.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to all members to join me in recognizing and welcoming today Yukon's Ombudsman, Diane McLeod-McKay.

Applause

Mr. Gallina: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to thank a few people who helped me get to the position I am in today. Susan Simpson was my campaign manager — thank you. My father, Peter Gallina, is in the gallery today. I thank constituents and other supporters who have joined us here today.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize members of my family who are here — my mother, who helped and has always supported me; also all of the members of the public service who are here today who help

all of us in all the work we do, and all Yukoners in their duties which are vast and varied. Thank you.

Applause

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel like I should join the fray.

I would like to start by welcoming Rob and Mary Ann Lewis, who have sat through every single day I have been elected — from the 33rd Legislative Assembly and here they are in the 34th — so I thank you for your dedication and your passion for democracy.

I'm going to also take this opportunity to thank my staff members. So we have Maggie Larocque; we have Mike Fancie and we have François Picard. Thank you so much for all the work that you do.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize Russ Knutson, who is here today — the chair of the Yukon Human Rights Commission — for his most important and hard work in our community.

I would also like to recognize a great friend and associate who is here today, Mr. Brad Weston. Certainly I wouldn't have had the opportunity to sit here if it wasn't for the hours and hours of work that you put behind this and for helping me. Also the individuals who are sitting there with you are also very important team members: Ms. Lassen, and Monica — who just continues to help us here in her role. For all those hours that you have put in, which gave us the opportunity here to work for this community, thank you very much.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to acknowledge Rob and Mary Ann Lewis, who are constituents from the beautiful riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I would also like to acknowledge Werner Rhein, Anne Middler, Wendy Morrison and I would especially like to acknowledge — oh, my lovely wife has left. But my lovely mother-in-law is here so I will acknowledge her. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Unanimous consent to move without notice motions re appointments to standing committees

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move without notice a motion to appoint the Members' Services Board, a motion to appoint the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, a motion to appoint the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, a motion to appoint the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments and a motion to appoint the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of the House to move without notice a motion to appoint the Members' Services Board, a motion to appoint the Standing

Committee on Public Accounts, a motion to appoint the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, a motion to appoint the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments and a motion to appoint the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

MOTIONS

Motion No. 5 — Appointments to Members' Services Board

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT the Hon. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 45(2), be appointed to chair the Members' Services Board;

THAT the Hon. Sandy Silver, the Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Brad Cathers and Liz Hanson be appointed to the Members' Services Board;

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

THAT the board consider:

(1) budget submission for the following votes:

(a) Vote 1 — Yukon Legislative Assembly, including the Conflict of Interest Commission;

(b) Vote 23 — Office of the Ombudsman, including the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner;

(c) Vote 24 — Elections Office; and

(d) Vote 26 — Child and Youth Advocate Office; and

(2) that the board consider policy questions concerning matters such as:

(a) space allocation;

(b) staffing;

(c) caucus funding;

(d) media gallery House rules; and

(e) Hansard; and

THAT the board fulfill its statutory responsibilities, including those in the *Legislative Assembly Act*, the *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, the *Elections Act*, the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*, the *Ombudsman Act*, the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act*, and the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*; and

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

Speaker: You have heard the motion from the Government House Leader. Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 5 agreed to

Motion No. 6 — Appointments to Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT Stacey Hassard, Paolo Gallina, Ted Adel, Don Hutton, Wade Istchenko and Liz Hanson be appointed to

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, established pursuant to Standing Order 45(3);

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

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

Speaker: You have heard the motion from the Government House Leader. Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 6 agreed to

Motion No. 7 — Appointments to Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT Paolo Gallina, Don Hutton, Ted Adel, the Hon. Richard Mostyn, Brad Cathers, Scott Kent and Liz Hanson be appointed to the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, established pursuant to Standing Order 45(1);

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

THAT the Committee review, as necessary, such Standing Orders as it may decide upon;

THAT the Committee, following the conduct of any such review, report any recommendations for amendment to the Assembly; and

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

Speaker: You have heard the motion from the Government House Leader. Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 7 agreed to

Motion No. 8 — Appointments to Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT Ted Adel, Paolo Gallina, Don Hutton, Geraldine Van Bibber, Patti McLeod and Kate White be appointed to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, established pursuant to Standing Order 45(1);

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

THAT the Committee review such regulations made following the date of its appointment as it made decide upon;

THAT the Committee review such other existing or proposed regulations as are referred to it by the Legislative Assembly; and

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

Speaker: You have heard the motion from the Government House Leader. Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 8 agreed to

Motion No. 9 — Appointments to Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT Don Hutton, Ted Adel, Paolo Gallina, the Hon. Jeanie Dendys, Geraldine Van Bibber, Patti McLeod and Kate White be appointed to the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, established pursuant to Standing Order 45(3.1);

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

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

Speaker: You have heard the motion from the Government House Leader. Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 9 agreed to

Special Adjournment Motion

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT this House, at its rising, do stand adjourned until the Premier has informed the Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 73(1), that the public interest requires that the House meet;

THAT the Speaker shall, pursuant to Standing Order 73(1), give notice that the House shall meet at the time designated by the Premier, and thereupon, the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time; and

THAT if the Speaker is unable to act owing to illness or other causes, the Deputy Speaker shall act in the Speaker's stead for the purpose of this Order.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT this House, at its rising, do stand adjourned until the Premier has informed the Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 73(1), that the public interest requires that the House meet;

THAT the Speaker shall, pursuant to Standing Order 73(1), give notice that the House shall meet at the time designated by the Premier, and thereupon, the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time; and

THAT if the Speaker is unable to act owing to illness or other causes, the Deputy Speaker shall act in the Speaker's stead for the purpose of this Order.

Speaker: You have heard the motion from the Government House Leader. Are you prepared for the question?

Motion agreed to

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I reneged earlier in submitting a report. I would like to now table the Yukon Health and Social Services Council annual report for 2015-16, which is tabled pursuant to section 41 of the *Health Act*.

Speaker: Are there any other reports to be tabled?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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.

The House adjourned at 4:14 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled January 12, 2017:

34-1-1

Speech from the Throne (Speaker Clarke)

34-1-2

Yukon Conflict of Interest Commission Annual Report to the Legislative Assembly for the Period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 (June 16, 2016) (Speaker Clarke)

34-1-3

Shining a Light on Advocacy — 2015/2016 Annual Report — Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office (Speaker Clarke)

34-1-4

Yukon Human Rights Commission — A Year in Review — 2015-2016 Annual Report and Yukon Human Rights Commission Financial Statements (March 31, 2016) (Speaker Clarke)

34-1-5

Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees Twenty-third Report (August 10, 2016) (Speaker Clarke)

34-1-6

Members' Services Board First Report (June 29, 2016) (Speaker Clarke)

34-1-7

Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (January 12, 2017) (Speaker Clarke)

34-1-8

Yukon Public Accounts 2015-2016 (Silver)

34-1-9

Yukon Development Corporation Annual Report 2015 (Pillai)

34-1-10

Yukon College 2015-2016 Annual Report and independent auditor's report (December 10, 2016) (McPhee)

34-1-11

Crime Prevention & Victim Services Trust Fund Annual Report 2015-2016 (McPhee)

34-1-12

Yukon Liquor Corporation Annual Report — April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016 (Streicker)

34-1-13

Yukon Child Care Annual Report — April 1, 2015-March 31, 2016 (Frost)

34-1-14

Yukon Hospital Corporation Consolidated Financial Statements (March 31, 2016), *Chief of Medical Staff Annual Report 2015/16 and Yukon Hospitals — Year in Review 2015-16* (Frost)

34-1-15

Yukon Housing Corporation Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 2016 (Frost)

34-1-16

Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (ATIPP) Act Review Report (December 2016) (Mostyn)

34-1-17

Annual Report 2015-2016 — Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board (Mostyn)

34-1-18

Annual Report 2015-2016 — Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board (Mostyn)

34-1-19

Heritage Resources Board Annual Report — April 1, 2015-March 31, 2016 (Dendys)

34-1-20

Yukon Arts Centre 2015/16 Annual Report (Dendys)

34-1-21

Yukon Health and Social Services Council 2015-2016 Annual Report (Frost)

The following documents were filed January 12, 2017:

34-1-1
Takhini River Bridge on the North Klondike Highway,
letter re (dated January 10, 2017) from Brad Cathers, Member
for Lake Laberge to Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier (Cathers)

34-1-2
Civic Addressing for the Mayo Road and Hotsprings
Areas, letter re (dated December 19, 2016) from Brad Cathers,
Member for Lake Laberge to Hon. John Streicker, Minister of
Community Services (Cathers)

**Written notice was given of the following motions
January 12, 2017:**

Motion No. 10
Re: declaring National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday
in Yukon by June 21, 2017 (White)

Motion No. 11
Re: amendments to the Yukon *Human Rights Act* and the
Vital Statistics Act (White)

Motion No. 12
Re: preventing hydraulic fracturing in Yukon (White)

Motion No. 13
Re: enforcing the fair wage schedule on government
contracts (White)

**The following written questions were tabled
January 12, 2017:**

34-1-1
Re: communication infrastructure (Kent)

34-1-2
Re: convening legislative committees (Kent)

34-1-3
Re: Yukon's agriculture sector (Cathers)

34-1-4
Re: communications infrastructure (Cathers)

34-1-5
Re: community safety, property crime, and illegal drug
trade (Cathers)

34-1-6
Re: reviewing the medical travel program (McLeod)

34-1-7
Re: compensation for owners of placer and quartz mining
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34-1-8
Re: carbon tax in Yukon (Hassard)

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Re: government transparency (Hassard)

34-1-10
Re: health care transfers (Hassard)

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Re: emergency housing for Ross River (Hassard)

34-1-12
Re: Yukon resource gateway project (Hassard)

34-1-13
Re: national inquiry into missing and murdered
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34-1-14
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Yukon Legislative Assembly

2nd Session

34th Legislature

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APPENDIX A

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Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 1

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, April 20, 2017 — 3:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 20, 2017 — 3:00 p.m.

**THE SECOND SESSION OF THE 34TH
 LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF YUKON CONVENED
 IN THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBER AT 3:00 P.M. ON
 THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2017**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. Please be seated.

Proclamation

Clerk: “To the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Yukon and to all others whom this may concern

“Greetings

“A Proclamation

“KNOW YE THAT under and by virtue of the power vested in the Commissioner of Yukon under the *Yukon Act* (Canada), the First Session of the Thirty-fourth Legislative Assembly of Yukon is prorogued on April 20, 2017, at the hour of twelve o’clock in the afternoon and the Legislative Assembly of Yukon is summoned to meet for the dispatch of business in the Legislative Assembly Chamber, Yukon Government Administration Building, Whitehorse, Yukon on April 20, 2017 at the hour of three o’clock in the afternoon.

ALL OF WHICH all persons concerned are required to take notice and to govern themselves accordingly.

“GIVEN UNDER my hand and seal of Yukon, at Whitehorse, Yukon,

“April 6, 2017.

“Doug Phillips

“Commissioner of Yukon”

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please advise the Commissioner of the Yukon, in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor, that the Assembly is now prepared to hear the Speech from the Throne.

Commissioner Phillips enters the Chamber accompanied by his Aides-de-Camp

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Commissioner: Please be seated.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable members, friends and people of the Yukon. I have the honour this afternoon to open a new legislative session, a new approach to governing. First, I want to acknowledge that we come together today on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta’an Kwäch’än Council.

Yukon owes much to the rich and enduring history of its First Peoples. For millennia, First Nation people have lived in this land. Its abundance has sustained them for generations,

and their customs and culture draw from their connections to the land and its creatures and define their heritage.

Others have come to the Yukon, whether they are lured by a sense of adventure or new opportunities or simply for a better way of life. They have put down roots, raised their families and looked after their grandchildren. Yukon people have embraced this beautiful land with its majestic mountains, its wild spaces and its wealth of natural resources. It inspires artists. It challenges our outdoor enthusiasts. It generates economic wealth.

Honourable members, Yukoners are generous and resilient people. They want for others what they want for themselves: clean air to breathe and clean water to drink, respectful relationships and equality among people, and good jobs. Yukoners want to lead healthy, happy and productive lives. They want the same for their children as they do for their grandchildren. They want to live in vibrant communities and shape the direction of these communities. Yukoners want their governments to serve them.

Your new government is working diligently every day to do just that: to serve Yukon people and serve them well. Yukoners deserve no less. Your new government has set a course for the future. Your government is committed to improving the well-being of Yukoners. It knows all communities matter. It believes strong government-to-government relationships with First Nations benefit Yukon as a whole.

Your new government is committed to a stronger economy. It recognizes Yukoners want good jobs and new business opportunities. They want an economy that respects the environment and the natural gifts of the land. Yukoners also want good government — government that is approachable, transparent and accountable. Working with Yukon people, your new government will make lives better. It will do so through these commitments.

Your new government’s approach to wellness — centred on people — will help Yukoners thrive. The strategic investments that your government makes will contribute to healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities. Strong government-to-government relationships will foster reconciliation. Your new government’s commitment to a diverse and growing economy will provide good jobs for Yukoners in an environmentally responsible way.

These priorities will drive government’s agenda for the coming five years. Your new government will work with the people of the Yukon to achieve this. In doing so, it will base its decisions on evidence, it will manage the territory’s financial resources prudently, it will speak forthrightly for Yukon’s interests beyond its borders and on the national stage, and it will measure the progress it makes and report on that progress.

Your new government will deliver on its fundamental responsibility to make the lives of Yukon people and their families better. Your new government is committed to a people-centred approach to wellness that helps Yukoners thrive. Its programs and services will support the well-being

of Yukoners, from infants to elders. Every child deserves to have the best start in life.

Your government believes in making investments in newborn health. Midwifery can and should be a safe, supported childbirth option in Yukon. Your new government has already started to work on regulating and incorporating midwives in the Yukon health care system. Working with midwives, doctors and other medical professionals, the government anticipates licensing the practice of midwifery later next year.

Yukoners want the best for their children — the best chance at a healthy, happy life. Your government does too. It will increase investments in early learning opportunities to support children's readiness for school. It will invest in more quality childcare to support families and help make their lives better.

Every child deserves a home where they are supported, nurtured and safe. Your government will work with families, communities and First Nations to help ensure every child has a secure childhood and a promising future.

Your government believes that Yukon students deserve a high-quality education — an education that gives them the tools to achieve their full potential and their dreams. Your new government is investing in Yukon classrooms. It's working with the Association franco-yukonnaise and the broader community to build a new school in Whitehorse. Over the next four years, the curriculum in Yukon schools will be transformed, with a focus on skills development and experiential learning. Through the new curriculum, your government will ensure Yukon students will have the skills they need to succeed in the workplace and in life. It will improve the outcome for all students, regardless of where they go to school.

At the post-secondary level, your new government will invest in the trades, skills and career training at Yukon College tailored to the job market of today and tomorrow. At the same time, it will work with the college on its path to becoming a university, giving Yukoners more opportunities to earn post-secondary degrees here at home. Outside the classroom, your new government is making greater investment this year in programs for our young people and the youth groups that deliver them.

Every Yukoner needs public health care that meets their needs. Your new government wants every Yukoner to have a primary health care provider, whether it's a doctor, a nurse practitioner or a nurse working in an expanded role.

It wants a health care system built on a collaborative care model — a model that responds to community needs. It wants more health services delivered in our communities, including services for people who struggle with addictions and mental health issues. With this in mind, it negotiated more than \$11 million in new federal contributions for home care and mental health initiatives in its first month in office. Your government will use these new funds to make lives better for Yukon people. It will invest in mental health services in communities throughout Yukon, and in addiction services at the new Sarah Steele treatment facility in Whitehorse. It will

also expand its support for land-based healing and home care. It will enhance services in French, with a strong focus on health, based on priorities identified by the Francophone community.

Your government will complete a 150-bed facility for continuing care patients in Whistle Bend while exploring other options for our seniors to age in place. It's true — governments can build buildings. But government is about more than bricks and mortar. It is about programs and services that respond to people's needs and make their lives better.

Next month, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls begins its national hearings here in Whitehorse. Your new government is an active participant. Working with the community partners and First Nations, it is developing Yukon solutions to help reduce violence against aboriginal women. This is part of your government's overall effort to reduce incidents of relationship violence and sexual assault, which are still too high in Yukon.

Your government will take a balanced approach in its justice system. It will protect Yukoners and respond to victims' needs while providing rehabilitation that reduces recidivism and addresses issues that lead to incarceration. Your new government supports inclusiveness, equality and a respect for diversity in its programming and services.

During this Sitting, your government will introduce legislation to amend the *Human Rights Act* to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression. This legislation will include changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* that will make it one of the most progressive laws in the country. These measures are the first steps in a larger review of Yukon laws, policies and practices. Your government will respect the rights of lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, queer and two-spirited Yukoners and their ability lead safe, healthy, happy lives as they choose. This is long overdue.

Your new government will make strategic investments in healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities. Communities are the lifeblood of our territory. Municipalities and First Nations are key partners in governance and in the future of the Yukon. Whether you live in Mayo, Carmacks, Haines Junction or Teslin, you need to know that our governments are working together and working for you. Your government believes in local solutions to local concerns to make life better for Yukon people throughout the territory.

Communities must have a meaningful voice in determining and building their future. Next month, members of Cabinet will attend the annual general meeting of the Association of Yukon Communities in Faro. Discussions on priorities for municipality governments will build on conversations that members of Cabinet have had with communities and First Nations in recent months. Your new government will build roads, bridges and other infrastructure to improve the quality of life in Yukon communities.

Key priorities for the coming year include clean water and waste-water projects, and improvements to solid-waste management, diversion and recycling. As more details are known about the federal infrastructure programs, your

government will involve communities and First Nations in setting priorities for active living, sustainability and local economic growth.

Your government will also use new federal funding to invest wisely in more affordable, accessible and safe housing across Yukon. This includes exploring a Housing First model to address the needs of our more vulnerable people. It will take a new, more effective approach as to how staff and social housing are provided in our communities. It will engage the private sector in partnerships to develop new ways of delivering these programs that support economic development of the communities. Part of your government's job in building vibrant communities is helping them define the economic future they want, based on their interest and advantages. This leads to local jobs.

Your government believes that we all have a role to play in reducing the impacts of climate change. Our goal is to eliminate diesel as a primary source of energy in Yukon. Getting there will not be easy, but we need to start investing now in this necessary transition.

Your government will focus on smaller renewable energy investments with projects driven by First Nations and communities. It will initiate pilot projects into the potential for electrical energy storage. These can both reduce the use of fossil fuels and extend the viability of renewables. At the same time, we must lower our energy use. Your government will make significant investments in energy retrofits in its buildings, while supporting programs for retrofitting residential and community buildings.

Climate change poses risks to our northern way of life. These challenges require good information on emissions to plan actions and guide investments and to establish effective targets to both reduce greenhouse gases and grow our economy. Your new government will do this work.

Our longer winters and our colder temperatures challenge us in reducing our use of non-renewable resources. It will take time to develop alternative forms of energy. This is why your government is committed to using any money raised through the federal price on carbon for rebates to Yukon individuals and businesses. It will be revenue neutral.

Our communities need to be connected to each other and to the rest of Canada and to the world. Your government is committed to enhancing connectivity and bandwidth for all Yukon communities and beyond. It is now undertaking a thorough review of the two potential routes for a redundant fibre optic line to strengthen Yukon's Internet connection to the Outside. Your government will make a decision based on the evidence of what is best for Yukon people.

Technology can help make Yukoners' lives better in our communities. E-services give ready access to government programs and services throughout the Yukon. This year, your government will expand e-health services on the online corporate registry. It will plan for more e-services to make it easier for people to take advantage of programs and services and meet their needs wherever they live in our territory.

Yukoners live with wilderness on their doorsteps. Being outdoors, hiking, fishing and biking contribute to healthy

lifestyles. Your government will improve campground infrastructure to enable Yukoners to enjoy the natural world that surrounds us. It will work with communities on the ideas for enhancing recreational opportunities.

This year, Yukoners will join with other Canadians across the country in commemorating the 150th anniversary of Confederation. Canada 150 allows us an occasion to reflect on our unique identity in the north and on our sense of what it means to be Canadian. It gives us an opportunity to recognize the enduring history of First Nation people, to acknowledge indigenous culture and languages and their contribution to the social fabric of modern Yukon. As Canadians, we have much to celebrate, including our willingness to address the wrongs of the past and to work together for a more promising future for all.

In the course of this year, Yukoners will also recognize the 75th anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway. Your government will support community events for both anniversaries from Watson Lake to Beaver Creek, from Tagish to Old Crow.

Honourable members, your new government believes in reconciliation with First Nations — reconciliation built on mutual understanding and respect, reconciliation based on a constructive relationship that contributes to good governance and benefits all Yukoners. In January of this year — just one month after being sworn in — the members of Cabinet and chiefs of Yukon First Nations signed an intergovernmental declaration. It sets the foundation for a renewed relationship based on reconciliation and collaboration. Next month, your new government will meet with the First Nation leaders from across the territory for the second Yukon Forum since coming into office. A ceremonial potlatch bowl presented by the Grand Chief at the January forum will sit at the meeting table as a symbol of our mutual pledge to work together for a stronger Yukon. Working together makes sense. This year, Yukon Days — held in Ottawa in February — were built on a collaborative approach. Together, members of Cabinet and Yukon chiefs met with federal ministers to advocate for programs, services and funding that responds to Yukon's needs. There is strength in a united voice and it's an example for the rest of Canada. Yukon First Nations lead the country in self-governance, yet there is more to do to fully realize the spirit and intent of the final and self-government agreements. It will involve hard work and sometimes difficult conversations. Your new government is committed to this effort. It will work toward reconciliation with all Yukon First Nations and with transboundary First Nations and traditional territories in Yukon.

Working together, Yukon will build a more cohesive society, protect our environment and grow a sustainable economy. As one of its very first priorities, your new government is acting on a promise to make National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday in Yukon. It will bring to this Legislature a proposal to the House as its first bill. On June 21st, Yukoners will celebrate the historic and cultural roots of this territory. They will honour and recognize the many contributions that First Nations and their citizens have

made and continue to make to our unique way of life. Honoured members, reconciliation will help Yukon progress. Together today, we can build a bright future for all tomorrow.

Your Yukon government is committed to help us strengthen and diversify Yukon's economy. It will encourage all companies to hire Yukoners. It will work with Yukon College to align training programs with market demands. That will mean more Yukoners on the ground to work on projects in our territory. It will encourage business partnerships. Yukon's airline, Air North, is a prime example of how a partnership between an existing business and a First Nation development corporation can grow our economy, creating more jobs, expanding Yukon's reach beyond our borders and making lives better for Yukon people.

The new free trade agreement signed recently with Canada and provincial and territorial governments will make it easier for Yukon businesses to expand outside the territory. It will open up new markets for Yukon products while retaining safeguards for local needs. Improvements in how government procures goods and services can support new opportunities for business and First Nation development corporations. It can create the conditions that enable new private sector jobs in Yukon.

Your new government will tender its major summer construction contracts by the end of March next year. That makes good business sense. It will change the procurement process within the next 12 months to spell out advantages for using local companies, local people and materials. Your new government believes the economy and the environment go hand-in-hand. It believes in responsible resource development.

Already there are positive signs in the mineral sector. Early in its mandate the government approved amendments to the Minto Explorations quartz mining licence. This will extend mining for its operations near Pelly Crossing until later this year.

Victoria Gold is moving forward with plans in the Dublin Gulch area, and there are positive developments for Alexco in the Keno Hill region. Two projects, Kudze Kayah and Coffee Creek, have recently entered Yukon's environmental and socio-economic assessment process. Just last week, Barrick Gold announced that it is investing more than \$8 million in ATAC Resources property east of Keno City. This means that half of the world's 10 gold producers have a stake in Yukon. This bodes well for mining here in the territory.

Your government knows support for mineral exploration is paying off. It is increasing assistance this year. It is committed to improving resource roads to placer operations in the Klondike region over the next three years. The mining industry recognizes that certainty is the key ingredient of a prosperous future. Your new government, Yukon First Nations and the Chamber of Mines have united in their efforts to restore confidence in the territory's development assessment process.

By working together with other governments and industry, more benefits can accrue to the Yukon from our mining industry — more good, well-paying jobs, more

opportunities for businesses and for First Nations development corporations, and more capacity to grow our economy.

Your new government is working just as hard to support other sectors of the economy as it is for the mining sector. Every year, Yukoners welcome thousands of visitors to our beautiful territory. They come to experience our spectacular landscapes, our rich culture and heritage, and the warmth of our hospitality, yet tourism is a highly competitive sector. Your new government believes there is a need to take a longer term view and a more strategic focus to grow Yukon tourism. To this end, we will engage Yukon partners, communities and First Nations in developing a broad strategy to drive growth to make sure Yukon is a destination of choice.

Marketing funds targeted directly at travellers will become a permanent feature of our efforts to attract visitors to Yukon. More will also be done to develop winter tourism. A summit later this year will define opportunities and investments for sustained growth in this market. To help tourism businesses better understand the interests and expectations of visitors, your government will initiate a comprehensive visitor survey this year.

Yukon's vibrant arts community and a unique heritage can enrich visitors' experience, just as they enrich our lives. Planning will begin this year on how best to give Yukoners and our visitors opportunities to view the many discoveries that have been made over the years in the fossil-rich Klondike gold fields.

This year, your government is funding the cultural centre component of the new learning centre built by the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and it will begin implementing a plan to jointly manage the Conrad historic site with this First Nation.

To enhance growth in Yukon's cultural industries, the government will start discussions this year on a broad-based arts and cultural policy.

Our agricultural industry can support greater self-sufficiency, reducing Yukon's dependence on food imports. The government will work toward a renewed agreement with the federal government this year to build on initiatives of Yukon farmers and agricultural producers. More local food will provide Yukoners with more variety and healthier choices for their well-being.

Yukoners are as innovative as they are adventurous. They are good at figuring out how to solve northern problems with northern solutions. Your new government believes in growing Yukon's knowledge economy. Building the innovation, science and research and IT sectors will strengthen Yukon's economic base. Over the coming year, the government will lay the groundwork for a new multi-million-dollar fund to invest in economic diversification and innovation. It has already made changes to programs for film development and production, giving Yukon media producers access to financial assistance and greater access to national funding sources.

The expansion of government e-services will be designed to create opportunities for local businesses while benefitting our citizens. Development of an open data repository will

begin this year to give entrepreneurs access to a wealth of research and the ability to use data in innovative ways.

Research using science and traditional knowledge will point to new ways to marry economic objectives with good stewardship of our environment, because Yukoners want both. They want to earn a good living and they want new economic prospects. They also value a healthy environment and the ability to use their leisure time to hike, fish and hunt and enjoy our wilderness. Both are fundamental to the Yukon way of life and the well-being of our communities.

Honourable members, your new government has been working hard, working with Yukoners to make their lives better. Its collaborative approach with other governments has set a positive new tone. It has engaged with Yukon First Nations in a renewed relationship founded on respect and mutual interest in partnering for the betterment of Yukon.

The joint approach that ministers and chiefs took in Ottawa for Yukon Days has shown others what can be achieved through collaboration. Your government's work with Ottawa has led to significant investments for Yukoners in the recent federal budget for health care, for home care, for mental health care and for affordable housing. There are other opportunities on the horizon. Your government will maximize efforts to ensure federal dollars and opportunities find their way to Yukon.

It has worked with First Nations and the mining industry to support new opportunities for resource development. It has concluded a new free trade deal with other Canadian jurisdictions with new prospects for Yukon businesses while protecting our local interests. It has signed a pan-Canadian accord to address and adapt to the impacts of climate change and support the shift to a cleaner, renewable economy. It has launched a new curriculum in Yukon schools to lay the foundation for our future workforce and our future leaders.

Members of Cabinet have been to the communities across the Yukon to help with today's concerns and listen to their plans for tomorrow, but this is just the beginning. There is much more to do. Your new government has a clear sense of purpose and is tackling that work now. It will continue to do so to make the lives of Yukon people and the lives of their families and communities better. Your government recognizes that it is not just what it does that is important — it is equally important how it does it. Yukoners have the right to be heard; your government will listen. It will involve people in the conversations to shape the decisions that affect them. This is the heart of good governance.

Your new government believes in working with Yukon people. It knows that decisions that respond to the people's needs and desires are the best decisions. It will collaborate with others who have a stake in healthy communities and in people in a stronger economy and in the stewardship of our environment.

Your new government will be approachable and open in its dealings with Yukoners. It will be a strong voice for Yukoners within the Canadian federation. Evidence will drive its decision-making. Your government believes in its responsibility to account for what it does. It will measure

progress on its priorities and report on that progress. Yukoners will know that their government is doing what it says it will do to make their lives better.

Honourable members, during this Sitting, you will be asked to consider budgetary measures for the coming year. The budget will give the financial details on the work your government will do with and for Yukon people. It will demonstrate sound fiscal management. It will show the full picture and the costs of delivering programs and services for Yukoners. It will reflect your government's commitment to responsibly managing the territory's finances. Fiscal challenges lie ahead. Your new government will involve Yukon people on how to address these challenges. These discussions will guide our choices for the future. Your new government is confident that these choices will include a future that includes strong, vibrant communities, a robust, diversified economy and a healthy environment, reconciliation among peoples, and a future where Yukon lives are better.

Honourable members, last week, Yukon lost one of the pioneers of responsible government for this territory. From 1958 to 1961, Jim Smith was a member of this House when it was known as the Yukon Territorial Council. He went on to be Commissioner of the Yukon from 1966 to 1976. Commissioner Smith believed in Yukon's political development. He championed the involvement of Yukon's elected representatives in charting the Yukon Territory's future. Members of this House and all Yukoners owe much to that vision — that the people of this territory should shape its own destiny.

His passion for Yukon and his genuine interest in Yukoners from all walks of life and all communities will be greatly missed.

Honourable members, as elected representatives of Yukon, you share a collective responsibility to help guide and shape the future of this territory. As you begin your proceedings, remember the wisdom of the generations who have come before you. Look to the promise of this land and the aspirations of its people. You are all here to work with Yukon people to make their lives better. As you work together, may fairness, respect, humanity and compassion for others guide your deliberations.

Thank you; merci; mahsi'; gñilischish.

Commissioner Phillips leaves the Chamber accompanied by his Aides-de-Camp

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

Prayers

Speaker: It gives me great pleasure at this time to introduce Karina Watson as the Legislative Assembly's new Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms. Ms. Watson recently retired from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police after 27 years of service. Ms. Watson moved to Yukon from the lower mainland of

British Columbia, and arrived in Dawson City to take up her first posting in Yukon on November 1, 2008.

Ms. Watson worked general duty, traffic, bike patrol, community policing, border integrity and as a drug dog handler. At her retirement, Ms. Watson held the rank of corporal. Ms. Watson spent three years as the operational non-commissioned officer, Ops NCO, in Dawson City. Ms. Watson was then posted to Old Crow for four years as the NCO in charge and one and a half years in Faro as the NCO in charge. I would ask members to welcome Ms. Watson to the House at this time. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Ms. Watson succeeds Doris McLean as Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms. Ms. McLean was appointed Sergeant-at-Arms following the retirement of Rudy Couture at the end of July 2016. Unfortunately, Ms. McLean cannot be with us today. On behalf of all members of the Assembly, I wish her a speedy recovery to good health and to the service of the House.

I understand as well that some members of Ms. McLean's family are in the gallery, and I convey my best wishes to you.

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: It also gives me great pleasure to introduce the legislative pages who will be serving the House during the 2017 Spring Sitting. They are Megan Prawdzik, Tess Casher and Rosie Lang from F.H. Collins Secondary School; Alyssa Cuenza, Ainslie Spence and Emma Pater from Vanier Catholic Secondary School; and Paityn Mountain and Chayce Giesbrecht from Porter Creek Secondary School. With us today are Rosie Lang and Chayce Giesbrecht. I would ask members to welcome them to the House at this time.

Applause

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 1: *Act to Perpetuate a Certain Ancient Right* — Introduction and First Reading

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 1, entitled *Act to Perpetuate a Certain Ancient Right*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt North that Bill No. 1, entitled *Act to Perpetuate a Certain Ancient Right*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 1 agreed to

TABLING SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Speaker: I wish at this time to inform the Assembly that I have received a copy of the Speech from the Throne, which I will now table.

CONSIDERATION OF SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT the Speech from the Throne be considered on a day following.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier:

THAT the Speech from the Throne be considered on a day following.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 26(2), that consideration of a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne will take place on Monday, April 24, 2017.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Honourable members, the Chair has for tabling a number of documents. First is the *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — 2017: Government Transfers to Societies — Yukon*.

The Chair also has for tabling a report of the *Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — 2017: Capital Asset Management — Yukon*. The Auditor General's reports are submitted to the Legislative Assembly pursuant to section 35 of the *Yukon Act* and were made public on March 6, 2017.

The Chair also has for tabling *The Report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Yukon on the 2016 General Election*. This report was prepared pursuant to section 315 of the *Elections Act* and was made public on April 5, 2017.

The Chair also has for tabling the *Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators 2015-16 Annual Report*. The annual report is tabled pursuant to subsection 22(8) of the *Human Rights Act* and was transmitted on November 24, 2016.

Finally, the Chair also has for tabling *The Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees*, dated April 20, 2017. This report is tabled pursuant to the direction of the Members' Services Board.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

May I have your further pleasure at this time?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all honourable members of the Legislative Assembly to help me in welcoming to the gallery three individuals. I would like to start with two former leaders of the Yukon Liberal Party, Mr. Jack Cable and Mr. Arthur Mitchell. I would also like to get everybody to help me in welcoming to the gallery the Grand Chief, Peter Johnston.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming today my mayor, Clara Jules.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming to this Legislative Assembly — no strangers to this House — people who, as citizens of the Yukon over the last five years, made it a regular part of their

day to sit in this Legislative Assembly to do what citizens do best, which is to bear witness to the work that we do in this Legislative Assembly on their behalf.

I would like to ask you to join in welcoming Dave Brekke, Murray Martin, Rob and Mary Ann Lewis, Marguerite and Don Roberts, Lillian Nakamura, Wilf Maguire, Carol Ann Gingras, Bonnie Dalziel and so many others. It's such a good thing to see them here today and we hope they will continue to be present with us in this Legislative Assembly.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to also take the opportunity to welcome some other very important individuals here today. I would like to welcome Ms. Lynn Hutton, president of the Yukon First Nations Chamber of Commerce. I would like to also welcome someone who has been very supportive of me over the last little bit in my new role — Mr. Samson Hartland from the Yukon Chamber of Mines.

I also appreciate the help along the way from the executive director of the Klondike Placer Miners' Association, Mr. Jonas Smith. Thank you very much for coming today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank some people this afternoon who have visited us in our Chamber. I would like to welcome Mr. Steve Geick. He is the president of the Yukon Employees Union. I would also like to welcome Patrick Michael, the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; Gill Cracknell, a former colleague I have worked with quite closely; Susan Mooney, who is up there working for the MP's office; and Mr. Devon Bailey and his son Ezra.

Applause

Ms. White: I would be remiss not to welcome Mr. Gerry Whitley to the Assembly. Every day that I have been here, he has been here as well — and a special hello to Karen Barnes, the president of Yukon College.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to ask my colleagues to welcome the president of Yukon College, Dr. Karen Barnes, as well as Deb Bartlette, who is the vice-president of Academic and Student Services. I would also like to recognize our newest Yukoner, Eli Martin McGill-Hyde, who is just over nine weeks old, but who has joined us here today. I would say that we are happy he is sleeping through the proceedings, but we shouldn't take that as an indication of his interest.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome — just acknowledging the Leader of the Official Opposition, who acknowledged Mayor Clara Jules. It is always lovely to have mayors here. Also with us from city council, we have councillors Samson Hartland and Betty

Irwin. I would also like to acknowledge a past councillor and colleague, Kirk Cameron. I would also like to acknowledge Archie Thompson from the RCMP, who I worked with while I was on city council — welcome — and Elder Judy Gingell from my own riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. It is lovely to have you here.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I would like to first acknowledge my brother, Jerry Asp, who has been by my side through this whole entering into politics — thank you so much for coming. I would also like to acknowledge some of the people who have really supported me along the way — Gaye Hanson, thank you so much for being here today. I would also like to acknowledge Marilyn Jensen. Thank you, and please send our best wishes to your mom. Thank you all for coming here today. It is so wonderful to see so many people interested in this Legislative Assembly and to welcome us as new politicians within your government. Thank you.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT, in the opinion of this House, the Government of Yukon should:

(1) recognize that it has been nearly a year since the Legislative Assembly has sat;

(2) recognize that since December 3, 2016, the government has approved close to half a billion dollars without legislative oversight;

(3) recognize that the Premier has announced that there will be a completely new type of budgeting that will require members of the Legislative Assembly enough time to familiarize themselves with;

(4) recognize that they have insisted on redoing their original throne speech while also delaying the tabling of the budget until five days into the Sitting, thus limiting the amount of time members have to debate; and

(5) agree to a maximum Sitting length of 40 days for the 2017 Spring Sitting of the Legislative Assembly to allow MLAs the necessary time to work, review and debate the budget.

Thank you.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, within the first year of the 34th Yukon Legislative Assembly, to fulfill their commitment to a Yukon early childhood strategy that will consider amendments to the *Child Care Act* and its regulations 1990 that will:

(1) reflect current knowledge and best practices in early childhood development; and

(2) consult and include early childhood and child care professionals, parents and First Nation governments in planning and implementation.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to release an estimate of the cost to the public to abandon the newly acquired gas well L38 in the Kotaneelee region.

Speaker: Is there any further business?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the *First Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees*, dated February 7, 2017.

I also have for tabling the *Second Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees*, dated March 17, 2017.

Thank you.

Speaker: Are there any further committee reports to be presented?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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: The House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. on Monday.

The House adjourned at 3:53 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled April 20, 2017:

34-2-1 Speech from the Throne (Speaker Clarke)

34-2-2 *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — 2017: Government Transfers to Societies - Yukon* (March 6, 2017) (Speaker Clarke)

34-2-3 *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — 2017: Capital Asset Management — Yukon* (March 6, 2017) (Speaker Clarke)

34-2-4 *The Report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Yukon on the 2016 General Election* (Speaker Clarke)

34-2-5 *Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators 2015-16 Annual Report* (Speaker Clarke)

34-2-6 *Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees* April 20, 2017 (Speaker Clarke)

34-2-7 *First Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees* (February 7, 2017) (Adel)

34-2-8 *Second Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees* (March 17, 2017) (Adel)

The following written questions were tabled April 20, 2017:

Written Question No. 1

Re: review of the medical travel program (McLeod)

Written Question No. 2

Re: compensation for owners of placer and quartz mining claims (Kent)

Written Question No. 3

Re: communication infrastructure (Kent)

Written Question No. 4

Re: Yukon vision for education (Van Bibber)

Written Question No. 5

Re: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Van Bibber)

Written Question No. 6

Re: Yukon resource gateway project (Hassard)

Written Question No. 7

Re: emergency housing for Ross River (Hassard)

Written Question No. 8

Re: government transparency (Hassard)

Written Question No. 9

Re: carbon tax in Yukon (Hassard)

Written Question No. 10

Re: health care transfers (Hassard)

Written Question No. 11

Re: communication infrastructure (Cathers)

Written Question No. 12

Re: Yukon's agriculture sector (Cathers)

Written Question No. 13

Re: community safety, property crime and illegal drug trade (Cathers)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 2

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, April 24, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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| Hansard Administrator | Deana Lemke |

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 24, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Jim Smith

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise this afternoon to pay tribute to the late Jim Smith, a man who shared his responsibilities with the whole of Yukon so generously.

Mr. Smith came to the north as a young man. He settled first in Atlin, BC, where he met and married Dorothy Matson, his wife of 74 years. In 1947, the Smiths moved to Yukon, made their home and raised their family in Whitehorse. Jim Smith was active in local affairs. He was president of the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and served a term on Whitehorse City Council. In 1958, Mr. Smith was elected to the Legislative Assembly or, as it was known at that time, the "Territorial Council".

He saw the mandate of the 1958 council as laying the foundation for responsible government here in the Yukon. He genuinely believed the future of Yukon should be determined by the people who live there. As Commissioner from 1966 to 1976, he carried on with this mandate. In 1970, the Executive Committee, a forerunner to the present-day Cabinet, was created with two elected representatives involved in the running of government.

Mr. Smith believed in good government for Yukoners. As Commissioner, he worked hard over many years to reorganize the territorial administration into a modern governance structure. Mr. Smith made many other contributions to Yukon life, both in the territory and also beyond its borders. He co-founded the Arctic Winter Games with Stuart Hodgson, the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, and also Governor Walter Hickel of Alaska. He worked with Premier Dave Barrett of British Columbia and Governor Bill Egan of Alaska to secure approval for construction to the South Klondike Highway from Carcross to Skagway.

He played a critical role in the establishment of Kluane National Park and the Chilkoot Trail National Historic Site.

After 10 years as Commissioner, Mr. Smith went on to head the northern Canadian power corporation, a pre-cursor to today's Yukon Energy Corporation.

Throughout his public life, he never lost his common touch, and his interest in and affection for the Yukon people. Many knew him simply as Jimmy; many — like our current Commissioner Doug Phillips — insisted on calling the man "Mr. Smith" out of respect and adoration. Either way,

Mr. Speaker, all agreed he had a wry sense of humour. Also, he was a modest person — modest about his many and profound contributions to this territory.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon is a much better place for Jim Smith's involvement in public life. His gifts to this territory are significant and they are enduring. On behalf of our caucus and the Government of Yukon, I extend to Mr. Smith's family our deepest sympathies for the loss of your devoted husband, father and grandfather.

At this time, I would like to ask all of my colleagues to join me in welcoming to the gallery today Dorothy Smith, Jim Smith's wife of 74 years.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Silver: Also with us here today: Marilyn Smith, daughter; Alex Murdoch — Mr. Smith's grandson — and I have to say, I'm not supposed to pick favorites as an ex-teacher, but you're one of my favorites for sure, Mr. Murdoch; also Eric Smith, Jim Smith's son; Darrell Alexander who is Marilyn's partner; Trevor Alexander, their son; and also Natasha Alexander, daughter. Thank you.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I rise to pay tribute to Mr. Jim Smith. Jim Smith was born in New Westminster, BC on New Year's Eve, 1919, but it has always been felt he was Yukon's son. After graduating from high school and with the war on, Jim was on the search for a job. He started work at a butcher shop and quickly learned the trade. An opening for a butcher came up in Atlin and he agreed to give the place a try. The store advanced his fare and up the coast he came, arriving in 1940 to a bustling town. He met and married a local girl, Dorothy Matson, in 1942. Then they moved from Atlin to Whitehorse in 1947.

Tourist Services was a huge complex where the current Yukon Inn complex is now, and Jim Smith was hired as the manager. I still remember the wonders of that modern grocery store, where the doors opened automatically. During this period, Jim was encouraged to become involved in local organizations, which eventually led to politics. He was city alderman, then a member of the Territorial Council.

In 1958, there were five elected councillors: Ray McKamy from Mayo; John Livesey from Carmacks-Kluane; George Shaw, Dawson; Charlie Taylor, Whitehorse East; and James Smith, Whitehorse West. The Commissioner of Yukon was selected and given instructions by the Indian and Northern Affairs minister and, well, basically ran the territory. The council really had no power — but were local elected executives from the communities to help the Commissioner in his direction for Yukon. Jim quickly realized things needed to change — to have a Yukon with Yukon decisions.

After Commissioner Gordon Campbell finished his term, there was a hunt on for a new Commissioner. There were interviews given to a few candidates, and Jim was one of those candidates. DIAND minister, Arthur Laing, arrived in the territory carrying a briefcase with the name of our new

Commissioner. Remember, communications were not like they are today. In that briefcase was the name “James Smith”. Yukoners were pleased. He was well-liked and everyone knew he would be fair and speak up for Yukoners. He was now in charge.

He was the longest sitting Commissioner in Yukon’s history. He served two five-year terms from October 15, 1966 to June 30, 1976. He began a legacy that is amazing. He formed the first budget program committee in 1968 so that the territory had a better handle on the money allotted to it. He was starting responsible government for and by locals. In 1974, he changed the name from Council of Yukon Territory to the Yukon Legislative Assembly. He said — and I quote: “The Commissioner had to be a dyed-in-the-wool politician. If I had stopped and paid attention to the controversy, we never would have done anything.”

The beautiful land of Yukon was something to be recognized and enjoyed for generations. He assisted in the establishment of the Kluane National Park and Reserve, had the Chilkoot Trail designated as a national historic site and encouraged the construction of the south Klondike Highway link to Skagway, Alaska.

The news that the NWT was eyeing possession of Herschel Island came to his attention, so he — along with Hilda Watson and several others — travelled north and planted a Yukon flag in 1972. That ended that; he claimed the island. The Hon. Member for Kluane, Hilda’s grandson — Wade Istchenko, provided me with a picture of the flag-raising, and it gives our caucus great pleasure to have presented the family members with a photocopy today.

He was also the push behind this building, where the Legislative Assembly is — to have government all under one roof. Little did he know how big government would grow.

Mr. Smith was instrumental in helping to form and encourage our modern land claims. He always believed that local First Nations should be involved in the government process. How that was to happen was an unknown, so he encouraged his staff to find ways. He could not tolerate segregation and wanted First Nation people to be a part of the Legislative Assembly. He was a very good friend of Elijah Smith, and they had many long discussions. A document called *Meaningful Government for All Yukoners* was written during his time at the helm and passed in the Legislative Assembly. He thought of two options: electoral boundary changes — so for one, Old Crow and Kluane would have a single seat, and that would surely guarantee First Nation input.

Jim, along with a small delegation, made a trip to New Zealand to visit the Maori, who had a structure that set aside four guaranteed seats, but Ottawa would not have anything to do with that. So today, our electoral boundaries have worked in our small jurisdiction and we can thank Mr. Jim Smith for that and for his inclusiveness.

This story is about the humble beginnings of the Arctic Winter Games. In 1967, Cal Miller — another colourful local — was attending the Canada Winter Games in Quebec City and he quickly realized that the northern kids’ skills were not

at the level of the provinces. We had a smaller population and did not have access to facilities and the means to many structured sports. He had an idea for a northern games that was the best idea since the invention of 7UP.

He lobbied Commissioner Smith, who then contacted the Commissioner of Northwest Territories, Stuart Hodgson, and the DIAND Minister, Arthur Laing, and they thought it was a smashing idea. One call to the west from Jim, and Governor Walter Hickel was also on board. The first games were held in 1970 and had three teams: Northwest Territories, Alaska and Yukon.

He was also the father of Yukon grants to help students who had to travel Outside to further their education. That was a help to so many families.

During those years, the territory was booming. Clinton Creek mine, Anvil Range, Cassiar, United Keno Hill Mines all helped drive the economy.

He eventually resigned after his 10 years as Commissioner and, after a brief regrouping, he worked for NCPC, as the Premier mentioned, and then fully retired from public life.

I first met the Smiths when I was running for Miss Dawson City back in the late 1960s. The Queen’s Tea was at the Commissioner’s residence on Kluhini Crescent, and it was thrilling to be there. Mrs. Smith was ever the gracious hostess, and Mr. Smith would be greeting and making everyone feel so welcome. When I was appointed Commissioner of the Yukon in 2005, many notes and congratulations arrived, and among them there was a note from former Commissioner Smith and Dorothy. They never failed to reach out.

Also during my term, I had an idea to have a book written about the Commissioners who were still living, and to get their stories and feel of their time while in office — not history from someone else’s perspective, but from the occupants of the office. With the help of Speaker Ted Staffen and writer Linda Johnson, each Commissioner was able to express their stories. We all had one chapter and it gives the reader an insight into the sense of responsibility and duty assigned to that position. *At the Heart of Gold: The Yukon Commissioner’s Office 1898-2010* — it’s a good read if you haven’t done so.

Jim was friendly and he loved to touch base with everyone. His memory was like a steel safe: once in there, he never forgot. Now he might get a name wrong — as we all do from time to time — however, he knew exactly where you fit into the Yukon fabric. If there was a family connection such as the name “Van Bibber”, he had a story. He said — and I quote: “I feel I brought the Yukon into the 20th century. That was my biggest accomplishment and I am happy I did it. I have no regrets. It was a lot of work, but we survived — with a lot of satisfaction too. There were good days and bad days with mediocre ones in between. On good days, you knew you won; on the bad days, you knew you lost. The mediocre ones were bothersome because you never knew if you won or lost.”

His wife Dorothy and his children were his biggest supporters and he always said that without his family he could not have done it.

In the final paragraph in *At the Heart of Gold*, Jim said — and I quote: “The Yukon is still the finest piece of undeveloped real estate in North America. To those entrusted with its care, may the Lord’s arms continue to be wrapped tightly around you while you tackle the tasks ahead.”

He will be missed and he will be remembered fondly. Yukon is better for him having chosen this as his final home. To Dorothy and his family, thank you for sharing him with all Yukoners.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party caucus, I thank you for the opportunity to add a few words in tribute to the life and contributions of James Smith. As my colleagues in the Legislature here today have described so well, James Smith’s contributions to Yukon are many and long-lasting.

Mr. Speaker, as I, along with so many others, participated in the celebration of life and death of Mr. Smith on Saturday, I was struck by the recurring theme of service that underlay James Smith’s life. His commitment to the principles that sustain a healthy democracy — that build community and cooperation — are hallmarks for a rare breed of leader — a leader who understands the importance of service.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the ideal of servant as leader is one that many aspire to, but few attain. In his quiet, dignified and respectful way, Mr. Smith’s legacy as a servant of the institutions, the governments, the church and the family he loved are a powerful legacy.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I would ask everybody in the Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming today a couple of former Liberal leaders and a former Premier, Pat Duncan, as well as former Liberal leader Arthur Mitchell. We also have in the gallery former Deputy Clerk Missy Follwell.

Mr. Hassard: I would like everyone to join me in welcoming a few people today who certainly aren’t strangers to the Legislature: Ken McKinnon, Gordon Steele and Mr. Jonas Smith as well.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the House to join me in welcoming Jan Koepke and Tim Koepke, former Ombudsman and also former chief federal negotiator for Yukon land claims.

Applause.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like the House to recognize a constituent of mine, Mr. Wilf Carter, who is sitting up in the gallery today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to welcome Mr. Ken McKinnon, who is of course a friend to this House, but who is also a constituent of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. Sitting next to him, as already noted, is a colleague of mine, Mr. Tim Koepke, a former Ombudsman and Information and Privacy Commissioner. Welcome to them both.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 2: *National Aboriginal Day Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 2 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT, pursuant to section 18 of the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*, the Legislative Assembly reappoint David Phillip Jones, QC, as a member of the Conflict of Interest Commission for a three-year period.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to report on progress made since the 2013 *Report on the Audit of Staffing* by:

(1) outlining specific actions taken by the Public Service Commission and the government’s human resource units to implement the 15 recommendations; and

(2) reporting on steps taken to resume effective operations of joint committees between government and the Yukon Employees’ Union.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to live up to its election promise to tender seasonally dependent contracts by no later than March 31 of each year and to immediately get the contracts for this summer's schedule on the tender management system.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to review the foster parent program and work to identify areas that can be updated to incentivize potential foster families, including but not limited to:

- (1) increasing compensation or allowances;
- (2) identifying other incentives such as tax credits or rebates; and
- (3) implementing a cash referral system for finding successful foster families.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work in partnership with the RCMP, First Nation governments, municipalities and stakeholders, including small-business owners, to implement measures to improve community safety, reduce property crime, and target the illegal drug trade.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to go back to the table with the federal government to negotiate an exemption for Yukon to the carbon tax.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to:

- (1) fully disclose and report on an annual basis the details of promotional spending and sponsorship by Yukon Energy Corporation; and
- (2) after making this information publicly available, hold public consultations to seek the views of Yukoners on whether this promotional and sponsorship spending should continue, or if they would rather see savings reflected on their electrical bills.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Recent deaths in Whitehorse

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, whose territory we are convening on during this 34th Legislative Assembly. Our heartfelt condolences go out to the

First Nation governments and their people during this very difficult time in their communities.

Your government has reached out to the First Nation governments. The First Nation governments are leading the responses in their communities, with support being provided through cooperation with Yukon government agencies. We want to commend the work of the RCMP, Victim Services, Health and Social Services and the Women's Directorate for their work during this time.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Official Opposition, I would also like to join the minister in expressing our sincere condolences to the families of those who have passed away, as well as to the community and First Nation government, and commending and thanking the RCMP, Victim Services and the Women's Directorate for their work at this difficult time.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister opposite for raising this. It is very rare that we have a ministerial statement in this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the death of any person in our community diminishes us all. The death of two women by violent means is unacceptable. I reached out last week to Chief Bill to express our sadness and our shock that this was happening still.

There are no easy words in this kind of situation. Every person in this room has been touched by violence. We must bring it to a stop.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the members opposite for their responses today. It's very much appreciated.

I want to acknowledge the Member for Whitehorse Centre for the note she sent to me this last week regarding this issue. I appreciate her very kind words.

We are taking our lead from both the Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'än regarding what services we are providing as a government. I would be happy also to make officials available to the members opposite to answer any specific questions about how we are assisting, and I will certainly remain in contact with the members opposite as more information becomes available with regard to the events that are happening in the community.

Again, our heartfelt condolences go out to the First Nation governments during their very difficult time and to their communities.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Carbon tax

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier promised his government would hit the ground running. However, by taking six months to bring the Legislature back, the Premier has shown that he is in fact not ready to get to work. That said, I have a very simple question for the Premier.

During the six months that he delayed bringing back the Legislature, did the Premier conduct an analysis of what the financial impacts of his carbon tax would be on Yukon families?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. The Yukon government is very proud to have signed on to the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change*. We agreed with the framework's assertion that carbon pricing will encourage innovation and build the foundation of a low-carbon and resilient economy. It is time that we as a territory make efforts to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels, and it's well past time to take action on a global level as well.

The first step in this action is the pan-Canadian framework, and we have agreed with our fellow provinces and territories to the aspects of that pan-Canadian framework.

We are also taking part in negotiations in full participation, because it's clear that Canada was not going to allow any of our provinces or territories to decline on a carbon pricing mechanism. We are now in the process of waiting to hear back from Ottawa for next steps, and we look forward to engaging with stakeholders here in the Yukon to showcase how we plan on giving all money from the federal carbon pricing mechanism back to Yukon businesses and families.

Mr. Hassard: So I'll take that as a "no".

Another question then, Mr. Speaker: During that same six months, did the Premier conduct an analysis of what the economic impacts of his carbon tax would be on Yukon businesses?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The answer is not "no". We're going through a process and we are working with stakeholders on this. During the election campaign, we campaigned on actually dealing with a federal pricing mechanism, as opposed to others who decided to take the route of looking for an exemption where there is no exemption.

So again, we are going to concentrate on what we can concentrate on here in the Yukon; part of that is waiting for the details to come from Canada through the next few months to find out the answers to specific questions that we've asked. Now, Yukon will need clarity from Canada prior to designing a rebate program on how Canada will adhere to the following two principles that are very important to this side of government: carbon pricing should minimize competitive impacts and carbon leakage — particularly for emission-intensive, trade-exposed sectors — and also carbon pricing policies should include revenue recycling to avoid disproportionate burdens on vulnerable people and indigenous peoples.

As opposed to hoping and praying that there is going to be an exemption, this government did the steps to make sure that we were getting ready for a federal carbon pricing mechanism and making sure that carbon pricing mechanism does what it's supposed to do: reduce our fossil fuels' reliance; but at the same time, not penalizing businesses where they cannot have any alternative.

Mr. Hassard: The question was: What kind of analysis has the Premier done? There was no answer, so the answer is "no".

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners know that before you sign your name along the dotted line of a contract, you should have an understanding of what it is you're actually agreeing to. We would have expected that an economic analysis of the impacts of the carbon tax on Yukon families and businesses would have been done before the Premier signed his name on to this carbon tax scheme. In the last six months, Mr. Speaker, has the Premier done any economic analysis of the impacts of this carbon tax on Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Silver: You know, the member opposite should be very clear and understand that it was his government that was moving forward, looking at options for carbon pricing mechanisms back when the Yukon Party was in power. There were conversations being had — which there should have been when there's a pricing mechanism happening on a federal basis that is going to affect Yukoners, so kudos to having those original conversations.

The member opposite also knows that the pan-Canadian framework has set out certain requirements. Of course we're working with every department right now and working with federal counterparts and we will be moving forward when we hear more details from Ottawa on aspects of our annex — which I hope and pray that the member opposite has read, and understands that a lot of work has gone into this so far. We are at a good place right now — moving forward to a tax that's going to be coming forth from Ottawa in 2018. I look forward to continuing that dialogue and that debate here in the Legislative Assembly.

Again, we believe carbon pricing is an effective measure to fight man-made climate change and I urge the opposition to take the same stance.

Question re: Carbon tax

Ms. Van Bibber: The government has not told Yukoners anything about how its carbon tax will impact the economy.

Documents from the Department of Economic Development state — and I quote: "For Yukon, the price of oil can influence economic activity, particularly in how it can impact mining sector activity as well impact tourism activities." We saw these impacts firsthand in 2008 when fuel prices skyrocketed and at least one local RV park saw a 30-percent decline in business as a result.

Can the Premier tell us today how much his carbon tax scheme will hurt the Yukon tourism sector?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question. I know that this is a concern of Yukoners because there are a lot of unknowns.

What we do know is that the federal carbon mechanism pricing is coming and to prepare for that, we intend to reach out to stakeholders and to make sure that the carbon pricing mechanism hits where it is supposed to hit, which means that if you can reduce your carbon emissions, you will. Everybody knows that this is a federal carbon pricing mechanism, so the

same concerns that are going to happen in the tourism industry here will affect other jurisdictions as well.

We recognize that the pan-Canadian framework — the Vancouver protocol — has identified the north is going to feel these effects more so than other jurisdictions, so we will be working with other governments. We will be working with other stakeholders to make sure that this carbon pricing mechanism does what it's supposed to do. One of those things that it will do is help us pivot toward a non-fossil-fuel-based economy. These are opportunities that I would hope to see the opposition embrace.

Now, it's going to be feeling the pinch on the pump for sure and we understand that. It's going to affect our tourism industry; it's going to affect our mining industry. We're going to be working with stakeholders on both to make sure that the carbon pricing mechanism reduces emissions where it is supposed to, but in those areas where we have a unique case — where it is more expensive because of our northern consideration — we'll make sure that the money comes back to Yukoners' families and Yukon businesses to address those situations.

Ms. Van Bibber: In December, the Premier told the Yukon News that Yukoners will get more money back in a carbon tax than they actually paid because tourists will pay the carbon tax, but will be ineligible for a rebate. It seems the Premier is essentially proposing a tax on tourism. The tourism sector is highly competitive and increased costs would have a negative impact on visitor numbers and economic activity across the territory. It seems the Premier has not considered the impact on the tourism sector.

Why has the government not taken the time to study these impacts on a carbon tax within the tourism sector?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It's worth noting at this point that carbon pricing mechanisms are being implemented right across the world. Every region has the responsibility to do their part. We're committed to doing that, and I would hope — and I will allow for the opportunity — for the opposition to work with us on how these mechanisms work on a regional basis, whether it be for the mining sector or for the tourism sector.

We have time. We have time to work out the details. To say that we haven't been doing work already behind the scenes with all of our departments — working with the Department of Economic Development, working with the Department of Environment, also Community Services and Finance — there is lots of work being done.

We are waiting for Ottawa to look at the next steps based upon our annex, and at that time, we will share with the opposition where we are and how we can effectively make sure that the carbon pricing mechanism does what it's supposed to do — reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

At the same time, there is a benefit. If you're getting more than just Yukoners paying into this tax, then you're going to have the benefits going back to Yukoners. That's a benefit to us — to be able to make sure that when we set our targets — when we set the rebate mechanisms — that we have a certain

threshold based on a larger pot than what Yukoners specifically are paying into.

Question re: Hydraulic fracturing

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From the first community meetings where Yukoners learned about fracking to Yukon's largest ever petition and select committee hearings across the territory, fracking is an issue that Yukoners care deeply about.

The threat to our water, the high infrastructure cost and the impact on the land made many Yukoners conclude that it is just not worth the risk. There is little doubt that fracking has no social licence in Yukon.

On behalf of the thousands of Yukon citizens who signed petitions, who attended community events, and who wrote to their MLAs, I'm offering the Premier an opportunity to send a clear message.

Does the Premier stand by his election commitment that there will be no fracking in Yukon and will he tell this House what form this moratorium will take?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The Government of Yukon does not support the use of hydraulic fracturing in oil and gas development, and we are seeking the best means to implement a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing. I see in our audience here today some members who have definitely taken this seriously. I have had an opportunity to meet with Yukoners concerned and I think they are quite comfortable with the approach we are taking.

There are currently no active oil and gas operations and no hydraulic fracturing activity underway in Yukon. We support responsible oil and gas development in collaboration with affected First Nations and in keeping with established regulatory environmental assessment in land use planning processes.

On April 15, 2015, the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources introduced a motion in the Legislative Assembly that, among other things, called for economic studies as outlined in the recommendations for the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing. I am happy to say that I have reviewed that study of potential economic impacts of developing shale and oil gas in the Liard Basin and I will release it — but there is a very important point. The risk portion of that report was never added, so I'm happy to say that we will be coming out with that report. We're going to make sure it's done right — as per the motion that was tabled, I believe, on the second-to-last day of the Sitting formerly, and we will be making sure that there is no fracking during this mandate.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate the minister's words, but like many Yukoners, I'm concerned that words are the only form that this moratorium will take — no regulation, no legislation. The problem, as Northern Cross has recently demonstrated, is that, in the world of oil and gas industry, words are sometimes misused.

You see, Northern Cross spent years telling Yukoners that it was not planning to frack in Eagle Plains. Yet two weeks

ago they launched a \$2.2-billion lawsuit against the government for preventing them from fracking.

Mr. Speaker, it is the government's job to protect Yukon waters, air, land and pristine wilderness. The notion that protection of our environment would trigger any requirement for government to pay compensation holds future generations hostage.

Is the Premier considering any form of compensation to oil and gas companies following its decision not to allow fracking in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Once again, I want to just — it's paramount that Yukoners understand that, as we were at their doorstep and as ran in this election, we have committed that there would not be hydraulic fracturing. We stick to that.

The member opposite has touched upon some particular issues. I think for those who follow the media, there are some processes that are going through — they are in the legal process. So at this point, I would reserve the right to comment on those items. But certainly, we're looking for the best possible tools to continue to stick to this moratorium. There is a series of tools that we can use but, at this point in time, we're looking at sticking to our word. Certainly, I think it's important to understand that there is no activity that's happening at this point in time where people have sought a permit to undertake hydraulic fracturing.

Thank you for the question.

Ms. Hanson: We know the issue is before the court, and no one is expecting the government to discuss the specifics of a court case, but in his role as the minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources, the minister has said that he wants to settle out of court — as he did recently in the media.

He sends the message that this government is willing to compromise on Yukon's right to protect our environment by preventing fracking. He is saying that Yukon's right to protect our land and water is negotiable.

It seems like Northern Cross has decided that, having failed to frack Yukon's natural resources, it will just frack the public purse instead.

One has to question why the minister has put himself and Yukoners in such a weak position by opening the door to compensation. Will the Premier tell Yukoners that this government will not give in to corporate interest and that he will not pay out oil and gas companies for Yukon's rightful decision to protect Yukon's water by prohibiting fracking?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We must have read two different articles, but anyway — with that being said, you know, I appreciate the digging in to try to bring us to another position, but certainly — the Leader of the Third Party — the comments that I have made about consultation — you know, Yukoners have watched over and over again these legal processes. I think that what I've learned in private business and what I've learned at the negotiation table is that sometimes you do have an opportunity to work through things.

I have no interest in putting us in a weak position in government — absolutely not. Certainly, what we want to do

is take into consideration the effects on the taxpayer at all times. That's paramount for me.

Once again, we're committing to not going through the process of hydraulic fracturing. As for the Northern Cross situation — we'll let that play out in the courts and hopefully we'll maybe even get to a point where we don't have to go there — but not by putting this government or Yukoners in a weak position.

Thanks for your question.

Question re: Children in care

Ms. Hanson: This is a new question. In 2014, the Auditor General of Canada made the following observation in his report on Yukon Family and Children's Services — and I quote: While the department meets many requirements, "...it does not adequately fulfill several of its key responsibilities for the protection and well-being of at-risk children, youth, and their families."

In a subsequent hearing, the department assured the public that changes were being implemented. Recently, we have learned that children as young as three in the care of this government are staying in group homes, often with much older children. This is not an appropriate family, nor structured setting, required by children this young. Will the minister tell this House what concrete steps the department is taking to fulfill its responsibility as parent in caring for these very young children?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for that great question. We are taking seriously the challenge before us with children in care — any children in care. We are currently looking more specifically at indigenous children in care, looking at rural Yukon and looking at what we can do to provide the necessary supports to ensure that children who do come into our care through the foster care system are well taken of. There are, in recent media reports, significant challenges that are before us. Foster care and finding foster care programming in homes in the communities oftentimes is difficult. We are working with our partners, working with the communities, working with the parents and looking at the whole important role of collaboration and cooperation with the indigenous governments of the Yukon Territory. The health and well-being of all Yukon children is paramount, and foster parenting is a full-time job. With that full-time job, we most certainly want to ensure that there are appropriate accommodations made. In terms of excellent work by the foster parent program and the collaboration that we have conducted over the course of the months in office, we will continue to work to ensure that we address this.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for her comments. This government has the ultimate responsibility for the care and well-being of children legally in its care. The government and this minister are in fact the legal parents of children in care, and have the role of making decisions and providing appropriate structure and care that ensures the well-being and growth of the child, whether they are three or 13 or 18. A child of three has very different

requirements, learning abilities and needs from those of a teenager. Any parent will tell you that a three-year-old requires constant attention, stimulation, play and love. This is a critical time in the brain development and growth of any child.

What training and support is the minister's department providing to group home staff to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of young children in the government's care?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, the work currently that is established with the Association of Yukon Foster Parents and working with the Department of Health and Social Services staff — we are looking at capacity development within the department to ensure that we have adequate programs, adequate staffing and a place to provide the essential services to children who we have in care.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I think everybody would acknowledge the yeoman efforts of foster parents in the foster care system, but it is the challenge that we are facing with very young children in group homes. Along that line, it is no secret that some youth and teens in care and in group homes are often out late at night. Some as young as 13 are not returning to their group home. Staff are regularly required to go out and search for these youth, often alone. Even when they are able to track down these youth who are in the care of this government, we have been told that group home staff do not have the authority to return them to the group home. These are your children. Youth and teens out at all hours of the night are at risk in a myriad of ways.

Mr. Speaker, what concrete steps are being taken to provide support to group home staff to address these concerns and to provide them with the ability to act and to ensure the safety and well-being of youth in the care of this government?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What are we doing? What can we do? I guess I would pose the question: What can we do differently? What are we doing differently? We intend to provide the best possible services and support that are available to us. Ideally, we would like to look at the prevention mechanisms available to us. So how do we keep our children at home in our communities with their parents so that we're not confronted with these challenges? That's what we want to do. That's what this government wants to do. That's what I want to do as the minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

The challenge is with regard to what happens when a child comes into our care. We have policies and procedures in place that guide and govern us and that protect the young children in our care.

Question re: Liberal Party ethical standards

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Premier. Does the Premier believe that the leader of a political party has an obligation to set an ethical standard for the party and a responsibility to show leadership in setting the tone for the party and setting standards for that team's ethical conduct?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes.

Mr. Cathers: I thank the Premier for the answer. Does the Premier believe that an ethical standard for his team includes following the law?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I guess we'll play this game until we get the last part of the question. I'll let the member opposite just go ahead and ask his question.

Mr. Cathers: It's interesting that the Premier refused to answer whether an ethical standard for that team includes following the law.

The Premier has acknowledged that as Leader of the Liberal Party, he has an obligation to set an ethical standard for his team. When he learned one of his candidates might not be complying with the law during the 2016 election, he had the option of defending the candidate's action or publicly stating that all Liberal candidates had to comply with the law or they would be kicked off the team. He made the wrong choice.

Will the Premier now apologize to Yukoners for failing in his duty as Leader of the Liberal Party to ensure that all of his candidates followed the law and complied with the *Elections Act*? Will he acknowledge his mistake and apologize for defending the candidate instead of telling her, as he should have, that she had to obey the law or she would be kicked off the Liberal Party team?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for being so guarded to the member — but I guess once bitten, twice shy with this particular member.

Mr. Speaker, we are aware that the RCMP is conducting an investigation into this matter and that this will proceed through the Yukon territorial court. It is a very serious matter and it is important that the Yukon election acts are upheld and the rights of voters are protected. To answer that question, yes, I absolutely believe that the law should be adhered to.

With regard to this particular candidate — again, we have a court case that's moving forward. I will answer the follow-up question which would be whether or not we believe that the appointment to the Assessment Review Board is something that we should be reconsidering. Well, the answer is: Innocent until proven guilty. If anything changes in the courts, then we'll make a decision at that time — just because I know that's where this question is going to lead the next time the member opposite decides to get to his feet.

Question re: Procurement policy

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the minister responsible for Highways and Public Works.

Mr. Speaker, this government campaigned on how it was going to improve procurement services, yet this morning we see again a continuing trend where the government's solution to contracting problems is to either fire the contractor or head for the courts.

Can the minister explain how he arrived at this decision, and should contractors expect this to be the new norm in dealing with contract issues?

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

This government is committed to improving the procurement system for all Yukoners, and we have a number of methods we are going to use to fix that system. We want to make sure that contractors have a list of contracts that they can refer to when they are going forward so that they can better plan and build capacity within their companies to actually carry these contracts forward in a measured and methodical manner. That list will be coming out in March 2018, and I'm sure that process will help contractors and the government, and help all sorts of projects roll out in a measured and responsible way. It will help the procurement process immensely, so stay tuned for that.

Question re: Carbon tax

Mr. Kent: I have a question today for the Premier.

Yukon businesses will be forced to pass on increased costs from the Liberals' carbon tax on to Yukon residents. The president of Air North, Yukon's airline, noted that the carbon tax will increase the cost of airline fuel, which currently totals over \$20 million a year for that company. Trips to the Yukon would become more expensive; it would also make it more expensive for Yukoners to fly south. People are less likely to fly if ticket prices skyrocket. We heard earlier today that, in his rush to please the Prime Minister and sign on to the carbon tax agreement, details were lacking. In the six months the Premier delayed bringing back the Legislative Assembly, did he do any analysis on what the impacts of his carbon tax scheme will be on our local airline industry?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I really do appreciate the question. Yukon's airline is another example of a Yukon business that we will be working with and have already reached out to. Joe Sparling has already been to the office and we have had a comprehensive conversation with our chief of staff as well, and we look forward to meeting with more local stakeholders as we iron out the details of a local effect — a local version of the carbon pricing mechanism that Ottawa is going to be implementing.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So no numbers on what the impact of the carbon tax scheme will be on our local airlines.

A local CEO stated that his restaurants would have to pay more for food, and his hotels would pay more for heat. This would either hit their bottom line or be passed on to Yukon consumers.

Another local business owner said that the prices will go up and, while she would pass on some of those costs to customers, she will have to swallow some of it to stay competitive with larger grocery stores in town. Again for the Premier — in the six months since being elected and delaying the recall of this Legislative Assembly, why was there no analysis done on the impacts of his carbon tax scheme on the local hospitality industry, restaurants or our grocery stores?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is interesting that we keep hearing from the Yukon Party on how long it took us to get down to business — as if we were not working on things in the six months that we were not in the Legislative Assembly. It is worth noting that it took us 138

days to sit. The Yukon Party governed for 134 days without calling the Legislature back in 2016 while it figured out what it wanted to do about calling an election — but that is for another day.

All of these concerns are very important, and I would urge the member opposite to work with the government and maybe share the contacts of the local businesses that have concerns. I would also tell local businesses that we are starting on the process of getting the input of all of the local companies and local individuals on how we are going to be fair in making sure that all of the money collected from a federal carbon pricing mechanism will come back to Yukon businesses and Yukon families. They can then make sure that they are utilizing the right business approaches — to make sure that they are being as conscientious as possible — and at the same time make sure that if there are areas where they cannot reduce their emissions, then that has to be taken into consideration while we all work together. Maybe not all of us — we will extend that option to the opposition to help us with this next round after we get back from Ottawa their answers to our specific questions on the Yukon annex.

Mr. Kent: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the member opposite, the Premier, wants to consult with Yukoners after he has already signed onto the deal in a rush to please the Prime Minister. Documents from the Department of Economic Development state — and I quote: "The price of fuel also influences the cost of Yukon construction activities and the cost of goods in Yukon as the majority of goods purchased locally are transported from outside the territory." This means that many of the goods and foods sold by our hospitality industry will increase in cost. Going out for dinner will be more expensive. Purchasing groceries at the grocery store will be more expensive.

Again, after six months, why doesn't the Premier know how much more expensive these activities will become because of his carbon tax scheme?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is interesting that the Yukon Party still believes that somewhere on the dashboard there would be some kind of exemption if we just held on and did nothing. It is not true. There is a federal backstop that Ottawa will put forward. That federal backstop will be there for any jurisdiction in Canada that decides that they are not going to put their own carbon pricing mechanism forward. That is going to happen in Manitoba. That is going to happen in Saskatchewan. The three territories united together and said that we will implement the carbon pricing mechanism through the federal backstop, and in that process there has been an awful lot of work being done through the three territories with Ottawa — internally with all of the departments — to make sure that the pan-Canadian framework is adhered to and the Yukon annex with Yukon-specific considerations is adhered to.

The next stage is to hear back from Ottawa, from all of the internal conversations, and we will reach out before anything happens as far as setting of a pricing mechanism. These questions will be asked. I appreciate that the opposition is ready to go with helping how we can figure out how to

implement this federal carbon pricing mechanism, and I look forward to working with the opposition to make sure that Yukon businesses and Yukon individuals' concerns are heard.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONSIDERATION OF SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 26(2), that consideration of a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, if not concluded today, will take place on Tuesday, April 25, 2017.

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Mr. Gallina: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT the following address be presented to the Commissioner of Yukon:

MAY IT PLEASE THE COMMISSIONER: We, the Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, beg leave to offer our humble thanks for the gracious Speech which you have addressed to the House.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek Centre that the following address be presented to the Commissioner of Yukon:

MAY IT PLEASE THE COMMISSIONER: We, the Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, beg leave to offer our humble thanks for the gracious Speech which you have addressed to the House.

Mr. Gallina: Mr. Speaker, honourable members, Yukoners, friends and family, I rise today before you humbled to address this House as the MLA for Porter Creek Centre. I am truly honoured to be representing over 1,000 riding constituents and to be an advocate on behalf of all Yukoners throughout the territory. My full name is Paolo Nando Ernesto Gallina. Both of my parents immigrated to Canada from Europe at a young age and blessed me with an Italian last name that simply translates into "hen".

My father Peter and my mother Francesca raised my brother Dino and I in Richmond, BC in a house full of arts, love, sports, food and friends. I first came to the Yukon in the early nineties and the classic tale of a summer's visit. I worked for the Westmark Whitehorse, and the following winter, I dove headfirst into Yukon tradition and, funnily enough, ran as a Sourdough Sam under the pseudonym "The Westmark Whip".

I instantly took to the strong sense of community here and began to gain experience through volunteer work and employment with the Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, the Yukon Convention Bureau and the City of Whitehorse. I was fortunate to travel

the territory for my work, and I was captivated by the people, the places, the cultures, the stories and their traditions.

Mr. Speaker, in 1999, my family suffered a tragic setback. My brother Dino had been visiting family in London, England, scouting prospective art schools and by accident was struck by a train in the underground. He survived, though was in a comatose state for the remainder of his life. It took six months after the accident for him to be stable enough to travel back to Richmond, BC, where he remained in a continuing care facility for two and a half more years. During this time, I had moved back to Richmond to support my family. Our lives changed forever. We were with Dino seven days a week, providing physiotherapy with a network of over 50 volunteers. We were dedicated to rehabilitating Dino and nurturing him back to consciousness. Even though Dino was in a vegetative state, he would wake up — he would open his eyes and move his arms slowly — but there was no connection. He wasn't able to communicate with us. We would often say we needed to get him through the fog, that we could do this — we could bring him back.

To paraphrase Martin Luther King Jr., the ultimate measure of a person is not where we stand in the moments of comfort and convenience, but where we stand at times of challenge. The challenge we faced with Dino was of monumental proportions for us as a family, and thankfully we all gravitated naturally to our roles. I was called upon, as the oldest son, to represent what was important to us — finding ways to bring positive people into our lives and to motivate and to serve.

My father became more solid than ever in his role as the rock foundation that never wavered — sticking to his guns and always being there when we needed him. Now my mother — she transformed. My mother operated from pure passion and energy. She was convinced and unconditionally driven to bring my brother back and she wasn't going to rest until that happened. Sadly, a few years after the accident, Dino passed away peacefully from heart failure due to complications from a flu virus. We were devastated. We always believed we were so close to bringing him back — and maybe we were, but now the hard work began for us to try to re-establish a normal life.

Mr. Speaker, I share this personal story because when I tell it, it brings perspective back to the world around me. It helps me appreciate the life that my family and I have, and it inspires me to help others to reach for what's meaningful to them.

In 2003, I again answered the call of the north and made my way back to Whitehorse with my bride, Sarah, in tow. We began to raise our family and shared our northern lives with my parents as much as possible. I began where I left off and started to further my career in the business community, working with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, the 2007 Canada Winter Games, Outside the Cube Management Consulting, Mount Sima and, most recently, with Northwestel as their community investment manager.

Now as a politician who serves the people of the Yukon, I've entered a world that I seem strongly connected to. This connection, with the support from my caucus members and

the leadership of Premier Silver, leads me to believe that there is tremendous opportunity to make the lives of Yukoners better.

Mr. Speaker, my decision to run for political office and as an MLA was threefold. First, I saw a team of candidates and volunteers being assembled that I knew I wanted to be a part of. Whether I won or lost the election, I knew my experience, skills and personality would lend a positive change in the lives of Yukoners. I'm truly honoured to have beside me today a group of people who are smart and caring. They know how to listen and they value my role on this team and the contributions that I make. Their encouragement propels me to be the best citizen, father, husband, friend and elected official that I can be.

Secondly, as the father of a young family, I benchmark my daily actions knowing our children and future generations will one day take the reins of this territory and become stewards of the earth. In my role as MLA, I'm able to involve and teach my children through my own experiences and provide them with a complete understanding of the democratic society that we live in, how they can engage when their time is right, and to help them further appreciate the life that we have here in this territory and that it is not common around the globe.

Finally, I am here today because I have the desire to serve. As a young man trying to define my purpose, I was looking for the rational explanation: What profession would I be in? Would I be a father, a husband, a coach or a mentor? Today as I stand here, I can say with confidence that my purpose is to serve and the act of serving itself is who I am.

Mr. Speaker, the riding of Porter Creek Centre is one of the fastest growing ridings in the territory. It flanks the Yukon River to the east and is filled with trails, parks, facilities and a mix of residential homes where it's evident that residents take pride in their place. Constituents can count on me to be approachable, efficient and thoughtful. I will listen to their concerns and work to understand what matters most to them and their families. I will work hard to solve the problems they bring to me and I will be an advocate for community priorities.

Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech, we heard how the government is committed to managing the territory's financial resources prudently and will measure and report on the progress that it makes. In my capacity as a private member, I will work with the government and strive toward fiscal accountability. I have been appointed by order of the Legislative Assembly to sit on four standing committees. In these all-party committees, I will review Public Accounts, government regulations and reports from the Auditor General's office to ensure government meets the needs of Yukoners. I will be assessing parliamentary procedure to find ways to modernize orders of this House and I will be recommending appointments to major government boards and committees. I'm proud to report that, since being elected, all of these committees have met and are moving the mechanics of government forward in positive ways.

The throne speech highlighted how the government was committed to a stronger economy and that it recognizes that Yukoners want good jobs and business opportunities. I'm poised to leverage my career experience in this territory through partnerships with numerous businesses, community organizations and industry associations. I will be focused on finding ways to create jobs, strengthen and diversify the economy and protect the environment, and as our team moves forward, I will ensure that responsible investments and programs and services lead to healthy, productive and happy lives for all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech outlined the importance of strong government-to-government relations with the First Nations and that all communities matter. I will work collaboratively with all governments and with my colleagues and members here in this House to ensure that all communities in the Yukon continue to grow and thrive. I will remain humble, respectful, and open-minded to our northern cultures and play a part in fostering reconciliation.

In my role as the caucus chair and party whip, I will bring forward relevant matters to Yukoners for our caucus to debate, discuss and align on. I will keep our team focused on the priorities we have set for government and keep top of mind our commitment to make the lives of Yukoners better.

There are Yukoners past and present who played a vital role in helping me to get where I am today: Marj Eschak helped me appreciate the value of contributing to the community; Dee Enright taught me the art of getting stuff done; Derek Charlton encouraged me to believe in my abilities; Larry Watling for his mentorship over me; Dave Gould told me that it was okay to dream; Sam Oettli showed me how to be an amazing role model to my children; Patti Balsillie was the sister I never had; and Susan Simpson drove me to success with a winning campaign.

My father now lives here with my family and he gives us unconditional love every day. My mother succumbed to cancer after a brief and courageous battle in 2010. She left me with a deep understanding of what it means to serve and live with passion. My wife Sarah, who truly is a shooting star, has not wavered in supporting me for 15 years this coming June. She and I have brought four healthy and beautiful daughters into this world: Oriana, Adria, Isabella and Vittoria. While they inspire us every day as they move into their teenage years, I'm preparing myself for a little trouble in the henhouse.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Gallina. A gentle reminder to all MLAs — probably some of us novice MLAs — that Members of the Legislative Assembly are not to be mentioned by name in the Assembly, so if you could govern yourselves accordingly, I know you will. Thank you.

Mr. Hassard: I am pleased to rise today as the Leader of the Official Opposition to respond to the Premier's Speech from the Throne. I will just begin by saying that the speech really contained very little detail, and when the Premier was

asked why this was, he said the real detail would be coming in the budget. This raises the question as to what was the point of a second throne speech other than to limit the amount of time opposition parties have to debate the budget. In the interest of using our time wisely and getting to work quickly, the Official Opposition will be limiting our responses to just this speech. Instead we will focus our efforts on the budget.

As I noted earlier this year, in my initial response to the Speech from the Throne, leading an effective opposition and holding the government to account is an honour and a privilege that I take very seriously. It is a duty that I and my colleagues will discharge to the best of our abilities.

In the course of our duties, we will ask questions of the government about matters that are important to our constituents and to all Yukoners. We will offer constructive criticisms of the government's decisions to ensure that they withstand the test of debate and to assure that Yukoners understand the context within which those decisions are being made. From time to time, we will offer alternatives so that Yukoners understand that the path being taken by the current government is not the only option to offer. It is indeed rare that decisions of government are without other options or without nuance, and we will do our best to explore those options and nuances to ensure that the right decision is being made and the right direction is being taken.

This is an important task in a democratic society, and my colleagues and I will endeavour to uphold our duty. To this end, our first task of this Sitting is to respond to the Speech from the Throne put forward last Thursday. Traditionally, the Speech from the Throne offers a new government the opportunity to chart out a course for their new mandate. It allows them to set priorities and provide the public with a glimpse into their agenda and their vision for governing in the coming years. Having heard and read the throne speech and having thoughtfully considered it, I can say that it most certainly came up short. For a speech that has taken almost six months to prepare, it was disappointingly lacking in detail.

As far as we can tell, the speech was strung together with headlines of old news releases, campaign platitudes and tired clichés. Its silence on key issues is deafening. In fact, on certain topics, such as key platform commitments, you have to wonder why the government chose to leave them out. Maybe they were hoping Yukoners would forget about their promises so they are easier to break, or maybe they just simply needed another six months to write it.

We may find out soon enough. At the current pace that this government produces speeches from the throne, we are due to get 20 of them over the course of their mandate. So far as we can tell, in fact they have delivered more throne speeches than they have seasonally dependent construction contracts.

Before I turn to my criticisms of the speech content, let me say that there are a few aspects of the speech that I was pleased to hear. I was pleased to hear the government's commitment to work at improving First Nation relations. We can all agree that improving relationships with any government is a benefit to Yukoners. I was pleased to hear the

government acknowledge the importance of the mining sector and commit to its support for responsible resource development. While it was a rehash of an announcement made several months ago, I was pleased to hear of the government's support of the resource roads in the Klondike region. We hope that this commitment and support will extend to other regions of the territory as well.

Mr. Speaker, I was also pleased to hear that the Liberal government has committed to completing the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, expanding the programs and addiction services at the new Sarah Steele Building, and moving to incorporate midwifery into the health care system. These are some of the Yukon Party initiatives that are being carried on by the Liberal government and have the support of the Official Opposition.

Having said that, let me now highlight where there are some significant gaps in the speech and the vision outlined in it. Mr. Speaker, we are concerned that some of the Premier's most significant commitments have been left out or ignored. One of the Premier's first commitments to Yukoners after learning of the 2016 election results was: "We are ready to hit the ground running." Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we can safely say that the Premier most certainly has not lived up to his promise. The delays this government has caused in getting down to the business of governing the territory have been historic.

First, they took a historic amount of time to recover from their election celebrations and swear in a Cabinet. Weeks ticked by without any direction being given to the patient officials of the Yukon government. Next, they took a historic amount of time preparing themselves to appear in the Legislature. They shattered the record for number of days passed before allowing the opposition to ask questions and hold them to account, and the delays don't end there. Numerous people — whether government officials, external stakeholders — have taken notice of how long it has been for this Liberal government to staff up and organize their own office. Mr. Speaker, when the Premier and his Cabinet can't even run their own political office effectively, it sends a terrible signal about their ability to run the entire government.

Mr. Speaker, we aren't the only ones noticing this. Just last week, the Yukon Employees' Union withdrew from all joint management committees and joint policy review boards because of the Liberal government's inability to get senior managers in place in a timely fashion. The Liberal's prolonged search for new senior government officials like deputy ministers is causing problems and disruption throughout the public service, and this came to a head last week.

The private sector is also taking note of this. In the 2016 election, the Liberals promised to get seasonally dependent work tendered by the end of March. Here we are at the end of April, while building contractors — hoping to get to work early as the ground thaws — are left waiting in the face of a broken promise from the Liberal government. What is worse is that we know that the waiting won't be over for some time yet. The Liberal government's historically late legislative

Sitting will mean that the budget won't be passed until well into the construction season. When the Premier tables the budget later this week, it will be the latest tabling of a budget in memory. Debate will not even begin until the first week of May.

Mr. Speaker, it has become quite clear that the Premier's first promise to Yukoners to hit the ground running has been broken. The Liberals may very well have hit the ground, but unfortunately we're still waiting for them to get up.

To be fair, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that their failure to launch as a government has been deliberate. I don't think that they wanted or planned to break these promises to Yukoners so early in their mandate. Rather, I think that many of the promises they've made are simply beyond their abilities to deliver. To be sure, officials within the public service, public sector unions and businesses in the private sector are all taking note of this.

Another notable omission from the throne speech was the Liberals' commitment to cut corporate tax rates and eliminate the small business tax. Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party supports measures to make Yukon a more competitive place to do business. We have a strong record of cutting taxes and taking action to improve our business climate.

The commitment to make these significant tax reductions was a prominent feature of their economic platform and any mention of it was conspicuously absent from the throne speech. Businesses that we have heard from worry that the possible tax cuts will be a contingent on the imposition of a carbon tax. If this is the case, the Liberal government certainly is not being upfront or open about it, and this is something that we in the Official Opposition will be watching for. Again, we think that these are issues that the government has had more than enough time to begin planning for.

Another important issue that has arisen over the past six months is the government's tendency to side with interests of Ottawa over the interest of Yukon. We have seen Ottawa unilaterally ban offshore development without consulting Yukoners while the Premier remains silent. We have seen the Premier abandon negotiations for exemption of the carbon tax, even though at least one of the other territories continues to pursue this. We have seen the Premier brag about leaving almost \$1 million on the table in a new health transfer deal. Not only did the deal not include any new money to cover medical travel, a report by a leading university suggests it will be unsustainable for the territory in the long run. These are issues of concern and we hold out hope that the government will understand that it was elected by the voice of Yukoners in Ottawa, not the other way around. Unfortunately, we saw nothing in the throne speech suggesting they intend to reverse this trend. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to priorities, the Speech from the Throne mentions Ottawa three times and medical travel none.

On the topic of this government's carbon tax, the throne speech left much to be desired as well. Several months ago, we tabled a series of important questions about the details of the Liberals' carbon tax plan and we have yet to receive any

real response. We hope that we are able to get more information and insight throughout this Sitting.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we eagerly await the budget to see what details are provided.

Thank you.

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and I am very honoured to be here speaking to this House today. It has been quite a journey to get here.

The purpose of a throne speech is to set the tone for the 34th Legislative Assembly. Let me repeat that: The purpose of the throne speech is to set the tone of the 34th Legislative Assembly, not the details. It is the task of this government to work with all Yukoners to improve government-to-government relations, have reconciliation, move forward, and forge new and meaningful working relationships with all levels of government.

Our common goal should be to improve the opportunities of Yukoners to create a healthy environment and positive working relationships that encourage the opportunities for all of us to have a good education, a sustainable environment and happy, healthy Yukoners.

An important part of this government's mandate will be to build new relationships with our First Nation partners for the benefit of everyone, be it in education, health, mining, environment opportunities that can be shared among Yukoners. This is an important point to note because my colleagues around me — in the last six months when the opposition has said we have been doing nothing — have been working hard to put these types of priorities to the forefront in their mandate letters, in the way they're dealing with the Government of Yukon and its employees.

The throne speech has set the tone of ongoing cooperation and new partnerships by the Liberal government to the betterment of us all.

For those of you who don't know, my name is Ted Adel and I am the MLA for Copperbelt North.

I would like to take a few minutes right now to thank the people who worked so hard on my campaign to get me into the House today. Where do I begin? With the love and support of my wife Barbara, this journey began in 2011 when I ran my first campaign under the Liberal banner in beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, as my colleague likes to call it — and he is not wrong. We were complete rookies. We had no idea what the commitment is like to run a campaign. Many miles, many handshakes and many cups of coffee later — the odd washroom break — we learned what it's like to come in a distinct and distant third, but we learned.

Fast-forward to May 2016. I sought the support of my family to campaign once again because I truly believed that the right group of people could move the Yukon forward, and that was our Liberal team. We took what we learned in 2011 and put together a campaign team led by my wife Barbara and my campaign manager, Rose Sellars. It was a big ask. Our families put their lives on hold from May 1 until November 7.

We knocked on 553 doors, sometimes two or three times, so we could listen to the constituents tell us what they felt needed to change in government today.

In August, Rose and Tim Sellars came on board and really helped kick our campaign into high gear. We navigated our way through a three-way contested nomination. With that, we brought 260 new members to the Yukon Liberal Party and we were successful on our first ballot at the nomination meeting. It's the first time we've ever had a three-way contest, and it's good for government and it's good for democracy to see that many people who were interested. That was step one. The next step was the door-to-door campaign where my two sons and volunteers took our Liberal message to numerous constituents criss-crossing the streets.

My worthy opponents — Pat McInroy, running for the Yukon Party, and Andre Bourcier, running for the NDP — both ran strong and respectful campaigns, for which I would like to thank them now. It was encouraging to see that many people working that hard for Yukon constituents. I would like to say that on November 7, we prevailed by 37 votes. No one said it was going to be easy, but it was certainly worth it.

The pillars of our throne speech were four. Healthy, happy people — we are committed to programs to support Yukoners from infants to elders.

Our government believes that Yukon students deserve a high-quality education and better mental health strategies. New money has been negotiated for home care and mental health initiatives in our first month in office. Whistle Bend is online to be completed in 2018.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls begins its national hearings here in Whitehorse next month. What could be more important right now, given the state of what has been happening in the Yukon and the good work that our ministers have been doing to move this forward?

Healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities — we will make strategic investments in health. Whether it's in Carmacks, Mayo, Teslin or other communities — they all matter to this government. So does clean water. I come from a little town called Walkerton, Ontario. Water is always foremost in my mind.

Climate change — our carbon tax, our policies, our working with the federal government to develop something that is relevant and helps all Yukoners.

Better energy sustainability and reliability, better connectivity to the Internet and the rest of the world — so that we have redundancy so we can continue moving forward, as we have, through business education with that connectivity. We live in an environment that promotes lifestyles and choices just outside of our doorstep. We should never lose sight of that and never stop working to keep that.

Strong government-to-government relationships — reconciliation with First Nations is built with mutual understanding and respect. Good governance and constructive partnerships benefit all Yukoners. There is a strength in a united voice. We can be an example for all of Canada. It will involve hard work and sometimes difficult conversations but,

as for Jim Smith forging the way before us, it will certainly be worth it. We are here to build a bright future for your children and grandchildren, my children and grandchildren, and all Yukoners.

Good jobs for diverse and growing economy — above all, Yukoners want and need to work at good, sustainable jobs. We will seek to work with education to align training programs that make sense for our market demands. We will encourage business partnerships with local companies. We believe the economy and the environment go hand in hand. They cannot be mutually exclusive. Diversity in our economy is paramount to our success and we will endeavour to support all sectors of our economy.

I ran because I felt the Yukon is in need of strong, experienced leadership that all of my colleagues bring to this Liberal team. During my tenure, it's important to me to help make the Yukon an even better place to live.

In 1992, I embarked on a journey. I was a jaded Ontarian who had finished careers in Ontario, sold my businesses and was looking for a new opportunity. The gentleman who owned the small Canadian Tire store in our town was coming to the Yukon and I asked him if he needed some help. Four weeks later, here I was, with family in tow — three teenagers grumbling all the way from the centre of the universe to the backwoods of Canada — or so they thought.

Over the years, as they grew and started their own families and moved away, all I hear from my three older children is, "Gee, dad, I wish we could come back." There is nothing like this place. Let's celebrate that.

Subsequent to that, in 1996, I met my wife-to-be Barbara. We had two more sons who are just working through their graduating years — who were born and raised here, who would love nothing better than if I gave them a jackknife, a tarp and some matches and kicked them out the door. They would spend all their time in the mountains if they could. They are going to be the new stewards of the Yukon. These are the people for whom we are preserving this. These are the people for whom we are making this better. This is something we cannot lose sight of because there is nothing in all my world travels I have seen that compares to this.

When I came here, I stayed with Canadian Tire for awhile. Then I moved on to become a postman, through which I got to see the entire City of Whitehorse — some good, some bad. It was a lot of fun. From there, I've gone on to do work with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. I have done a lot of volunteer work. Like my colleague to my left, I was also a Sourdough Sam — though a few years before him — and that was back in the days when Mr. Gallina will know we did 10 days of straight-on performances. So is that an experience that has helped me with the Legislature — this type of performing? Perhaps. It's fun.

From there, I've come to understand that service is something I've done all my life. I am a life member of the Kinsmen Club of Canada, which is the highest honour for service work that they can bestow on a member. I am committed to moving forward with my constituents and it is

paramount to me and people who know me that if you ask me to do something, I am happy to help.

In my riding from Canyon Crescent to Lazulite, to North Star, to Falcon, the riding of Copperbelt North encompasses rural and municipal constituents. My constituents live, breathe, work and play within the City of Whitehorse's boundaries. It's important to me that I represent Copperbelt North constituents on challenges that bridge municipal and territorial governments' responsibilities and priorities. In light of these priorities, I've participated in the recent town hall meetings held by the City of Whitehorse, and the École Émilie Tremblay and Golden Horn schools. I listened as my constituents spoke passionately about the concerns they have in and around their neighbourhoods, such as safe trails, quiet enjoyment, safety, speeding, highways, local improvement costs, snow runoff, and how resolutions can be arrived at in a mutually beneficial and amicable way, based on evidence-based decisions.

A lot of what a private member does within the government happens behind the scenes. As co-chair of the CDF committee since we formed the government, we have earmarked over \$1 million toward important territory-wide community initiatives, which include: the church in Mayo, Wolf Creek ice rink, a Drift Drive park, and a whole bunch of other community improvements. I'm enjoying the aspect of being a private member because our work impacts all Yukon communities and we have identified that all communities matter.

As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I will be helping to hold the government accountable to the recommendations of the Auditor General of Canada's reports and findings as part of our transparency and commitment to good governance on behalf of all Yukoners.

Private members will also be a large part of special commissions struck by this government to anticipate and look at specific and general issues. We may not be in the media often, but we are consistently working on Yukoners' behalf.

First and foremost, I am here for my constituents and I would like to hear from them, not just when something becomes a problem, but when you need to have a chat over a coffee about what we can do to make the Yukon better: good jobs, a sustainable environment, a modern Yukon — all communities matter — and healthier and happier lives. These four priorities define who we are as a government and will guide our decision-making moving forward. I am honoured to be representing you, and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to do so.

Ms. Hanson: I should have clarified at House Leaders this morning exactly what the Official Opposition's approach was going to be this afternoon. I was thinking that we were going to be hearing from all of the Official Opposition this afternoon, so I have been busy scribbling away here. You are going to hear some scribbled notes, which is probably not — well, the Premier is familiar with that approach of mine, so here we go.

It really is an honour to stand in this House at the beginning of the Second Session of the 34th Yukon Legislative Assembly as the elected representative for the people of Whitehorse Centre. Some days it seems like an awfully long time since I first stood here after the December 2010 by-election. At the outset, I offer my sincere gratitude to the citizens of Whitehorse Centre for again putting their trust in me to bring their voices into this Legislative Assembly. Whitehorse Centre is a diverse and thriving community — a community with many challenges. There are many unique aspects to Whitehorse Centre. For one, Whitehorse Centre is probably the one riding in the whole territory that nearly every Yukoner has been to. There are probably not very many Yukoners who have not been in downtown Whitehorse or in some part of it. Whether you are coming in from the communities for a medical appointment or to participate in events like Adäka, Rendezvous or events at the Old Fire Hall or the now-burgeoning focal point on the waterfront, the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, Whitehorse Centre is a hub. Indeed, many people from all over Whitehorse and surrounding communities work downtown or will soon visit Arts in the Park or the farmers market as the warm weather returns.

Whitehorse Centre is also a starting point for many tourists' Yukon journey. Above all, Whitehorse Centre is a unique amalgam of all that is Yukon. I am honoured to represent First Nation people and recent immigrants from all corners of the world, elders and seniors, young families and students, lifelong Yukoners and people who are just putting down roots in our territory. The cultural and linguistic diversity of Whitehorse Centre includes AFY, celebrating their 35th anniversary this year, and the multi-cultural centre offering settlement services to new immigrants.

Of course Whitehorse Centre is also home to many Yukon businesses from the Itsy-Bitsy Yarn Shop to big box stores. Change is a fact of life for Whitehorse Centre. From being the historic home of Yukon's first peoples along the waterfront to the settlers enticed north by gold, Whitehorse has evolved over the years, and with that change come many challenges.

Whitehorse Centre is home to both cosmopolitan new condo developments and squalid slum apartments. There are hipster hangouts and homeless hideouts. There are people struggling with loneliness, mental illness and/or substance abuse. There is joy and despair, and this is who we are, Mr. Speaker. So you can understand why I'm both proud and humbled to have been re-elected to serve this eclectic riding that represents today's Yukon in so many ways. I will do my very best to bring these diverse perspectives in what unites us to the forefront in this Legislature.

Speaking of what unites us, I do want to start by acknowledging and encouraging a change of tone in the throne speech delivered last week. It was good to hear the Liberal government incorporate it into their statement of commitment because the throne speech, along with their campaign promises set out in their election platform, does form a commitment made to all Yukoners, a commitment to

which we, on the opposition benches will hold this government to account. The language of collaboration, collaborative people-focused care, recognition of the important of both the environment and the economy, and the language of reconciliation was good to hear. As the Speech from the Throne said — and I quote: “... it’s not just what it does that’s important. It’s equally important how it does it.”

So after 14 years of a government that lived by a father-knows-best principle, Yukoners are hopeful for government that will do more than talk a good story. I’ll come back to this in a moment.

The legislative agenda for this Sitting of this Legislature, while a bit on the thin end, contains important measures that the Yukon NDP caucus advocated for a long time and supports. Making National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday is a symbolic positive step to take toward reconciliation. It will be an opportunity for all Yukoners to celebrate and learn about the rich contributions, past and present, of First Nation cultures to our territory. It’s a holiday that all Yukoners deserve to participate in. It’s not a holiday for First Nations; it’s a holiday for all Yukoners.

I have to salute the work of a former colleague of mine to bring this issue forward in the Legislature. The former NDP MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes worked tirelessly on this, from collecting petition signatures to reaching out to First Nation leaders, business owners and others in support of this initiative.

As I mentioned earlier, though, we must keep in mind that, while important, a measure like this is symbolic in nature and it is no substitute for concrete action on fulfilling the other 93 calls to action contained in the truth and reconciliation report. There are many vitally important initiatives left on the “too hard” pile by the previous government that we must, as legislators, take on if we are serious about reconciliation — examples that stem directly from the TRC, including living up to commitments made in treaties.

For too long, government has talked around the issues of addressing modern land use and resource development, despite the fact that in both the Yukon final agreements and the devolution transfer agreement there is an obligation to develop modern successor mining legislation. The promise of unbounded economic development in the Yukon is an illusion until and unless the Yukon government makes it a priority to work in a principled manner with Yukon First Nation governments, the Government of Canada, industry and citizens to get regional land use planning going with a respectful, effective process and timelines to provide the certainty needed for sustainable economic development in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, another welcome legislative change signalled by this government in its throne speech is the amendment to the *Human Rights Act* and *Vital Statistics Act* to eliminate discrimination against trans-identified people. This is again a change that was championed in this Legislature by a former colleague of ours, this time the former NDP MLA for Copperbelt South. I want to thank her for her work on this.

But as she would no doubt do, I think we all must give credit for this change to the advocates, to the citizens who have made this issue a priority for our community. I’m thinking of Chase Blodgett and everyone at All Genders Yukon. I’m thinking of trans-identified people who have for years had to patiently wait, sometimes for the bureaucracy, sometimes for the political will, to see their rights enshrined in our laws. Yukon will be a better place for their work and we owe them our gratitude. It’s time Yukon finally catches up with the rest of the country in taking this positive step. Hopefully someday soon Yukon will again be at the front of the pack when it comes to human rights instead of playing catch-up.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are, in my view, several caveats in terms of my endorsement or the positive response to the throne speech we heard last week. An example is the question of whether those words, those stated intentions, will materialize. As I mentioned earlier, we do welcome the change in tone. We appreciate the symbolic gestures made by this government on issues from collaborative care to building a more resilient economy. But if we have learned anything from the experience of the federal Liberal government, it is that a change in language does not necessarily mean a change in action.

We hope — and I think all Yukoners hope — that this government will take a different approach than that being followed by its federal counterpart when it comes to actually delivering change — change that Yukoners need and want — because we can talk about patient-centred collaborative care all we want, but if patients are still being bumped from wait-list to wait-list and the silos in our system are not dismantled, we will have failed. We can talk all we want about a resilient economy that protects our environment but, if we keep creating more Faros or more Mount Nansen mines, we will have failed.

I encourage this government to be bold, not just in words but in actions, so that Yukoners over the next months and years see a real difference in their day-to-day life, because ultimately that is what every government should be about — making life better for the people we represent.

Another reservation that I have about this throne speech is what was not said in it. The first thing that comes to mind is the issue of inequality. Anyone who has ever volunteered at the food bank or at the soup kitchen knows that there are many people in this territory struggling to make ends meet. Despite the abundant resources we have and the generous transfers Yukon gets from Ottawa, we have yet to find a way to ensure that no one is left behind in Yukon, that no kid goes to school on an empty stomach.

Yukoners are still struggling with the real and serious issue of the shortage of affordable housing. I would encourage all members of this House to take a moment and get today’s paper. We are too early in the Sitting to have the members opposite sitting there reading the newspapers, but we have seen it in the past; hopefully, that may not happen. Take a moment, grab today’s paper and go through the apartment or house rental classifieds. It’s a fairly short list, Mr. Speaker.

Now imagine having to find a place on Yukon's minimum wage — \$11.32 an hour. Even someone making \$15 per hour would struggle to find a place to live that won't take up 50 percent or more of their income. That is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

People will tell me that there are very few adults trying to live on minimum wage. Tell that to my constituents in downtown Whitehorse — there are — who are working full-time. This is how we end up with people who have a full-time job, who still need to go to the food bank every week. This is how we end up having kids go to school hungry — because their parents have to make the impossible choice of heating their home, getting nutritious food or paying for school supplies. We can do better and we must do better.

Although the throne speech, in terms of tone, was good and it was light, it was also sometimes light in content. Yukoners are looking for a clear vision of how the new light and positive language will be reflected in that positive change for ordinary Yukoners.

I mentioned a little bit about the notion of using the language of collaboration. Actually, there were seven uses of the word “collaboration” or “collaborative” throughout that brief speech. It was used to describe the health care model that the government aspires to. I remind the government that over 900 Yukoners took part in a comprehensive review of Yukon's health care system in 2008-09. That report and its companion, *Taking the Pulse*, set out a vision for health care endorsed by Yukoners that focused on collaborative primary care, midwifery and community-based care. While it is good and important to hear that the government is willing to spend the new federal monies on home care and mental health, what is missing is a commitment to how that money will be spent. Yukoners have clearly said before what kind of health care we need in this territory and how it should be delivered — community-based health care. Think of the money we could have saved if over the last 10 years we had implemented any of the recommendations of that territory-wide consultation — hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars.

It's good to hear that they are willing to spend the new federal monies on home care and mental health, but I'm looking for the commitments on how it is going to be spent. Again, it's what the government itself said in its speech. It's how we do it. Will the government commit to a timeline that would see expansion of home care to include evenings and weekends, and strengthen the provision of home care in rural communities within the next year?

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that these are needs that are not only necessary, but vital to reducing demands on our acute care system. We look forward to the details of when and how community care clinics will be established in Yukon, how they will be comprised, and who will be part of those clinics.

An aspect that is missing from the Speech from the Throne in terms of building a healthy and happy people — a really important piece of our public health care system — is any mention of dental care. We have had serious changes and challenges within the school system for dental care and its delivery. Dental care was originally part of the vision of

medicare in Canada because it's seen as a vital piece of the preventive health care model. Of course, when medical doctors went on strike in Saskatchewan, they basically scared the whatever out of various governments from going beyond the single-insurer system. So the doctors were happy they got the insurance scheme, but governments were scared off from moving to the next component, which included dental care. But Mr. Speaker, dental care is an absolutely vital piece of prevention and preventive health element in terms of diabetes and heart disease. We look for the kind of creative ideas and responses from the government on this.

Nowhere in this Speech from the Throne in terms of healthy and happy Yukoners do we see any indication of how this new Yukon government will give effect to addressing the real issue of poverty reduction. Again, Yukoners — over 70 different NGOs, non-government organizations and many, many citizens — in the course of 2009-10 participated in discussions around a poverty reduction strategy for Yukon. There is no legislative framework for that in the Yukon. There is no way of measuring whether or not we're succeeding in any of the efforts that we take to reduce poverty in this territory, unlike other provinces. If we're going to say we're going to do something to make life better for people, we should have some measuring stick to say we've done it or we've moved along that stick. Mr. Speaker, without effective planning, we can't tell whether or not we're doing anything more than saying the good words.

Mr. Speaker, we're pleased to see in the Speech from the Throne that this government is willing to invest more in quality childcare. The question will be how much and by when. Perhaps the minister will give positive consideration to the creation of a ministerial taskforce, including all relevant stakeholders in the first year of her mandate. It's not in the mandate letter to review childcare needs — to address what I have become increasingly concerned about, which is the real and serious deficiencies in our legislation that was, at the time — in 1990 — leading the way but now has fallen back — our childcare legislation. It concerns me on a personal level, representing Whitehorse Centre, when I see — almost daily it feels like, but that's an exaggeration — the increase in the number of childcare facilities that are repurposed facilities. When I look across the street, when I look down beside the 202, when I look at the old Sears building and I see children whose parents need to place them in childcare because all of us — not all of us, but many of us in this room — have had the experience that when you're working, you need childcare for your child. You hope that childcare will be quality childcare. You hope your child will have exposure every day to a safe play area and to fresh air. Mr. Speaker, we are denying that to many, many children in this territory.

If you look at the regulations that date back to 1990, you can walk four blocks and that is called adequate access to play areas for kids. Try that at 40 below with a two-year-old or an 18-month-old. There is a need to look at the importance of making childcare affordable and accessible in our territory, to look at what are the modern, 21st century requirements for accreditation of childcare workers, to look at what kind of

commitments we as a community are willing to make to build safe, quality childcare services and facilities. Why aren't we investing in childcare facilities as we do in educational facilities? We talk about EDI — the early development index — and how Yukon is failing and falling back and it's not just in rural communities. We have serious issues in this town. That will take rethinking some of our approaches about how we have done it in the past, but I am hopeful that in this government's commitment to healthy families, it will be taken into consideration.

It is good to see that this is a government that is open to the idea of Housing First. I would have hoped that by 2017 we would be beyond exploring the idea of Housing First. It is time to commit to ending homelessness through the evidence-based and proven Housing First approach to homelessness and housing insecurity.

On housing more generally, the language in the Speech from the Throne is fairly general and there is no mention in the Speech from the Throne or in the mandate letters of any sort of common-sense approaches to protect Yukoners, for example, who make the most important and probably the most significant financial investment of their lives, which is to buy a new home, and we continue not to see any protection for them by being, again, one of the few jurisdictions in Canada without a home warranty program so that new home purchasers and people who have done renovations have protection to address building deficiencies after making that significant investment.

I know my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King will raise this, but I have to say it also because it affects people who I am dealing with right now in casework issues: the absence of any recognition of the need to recognize — and this is an absence in both the Speech from the Throne and in mandate letters — the differences between mobile-homeowners and renters and the need to protect mobile-homeowners by putting a cap on pad rental. Here is an opportunity to correct, to indicate or to signal that this government hears the essential justice of correcting the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* — an oversight by the previous government that fails to provide security of tenure so that we can move away from being one of the few jurisdictions to allow evictions without cause.

As much that, as I said, we appreciate the improvement in tone, it can't be at the expense of expectations that tone replaces substance. We were shocked not to see any specific reference to how the efforts of the supported independent living facility — Vimy — would be addressed specifically. This is a community group of seniors, and my goodness, some of them are even older than I am, and they are getting there, and they're wondering if they are going to be able to live in this facility that they have worked so hard for so many years on.

Building a healthy, happy community means an inclusive approach. It's not just using the word "inclusive". In my view, it is disappointing to see the lack of inclusion of any specific language about how this government will work with Yukoners living with disabilities.

Again, as I was scribbling away this afternoon, I looked at the healthy and happy people part, and I couldn't see that. I stand to be corrected, I'm sure, by members opposite if that's an oversight, but I didn't see that. I would expect, at minimum, a review of relevant government programs and services with the objective of accommodating Yukoners who are living with disabilities, and accommodating their diverse needs and abilities.

Mr. Speaker, it can go from the complex to the simple. It has been suggested — and we have suggested it and will continue to suggest it — that the Yukon look at how we live up to the UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* to ensure that we are living up to that convention. Being a subnational government of the federal government that signed on to this convention, we have obligations there. To the simple one: finding a new location to provide community-based living for the current tenants of the Takhini Haven group home.

My colleague, the former MLA for Riverdale South, pointed out time and time again how offensive it was to have Yukoners living with disabilities who have committed no crime but are housed in a former women's jail, on the jail grounds. It took her five years to get the previous government to acknowledge that it was wrong to keep the barbed-wire fence around it. The barbed-wire fence is gone but it is still a jail. I can tell you that there are people who you see every day, who you interact with, who resent deeply that they are in that facility.

That's more than tone; that's action — but it gives effect to that kind of respect that is spoken to in the Speech from the Throne. The Speech from the Throne speaks of a balanced approach to justice. The good thing is that this government is coming in when there are lots of really concrete starting points and concrete recommendations that will help it make real improvements for the lives of Yukoners. They can start by reviewing the Auditor General's report on correctional services, keeping in mind that all of the recommendations made by the Auditor General were agreed to by the senior officials of the departments responsible, so there should be no excuse, several years in, for those changes having not been implemented. They are accountable to us as legislators to follow through on what they did in response to the recommendations that were made.

One concrete step would be to ensure that never again will the so-called "Mandela provisions" be violated — that this government will live up to respecting individuals by banning isolation in the jail so that we don't create situations where individuals spend 15 days, 180 days or 300 days in isolation. The UN says 15 days is torture. We need accountability in terms of how many people have been in isolation.

The Speech from the Throne has one delightful, really loaded line that, if truly given effect, will have a significant impact on the future in this territory and we look forward to working with the government on it — "a larger review of Yukon laws, policies and practices" — because I think, Mr. Speaker, there are real opportunities. I had mentioned

earlier the changes are — there are some changes — let me step back for a second.

The government announced the long-awaited changes to the laws and regulations as they affect the pharmaceutical profession, and I have a list of about two or three pages of other professions whose legislative base — or lack thereof — needs to be updated. That's just one area in terms of that kind of professional regulatory side. Mr. Speaker, there is so much positive and constructive work that can be done when Yukon does this larger review of its laws, policies and practices with respect to ensuring that what we do as government is both in line with *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and how that's consistent with what we've negotiated in our Yukon land claims agreements, that what laws that we have in place are consistent with what we have in our Yukon final land claims agreements. There are so many of them.

We're pleased to see the emphasis — or the reference anyway — on renewable resources and joining this global transition from fossil fuels. Again, there are so many aspects that we would hope to see fleshed out, both as what we see in the coming budget speech and over the course of the next few weeks, months and couple years.

One of the things that we put forward as an idea and we will be bringing forward again, as the Leader of the Official Opposition said, is offering positive ideas. We have spent a lot of time and energy in this territory on geological survey. We think it's time to do a renewable energy resource survey. If we're going to really get serious about our renewable energy, then let's map where those resources are. With our federal counterparts, let's spend the money to find out where they are so we can take advantage of them.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other aspects that, over the course of the next few months, we will be spending time together on. In this Legislative Assembly we'll have an opportunity to come back to a number of elements that I have not focused on with respect to where we think we could put some meat on some of the broad language that's contained in this Speech from the Throne, and we hope that the suggestions that we make from this opposition bench will be received in the same positive vein with which they are offered.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to begin, Mr. Speaker, by referencing the tribute to Jim Smith and acknowledging the Member for Porter Creek North when she was giving her lovely tribute to past Commissioner Smith. She quoted him as referring to the beautiful land of Yukon. That's where I would like to start.

I think that the Yukon is beautiful. Mountains, forests, the vastness of the river-carved landscape, the spring sky — all parts of the Yukon from the beautiful Southern Lakes up to the beautiful North Slope are exceptional and special to us, the people who plant our roots here in this land. As Members of the Legislative Assembly, each of us, I am sure, is extremely proud to represent a part of the Yukon. Each of us has a

beautiful riding, and I have the privilege to represent beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I say that here today not to try to make it any sort of competition with any other riding — just because I am very proud to be elected to represent a place that I call home and believe so much in.

It is very humbling to be elected to this Legislature to represent Yukoners and it is a responsibility that I consider to be a privilege. I intend to work very hard to represent all of the citizens of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes to make lives better for all Yukoners. As a young person, my family moved around a lot. I lived in seven of the provinces, and when I came north — came to the Yukon — I met my lovely wife Susan and now we make our home here. Well, she had already made her home here. I was in trouble with several of the erstwhile suitors. She and I feel lucky to be able to live in beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. Our living room window overlooks Marsh Lake and the mountains beyond. I was there just this morning working on this very speech. I'm reminded every day of the inspiration that this spectacular place provides to all of us. I'm happy to be here with all of you.

I would like to begin, Mr. Speaker, by thanking two people from my riding in particular — Mr. Rob Schneider and Mr. Kevin Barr. Like me, they also put their names forward to represent Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. Both ran respectful and sincere campaigns. Both are dedicated community volunteers. I would like to thank Mr. Barr as well for his five dedicated years of service here in this House.

I would also like to thank all of the citizens of the four communities that make up beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. During our election campaign, there are always times when, as candidates, we feel under stress, but as we worked in the riding, what I found especially memorable was to get to hear from Yukoners and to hear their points of view and to have them engage in our democracy.

I think that whenever that happens — whenever our citizens are engaged — then we strengthen our democracy, regardless of whatever political stripe we are talking about. I really appreciated the citizens of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. They came out to several town hall meetings or all-candidate forums. It was great to go door-to-door and to hear them as they spoke to us in those forums.

I would also like to thank my colleagues here in caucus. We have had quite a year. We ran a strong campaign, working hard to represent Yukoners. We spent a lot of time together since last fall — first during the campaign and, since December, in government. While I respect that the Leader of the Official Opposition has expressed his concern that we haven't been doing work, I would actually like to acknowledge, from my colleagues, the incredible amount of work that everybody has been putting in and also the level of respect that I have found from working with everybody. You don't always know where you're going to land, and it is sincerely an honour to get to work alongside all of you.

Finally, I would also like to thank all the members of this House. Congratulations to everyone who was elected to serve their beautiful ridings. It is a privilege and distinction to stand

among this group. I know we are all here in our sincere desire to serve the Yukon — this place that we all love to live.

As Members of the Legislative Assembly, we all have a duty to work to make the Yukon better as a whole — to echo what the Leader of the Third Party just said — and to represent our constituents. Our role is to serve the people of the Yukon, to work together respectfully, in and for the best interests of all Yukoners.

I would like to relate a small story, Mr. Speaker. A couple of weeks ago, I visited a grade 4 class. We were on one of the trips that we had been taking to the communities and we did a tour with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health and Social Services to the Robert Service School. A grade 4 class asked me to come in and speak with them because they were studying civics. They asked if I could come and give them a few words about government. I did — and by the way, I also was given some of those lovely Yukon pins. At that time, my colleagues in my offices hadn't mentioned how precious those pins are and how few of them we get because that class is now all sporting those pins.

We had a conversation in that class; I was talking about the various orders of government and what we all do in those various orders. Toward the end, I asked them a question. I was talking about my role as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and as a minister. I asked them the question: Who do you think is my boss? Several of them shouted out "Premier Silver", which is very nice because he is also their MLA. That wasn't the answer that I was sort of trying to track down. I said to them, "Sure, he's my boss, but who's our boss? Who's the boss of the Premier and me?" There were several suggestions put forward. In the end, I said to them — they were a little surprised when I said to them that they were my boss.

No matter what our political stripe or what riding we live in, our job is to represent all people of the Yukon. Simply put, we work in a representative democracy, and this is a responsibility that I think we all take very seriously. I would like to acknowledge that I am speaking to you today — and we are all speaking today — on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. I was schooled on that pronunciation just last week. The member opposite and I were encouraged to pronounce it with the emphasis on the second syllable for the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

My riding of beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes includes the traditional territory of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. One of the first priorities of our new government has been to improve government-to-government relationships to create a modern Yukon that is diverse and inclusive. I will speak a little bit more about that in a moment, but I would like to acknowledge that it has been a pleasure to get to speak with counterparts in other orders of government. Just this last week, I had yet another part — a good visit with Chief Carvill of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. We are working together as respectful orders of government. That does not mean we will always agree, but it does mean that we will take the time to work together to try to reach a shared understanding.

Yukon First Nations are the foundation of this territory. Their story is the first story. Celebrating First Nation knowledge, language and culture is central to modern Yukon. It is part of our collective and shared history. For this reason, I am excited that I had the honour today to introduce our first bill to this House. I brought forward, as we all know, legislation to establish National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday here in the Yukon. I would like to acknowledge that it was my predecessor, Mr. Kevin Barr, MLA for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, who first presented the petition to establish National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday in the territory. I would also like to acknowledge that it was the Minister of Community Services who brought forward a motion here in this House that began the work to investigate National Aboriginal Day. I will let everybody know that today, as this legislation was tabled, I am given to understand that we have put the information up on the website about the work that was conducted to carry out a survey of Yukoners to check in with them on their opinions around National Aboriginal Day, which I will present later when we are debating the bill. I will let you know now that there is very strong support for National Aboriginal Day across Yukon and 88 percent of Yukoners expressed their support for it. I am very excited about that.

This holiday will be an important way that we can all come together as a community to commemorate First Nation history and celebrate First Nation culture. Marking National Aboriginal Day will enhance Yukon society as a whole. Again, I acknowledge the speech of the Leader of the Third Party who pointed out that this is for all Yukoners to celebrate.

As members of the Legislative Assembly, we already have big roles to serve and represent the citizens of our beautiful ridings. From the government side of the House, if we are also invited to join the Cabinet, the opportunity to help shape the future of the Yukon and make lives better for Yukoners expands further. When the Premier chooses Cabinet, lots of public servants wonder who they are going to get as a minister. It has an impact on the work that they do, day to day. Interestingly, for me, if you are asked to join Cabinet, you have the very same feeling as public servants. Who am I going to get to work with? How will this choice impact my day-to-day contribution? How will it influence the types of challenges that I face?

When the Premier invited me to join Cabinet, I was honoured to be offered a portfolio and especially excited to be asked to be Minister of Community Services. This means I get to work with communities across the territory on a wide range of issues, opportunities and projects and, as it turns out, I get to work with an extremely capable and motivated group of public servants in the department and I would like to acknowledge them. This territory is built on our communities from Watson Lake to Beaver Creek, from Tagish to Old Crow, from Whitehorse to West Dawson.

I would like to say that one of the first tasks that we carried out after we were sworn in was to make a trip with my colleagues, the Minister of Health and Social Services and the

Minister of the Yukon Housing Corporation to Ross River. We went there and met with chief and council. We sat down with the community; we had a conversation. On our way, we discussed how we would try to work as one government — this notion that we would take a “whole community” approach to dealing with issues. This was where I started to build my sense of respect for my colleagues. We had that meeting. We sat down and had a very productive meeting with chief and council and it was the first of several trips that I have been able to make to communities.

From there, we went to the community of Faro and we sat down with mayor and council. We didn't have a lot of time, but they were very kind to meet with us. I alerted the Leader of the Official Opposition, who is also the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin, because in travelling to his community I wanted to give him a heads-up.

He joined us for a conversation with the mayor and council. It was very enjoyable and informative to be asked questions about the status of the Yukon's budget while sitting next to the Leader of the Official Opposition. It's great. I hope that we have that type of constructive working relationship throughout our tenure here.

Since then, I have been travelling all over the territory. I will note that on one of the days when one of the members opposite was talking about our work ethic and discussing it — asking about whether we were actually doing our jobs — I was in Beaver Creek in the riding of beautiful Kluane meeting with chief and council there and having great conversations with them. So it has been terrific. As I noted, my most recent — is it my most recent trip? My second-most recent trip has been up to Old Crow and to the City of Dawson — well, down to the City of Dawson, excuse me.

Twenty years ago, I moved to the Yukon and met my wife. One of our personal goals that she and I share has been to help make our communities vibrant. Like so many Yukoners, I have volunteered to help build our communities. I don't think this is just me; I think this is a common theme for all of us. For me though, from the Southern Lakes GranFondo to volunteering at music festivals, to one of my favourite events each year — and I encourage all MLAs to come out — the bridge-building competition — and thank you to the Minister of Education, who came and co-hosted that with me; I know the Official Opposition House Leader has been there several times and has had an enjoyable time — from running our community ski loppet; Rendezvous; volunteering with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition; spring litter cleanup — which comes next week, and I hope we can all get out there and do some work around the community — to volunteering to build my own local free store. It was not once, not twice, but three times that we built that free store after it burned down twice. All of it has been to make our Yukon communities active, vibrant and sustainable. Therefore, it is a deep reward to be offered the role of Minister of Community Services and I look forward to working with all Yukon communities. All of our communities matter.

The Department of Community Services is an incredibly diverse department. I affectionately refer to it as the “kitchen-sink department”, where I am happy to be a dishwasher.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you from across the way there.

Community Services promotes active living through sport and recreation initiatives like the Special Olympics. I will note — and many of us were there recently at the Special Olympics dinner — that it was a very touching evening. The most important thing in my mind, were the speeches from the athletes themselves — incredibly moving. I have a personal relationship with the Special Olympics. I have two autistic nephews and my sister, the mother of one of those nephews — the elder of the two — has volunteered for many, many years in the Special Olympics in British Columbia. Each time I go down to visit my family there, I get “volun-told” and happily participate in the Special Olympics. It was great to meet with Special Olympics here as the minister.

We also have Team Yukon heading this year to both the North American Indigenous Games — and I'll talk a little bit more about that in a moment, with Team 88 — and the Canada Summer Games. I'm excited to get to both of those.

As a department, we will promote wellness by regulating midwifery — enabling more childbirth options in our communities. Again, I acknowledge that the Leader of the Third Party was talking about midwifery, so I'm looking forward to bringing that forward again with my colleague the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Community Services builds sustainability and jobs by investing in essential infrastructure across the territory. We promote safety by training EMS and firefighters to deal with structural fires and to respond to our wildfires.

Just late last week the Premier, the Minister of Economic Development and I attended a First Nation wildfire training session to their graduation and it was really quite an exciting time to be in there with those young folks. I applaud them for seeking work that helps to keep us safe. It is such a big deal and I appreciate it.

We're working with the First Nation development corporations to look for ways in which to increase that involvement of our government-to-government partners. As a dishwasher in the kitchen sink department, we are working to make lives better for all Yukoners.

The core of the Department of Community Services is about providing public services to the Yukon from water and recycling to libraries, mobile homes and electrical inspections.

For a moment, I would just like to add a few comments on mobile homes because, again, it was mentioned in the speech opposite. I appreciate that there are other notions about how we should dig down into the legislation and have a look at how it is working. At this moment, what I did as I came in as Minister of Community Services — I had a look to see where mobile homes were located across the territory and I would like to acknowledge and thank several members from the House — the Member for Copperbelt North, the Member for Porter Creek North and the Member for Takhini-Kopper

King. They all have mobile home parks in their ridings and they have been sitting down and working together on shared issues that their constituents have, and I appreciate that endeavour. I look forward to working with them on that issue.

From all of these topics in the core of the Department of Community Services, we work also in partnership with municipalities, First Nations and unincorporated communities to ensure that everyone has access to the services that enable them to thrive.

I would also like to note that partnership is a key element to success. Services are not always provided by government. In order for the whole territory to flourish, we need to work in partnership with other orders of government and also with the private sector, with societies and with our volunteers. Our social, political and economic fabric is richer when we all work together to enhance the place that we live, making lives better for Yukoners.

My portfolio in this Cabinet is rounded out by French Language Services Directorate, the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Lottery Commission. I note that there are six members opposite who are critics of all of these various departments and I look forward to working with you all.

For the members in the House, I will endeavour from time to time to speak in French, which I'm about to do — and full-heads-up — but I'm also going to repeat all of those words in English, but not to worry. I will do my best.

C'est avec plaisir et humilité que j'ai recommencé à étudier et à améliorer mon français. J'aime beaucoup mon cours de langue hebdomadaire, et j'ai eu l'occasion de mettre mes leçons en pratique lors de plusieurs activités publiques.

It has been fun and humbling to begin to improve my French again. I'm enjoying my weekly French classes and have had several opportunities to practise my French at public events.

Je crois fermement à l'importance des langues — lorsque nous améliorons notre maîtrise de l'une d'entre elles, nous renforçons toutes les langues parlées au Yukon. Appuyer la prestation de services en français, et souligner l'importance de la langue et de la culture françaises au Yukon, veut aussi dire appuyer la diversité des langues de notre territoire. Cette diversité est une véritable force.

I strongly believe in the value of language. I know that when we strengthen one, we strengthen all Yukon languages. Supporting service delivery in French and celebrating the French language and culture in Yukon translates to supporting diversity of all languages in our territory. There is strength in our diversity.

À titre de ministre responsable de la Direction des services en français, l'une de mes tâches, en collaboration avec la communauté francophone, est de mettre au point des façons pratiques d'accroître l'offre de services en français, tout particulièrement en ce qui a trait aux soins de santé primaires, aux soins d'urgence et à la santé mentale. Je tiens à saluer la communauté franco-yukonnaise, et tout particulièrement l'AFY, pour la générosité dont ils font preuve en m'appuyant dans ce rôle.

As Minister responsible for French Language Services, I am tasked with working with the francophone community to develop practical solutions to providing more services in French, with a particular focus on primary, emergency, and mental health. I would like to acknowledge the franco-yukonnaise community, and especially AFY, which is celebrating its 35th anniversary right now, for being generous with their support for this role.

Pour notre gouvernement, il est important que les francophones aient accès à des soins de santé dans leur langue maternelle. Je travaille en étroite collaboration avec le gouvernement du Canada et avec nos partenaires locaux pour mettre au point des solutions qui amélioreront l'offre de services en français. Nous ferons certainement de grands progrès au cours des prochaines années.

It is important to this government that francophones have the opportunity to access health care in their primary language. I have been working closely with the Government of Canada and with our local partners to develop solutions to enhancing French language service delivery. We are poised to make great strides in the years to come.

Je suis également enthousiaste à l'idée de présider, cet été, des rencontres nationales avec les ministres responsables des services en français, et ce, au moment même où se dérouleront les célébrations du 150^e anniversaire de la Confédération. Monsieur le Président, certains Yukonnais seront peut-être surpris d'apprendre que le Yukon se classe au 3^e rang au pays en matière de bilinguisme, après le Québec et le Nouveau-Brunswick.

I am excited because this summer I will be chairing national meetings with the ministers of French Language just as we celebrate Canada's 150th. Mr. Speaker, I think it might surprise some Yukoners to learn that after Quebec and New Brunswick, the Yukon has the third-highest rate of French spoken in Canada.

Thank you everyone for your patience with my French.

As Minister responsible for the Liquor Corporation, I will work with partners and stakeholders to modernize the *Liquor Act*, to increase efficiencies and to provide for an appropriate balance between economic opportunities and social responsibility, and I get to support our amazing local producers.

I would like to acknowledge the Leader of the Official Opposition and his response to the Speech from the Throne — which, by the way, I think was given by the Commissioner and not by the Premier, but that's just a small point.

The previous government was working to help improve the service that the Liquor Corporation provides and I would like to thank them. I will continue to build on the work that they began. I have met with several licensees and local manufacturers, and we have some good ideas on how to continue to modernize and improve the Liquor Corporation and the work it does with businesses that make, sell or distribute liquor across the territory.

By the way, those national meetings that I'm going to be chairing this summer, Mr. Speaker, which I spoke about

earlier — I fully intend to showcase with pride our local Yukon wares.

For a moment, Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn to the enduring priorities that the Commissioner spoke about in his speech. I was excited to hear the Commissioner present this government's four main commitments in the Speech from the Throne. Each commitment will influence the work we do within government.

First, around people-centred wellness that will help Yukoners thrive — this is closely tied to communities. When people are actively engaged, when they have recreation opportunities in their communities and access to infrastructure that encourages them to walk or bike, then people and communities thrive. Government-to-government relations are a very important priority for all communities.

I have personally met with most First Nation chiefs and municipal councils to discuss our working relationships and how together we can achieve our shared objectives. As I mentioned earlier, the other day I was at the celebration for 88 days to the launch of the North American Indigenous Games, as an example. For those of you who don't know, the North American Indigenous Games will be held in Toronto this summer. I believe the opening date is the 16th of July. Eighty-eight days out, we had a celebration at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre to acknowledge that sport and recreation are an important pathway to reconciliation. In fact, the 88th action within the Truth and Reconciliation's call to actions are to support the North American Indigenous Games and so across this country, we celebrated 88 days out. This helps remind me of the importance of sport in reconciliation.

The third priority is that our government is also committed to creating good jobs and supporting a diverse economy in an environmentally responsible way. Building a vibrant economy and a healthy environment is smart for the long term. This will foster resilient communities for years to come. The Premier has mandated me to look at infrastructure investment, at waste diversion and predictable funding models for and with all communities.

Finally, as Minister of Community Services, our focus on healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities — well, this priority was practically written for the Minister of Community Services. As that minister, it is at the core of everything that we as a department do. I will personally work to ensure that the investments we make in our communities, including the significant support from the Government of Canada, will strategically enhance the health and sustainability of our communities, bringing local solutions to local problems. All of our communities matter.

Mr. Speaker, as an engineer and a scientist — with considerable experience in researching climate change across the north — the importance of sustainability is particularly urgent to me. I consider myself to be a sustainability advocate and will bring this perspective to my role in this government.

Sustainability comes in many forms. For example, as a northern resource economy, the Yukon has experienced a recurring boom-bust cycle since the days of the gold rush. As we continue to invest in mining, we need to be thinking for

the long term. We also need to diversify our economy. We need to protect our environment and consider how our communities will thrive and remain resilient for generations to come. When we invest in infrastructure, we need to be sure that our investments will last.

As an example, the Department of Community Services is working with all communities to deal with asset management. In this way, we hope to protect those infrastructure investments so that they last for the full life cycle — their intended life cycle. It has been concerning to all Yukoners when we see infrastructure that should have a much longer life reaching its end too soon because we haven't been thinking about how that infrastructure will deal with a changing climate — also how we ensure that we invest in it in a way so that it will last.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. While our global contribution to climate change and other environmental problems may be small, our potential impact for positive change can be big. As northern communities, we are on the front lines of our planet's changing climate. It is important that we are leaders in ensuring that we have a healthy environment, a strong society and resilient communities.

My science background also means that I am committed to objective, evidence-based decision-making. This science-based perspective is something that I think will contribute to the Legislative Assembly. By the way, evidence comes not just from science, but also from traditional knowledge. It is important that we collaborate with and hear from all communities across the Yukon and seek out their traditional and local knowledge. Science and traditional knowledge together will help us to make decisions that are better informed and longer lasting.

As we all work together in this Chamber to create a better Yukon, it is my sincere hope that we can work respectfully together. I commit myself to upholding clear and respectful dialogue and being open to hearing good ideas, no matter what side of the House they come from.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read from a text message I received this past weekend — and I quote: "Hi, John. Good luck in the House. Even after 14 years, there wasn't a day that I didn't experience the butterfly sensation in my stomach. Be prepared for anything and everything and then some. Above all, enjoy the experience. It is a privilege to serve the territory and one that bears tremendous responsibility. It is also an incredible opportunity to learn, help others and make our territory an even better place to live." That text was from past Deputy Premier, Elaine Taylor, and I thank her for her very kind words.

Our job is to serve the Yukon and to represent our beautiful ridings. My belief is that when we work respectfully and constructively together, we can build a stronger Yukon. We each have something to contribute and it is our duty and privilege to work in a way that seeks the best for all Yukoners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, it's a tremendous honour and a privilege to rise in the House today to speak as the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. I want to start by offering a big thank you and mahsi'cho to all those people who supported me during my campaign. A special mention is required for the following individuals, without whose help I would not be here today: my campaign manager, Nancy Hager; my official agent, Cathy Samson; fundraising coordinator, Crystal Trudeau; my communications and IT assistant, my beautiful and helpful daughter, Nicole Hutton; and my get-out-to-vote driver, Michelle Buyck. These were my people in Mayo.

In Pelly Crossing, I owe many thanks to Mark Staub, Betty Baptiste, and Dean Gill for their help.

To my wonderful volunteers in Carmacks, Cathy Kowalchuk and Norma Gull, as well as my youth contacts, Zach Cochrane and Christian Gull. Mahsi' cho to you all. I must also thank former chiefs Eric Fairclough and Eddie Skookum, and the current Chief, Russell Blackjack, who all helped me with my campaign in Carmacks.

As you may be aware, the Mayo-Tatchun riding is the largest and one of the most beautiful in the territory. There is no competition. There are five separate, distinct and unique communities that make up Mayo-Tatchun. I would like to take this opportunity to share with all of you some of the history of each of these wonderful places.

Keno City is a real hidden gem located approximately 60 kilometres northeast of Mayo. The current population of about 24 persons is really a shadow of the 1,500 people who were in the area at the peak of mining operations in the 1950s and 1960s. Since 1913, over 213 million ounces of silver were produced by United Keno Hill Mines in the 75 years the mine operated in the Mayo district. This is equivalent to \$4 billion in today's currency. Keno Hill was the most significant contributor to Yukon's economy for almost seven decades and resulted in opening up the Mayo mining district. Mayo benefited greatly from all the jobs, the service sector support, the mine staff and the major infrastructure initiatives completed because of the mine at Keno. These improvements included the original Mayo dam, constructed in the early 1950s by Northern Canada Power Commission, which operated the facility until it was taken over by the Yukon Energy Corporation in 1987.

Keno, Elsa and Mayo had the benefit of enjoying electricity at the fine price of seven cents per kilowatt hour during those NCPC years. I think everybody is paying a bit more for it now.

Keno employed thousands of people during its many years of operation and hundreds of people from Mayo worked there over the years. Although there is an environmental legacy to be cleaned up that we are dealing with, the impact is mitigatable and when compared to the seven decades of economic and social benefits that accrued to the citizens, the negatives are really outweighed by the positive benefits over all that time. We have never seen a mine like that in the territory before, and I doubt we will ever see one again. This

was one that was a real game-changer, not just for Mayo, Elsa and Keno, but for the entire territory.

During its heyday, Keno was Canada's second-largest silver producer and the fourth-largest silver producer in the world. All Yukon owes a debt to this community and this mine for its massive and long-term positive impact on not just the economy, but the political development of the territory as well. With the good news recently from Alexco, we could see another 10 or 15 years of production from this mine, and I look forward to the benefits to our economy continuing for another two or three generations.

Now I would like to speak a bit about the place where I live and love — the beautiful Village of Mayo. I am very pleased to state here today that I was born in Mayo Landing in the summer of 1956, and I have lived there continuously ever since. It wasn't until 1958 that Mayo Landing lost the "Landing" part of its name. They decided that once the bridge was in at Stewart Crossing, the Landing didn't really count any more. It was a steamboat landing for many years and hauled billions of dollars' worth of ore from Keno out to the service centres to be further processed.

Mayo is the second-oldest survey townsite in the Yukon Territory after Dawson City. The first commercial flight in the Yukon that carried mail departed from Whitehorse and landed in Mayo on a fine spring day in about 1947. Mayo has had two royal visits: Prince Philip in 1959, and his son, Prince Charles, recently in 1994, who commemorated the Prince of Wales walking trail in Mayo.

Mayo is situated in the heart of the Yukon on the traditional territory of the Na Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation in the middle of some of the finest hunting and fishing territory in the world.

With a population between 450 and 500 people, which has remained stable for almost seven decades now, Mayo continues as a service centre for placer and quartz mining, which is evident in every corner of Na Cho Nyäk Dun traditional territory. The first prospectors and miners in the area showed up in the late 1800s, and their descendants continue to mine in the area today.

Mayo's population consists of 50 percent non-native and 50 percent First Nation people, which has enabled the community to grow, thrive and develop a diverse economy in a community that is really appreciative of diversity.

I began school in Mayo in 1962 — it was only a couple years after when they allowed First Nation people to go to school in this territory — and it was a real privilege to get to know a young man named Albert Peters, who, at the age of six years old in our first grade 1 classroom, shared something that the Northern Tutchone people call [*Member spoke in Northern Tutchone. Text unavailable*] with me. It is "dry meat" in English, and that was my introduction to the First Nation culture in Mayo. I fell in love with big parts of it, and I had no idea that this other culture existed in our own little community.

Part of my goal over the next four or five years here is to make sure that every Yukoner is aware of this community that was here long before us and that looked after this territory for

us for thousands of years and handed it over to us in absolutely wonderful, pristine shape — that we recognize and work together with them to make their home and our home a better place for all of us to live in.

I'm really encouraged by the work that our government has done in trying to rebuild the relationships with First Nations that have suffered so badly under the previous government. It's actually one of the reasons that I decided to campaign. My wife, my son and my daughter are First Nation and it's their territory. I want to work with them to make sure that we look after it for not only them but every other future generation that comes along, and it's something that has to be done together. For too long, non-native people have determined the course and the path of the First Nation people in this territory. It's time for that to change. It's time for First Nation people to take their rightful place as co-governors in this territory, involved in every decision that is made.

I'm going to end it at that and just leave it there, and let you ponder those words. But if we accomplish nothing else over the next five years other than improving our relations with our First Nation neighbours, then I think that we've done something that the last government failed to do in 15 years.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Drin gwiinzii. Shǎw ɪlǵ. I'm happy to stand here today to represent the Vuntut Gwitchin riding as Minister of Health and Social Services, Yukon Housing Corporation and Environment. I want to acknowledge at this time the Kwanlin Dūn and the Ta'an Kwäch'ān Council, whose traditional territories we are convening this 34th Legislature on.

My heartfelt condolences go out to the Kwanlin Dūn people during this difficult time. I'm going to say in my language something that my grandparents taught us. [*Member spoke in Gwich'in. Text unavailable.*] It means, "The Creator will protect the community and keep them safe."

My name is Pauline Frost. I'm a mother, a sister and an auntie. These roles are the most important roles to me. I'm a daughter of the late Alice Frost and Donald Frost. I was born and raised in Old Crow. I have a husband and two beautiful children. My home, my family, my parents and my ancestors come from the Vuntut Gwitchin traditional territory. I could not be more proud of where I come from and the very special place that my people call home.

It brings me kind of to a place — I think an emotional place — because my uncle Grafton Njootli was the first First Nation health minister in this Legislative Assembly, with his very good friend, Alice McGuire. My mother, Alice Frost, was the first First Nation — first indigenous — woman chief in my community. My uncle was Harry Allen. He led and blazed the trail for the self-governing Yukon First Nations. These were my mentors. These were the people who brought me to where I am today. So in a way, I come with the teachings from the former leaders who brought me to a place of humbleness.

My home, my family — the community of Old Crow is a very special place. Under the watchful eye of my grandmother, Joanne Njootli, and my late grandmother, Clara

Frost — together they guided to build a strong indigenous identity in me as an indigenous woman — as a Vuntut Gwitchin woman. Shitsuu, Grandmother Joanne taught me the intricacies of being Vuntut Gwitchin women and how our people, the Gwich'in people, persevered during very difficult times.

My grandmother, Clara Frost, was uprooted at six years old and taken to residential school. She didn't go home until she was 18. She lost her identity. She lost her culture. She had her very dear friend with her, Robert Bruce Sr. Together they survived. She lost a number of her brothers during this time, and I look back at that time in history and I look at where we are as indigenous people in this territory and the lessons that were far, far fought and won on the backs of these people who sacrificed and were put through really, really difficult times. That's me; that's where I come from as a Vuntut Gwitchin member, a Vuntut Gwitchin citizen. The Gwich'in people persevered during these times. Our grandparents persevered. The lessons that both grandparents brought to me as a Vuntut Gwitchin — one was rooted in culture because that's what she knew. She taught us that the other was rooted in something else — in religion and teachings that were not familiar to her or familiar to our people. She came home and influenced us to excel, go away, get your education and bring voice to your people and make a difference for our society. I'm happy to say that I have two brothers and three sisters, and each one of my siblings is contributing well to our community and to our societies as public servants of this government and other governments.

For those teachings I am forever grateful. "Shǎw ɪlǵ" means "I am happy today" for all of that. I'm very fortunate to have grown up in my community and to be raised by the elders of my community and the leaders. As I indicated earlier, my mom, Alice Frost Njootli, blazed the trail for our community as a First Nation woman, first First Nation lady chief in our community. She was the one who pushed forward the first legislative amendments that went through this Legislature. She went ahead in our community to move prohibition of alcohol and the influences of alcohol in our community, with us as small children picketing down the streets of our community, to say we needed to make a difference.

We needed to protect the children. The respectful colleague asked earlier about what we intend to do about indigenous children in care. I come from that place. I know what it means and I will do my very best to ensure that we address that. We picketed up and down the community and we went ahead and voted and we won by a couple of votes. She went ahead, with us children in tow and the grandmothers in tow, and moved it ahead with Norma Kassi, who was then a Member of this Legislative Assembly, to enact it into Yukon legislation.

So to this day, that legislation is in effect and it means a lot for our community and that was what we did at the very beginning of our self-government process. We've grown from that place to where we are today with a number of

representatives in this Legislature, representing and speaking on behalf of our communities.

So I'm deeply honoured and humbled to be here today as the elected member. I say mahsi'cho to my colleagues. Thank you all for being such great support for bringing me in and educating me and just teaching me the ways. This way, I want to be able to provide and support you all, as well as ensure that I respectfully dialogue with my colleagues across the way. It's my role and the role for the indigenous people of this Yukon that, in order to forge forward, we must work together; we must work in collaboration and we must speak respectfully and be respectful at all times as we speak. That's what I intend to do in this House — in this Legislature.

I want to take this time to acknowledge my family, my husband and my children, and my brother-in-law Joe Tetlich, for getting me to where I am, to this place. They supported me during the campaign in my community. It was very difficult. It's a small riding and the community oftentimes makes their decision based on family votes, but I have the support of a significant number of my community elders and that I hold with the highest regard and I hold the elders with the utmost respect.

What an amazing territory we all come from — as we heard from our other members here. I'm proud of the progress that we've made in the Yukon over the course of the last 20 years. I spoke about the early beginnings and the teachings that I bring with me, especially around the advancement of First Nation governments in the Yukon. As one of the self-governing agreement signatories, Vuntut Gwitchin, and as a citizen of Vuntut Gwitchin, I saw that process; I saw that process evolve.

In 1993, while I'm studying here at the local college, my uncle, Harry Allen, invited me to come to the special ceremony. He said, "You need to know this. You need to understand it because some day, you are going to be our voice and you need to listen." Well, I listened and I travelled with him. I think it needs to be a part of our education system for all young people in the Yukon. It needs to be a part of what we teach our bureaucrats and our government. We need to teach our young people. I was a spokesperson for Mapping the Way. Mapping the Way is an opportunity for the federal government, the Yukon government and the First Nation governments to educate our bureaucrats on what it means to be a self-governing First Nation. What does it mean to implement all 28 chapters of the self-government agreement in true faith and collaboration — to educate about the significant places — the pristine places — that we own and occupy in this beautiful territory of ours? How do we design and protect special areas? It's important.

If you look at the north Yukon and you look at the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan*, it's the first and the only one in the Yukon Territory. The Vuntut Gwitchin people led that discussion. We went ahead and built special management areas to protect our traditional areas. We have legislation in our government that defines that there will never, ever be fracking on our traditional territory — not just Vuntut Gwitchin. We worked in collaboration with the Na Cho Nyäk

Dun and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to ensure that all of the north is protected by way of the territorial government and our own governments. That's my message from my people who I represent from Vuntut Gwitchin riding.

The modern treaties that we're all familiar with as signatories to those agreements — we have a process in this government that we're partners to the post-service transfer obligations of our self-government agreements. Post-service transfer obligation means that this government has yet to sign one self-government post-service transfer agreement with the First Nation modern treaty holders in this Yukon. It has not happened because we have not met in good faith to try to deliver effective health and social programs, alcohol and drug services, local services and heritage resource management.

Those are things that we want to do as government. We want to be able to build a relationship and work in good faith with the 11 self-governing First Nations. We have a number of First Nations that are not self-governing and, as my colleague Minister Streicker indicated, we have been in attendance at those communities to help to bridge the gap, to help them forge some new trails and ensure that they do not get left behind through this process.

The same sentiment was expressed by Commissioner Doug Phillips during the recent throne speech — and that is to continue to advance rural Yukon communities through respectful relationships, government-to-government approaches and mutually shared interests in reconciliation.

When first approached to run as an MLA for the Vuntut Gwitchin riding, I needed to respectfully consider what this responsibility would entail. Through my experience as the intergovernmental coordinator and negotiator for Vuntut Gwitchin and living and working with self-governing First Nations in the Yukon in our urban and rural communities, trying and attempting to negotiate in good faith programs and services that would meet the unique needs of Yukoners — the unique needs of our communities were major and were challenging, with many hurdles. I felt that a part of me was torn. Do I continue my work in advancing the First Nation's interests or do I come here and attempt to make a difference through this process?

With the guidance and the leadership of my community and the elders, I was driven to come here. My role is to serve our Yukon people and our communities, and to bring a strong northern and rural perspective to decisions that directly impact our communities. That's my role. That's why I see myself here. The decision to put my name forward came from my desire to want to change how government works with communities and with First Nations.

We have a responsibility to work alongside all levels of government. We must work in good faith and work toward implementation of our final agreements. It is now my responsibility to walk in the path that I walked in six months ago — to bring that voice to this table, to this Legislature and to this government.

My time spent in Yukon communities was not all work. I spent a lot of hours volunteering in our community. I volunteered in the City of Whitehorse as a volunteer

firefighter. I worked in Dawson City and in Teslin as a volunteer ambulance attendant. My husband and I started Run Dawson in Dawson City. We spent many, many hours — I'm a coach, I'm a mentor to many youth in my community. Over the course of my life, I worked as an indigenous role model, selected by my peer group to speak on their behalf at the national level about what it means to be healthy, to be strong, to be vibrant and to bring a voice to youth — to do it in a humble way and a respectful way. That's where I come from. I commit my life to work for my people, but my humble beginnings start in my community as a young person, caring for my children and the children of the community. As the First Nation saying goes, it takes a community to raise a child — and it truly does in all of our small communities.

I know first-hand, as many of our rural Yukoners do, how decisions made by those who haven't experienced the realities of rural communities and rural living can directly impact lives. The decision to step forward as an elected leader of my community was certainly not easy and required much reflection, ceremonies and many discussions. I am happy to say that I took that step forward, recognizing the leadership of this team and the team that Premier Silver brought around him. I felt that my time was right and it is my contribution to be here. I'm humbled to be here with such a strong and vibrant team.

Old Crow is a pretty special place. It's active; it's a rich community rich in culture and tradition. There is a generation of new leaders coming out of our community — forward-stepping leaders, leaders who are ready to make changes — yet rooted in our culture because the elders are there, the values and principles are there, and they will never change. That is important to note, because our community not only is unique; it is the only isolated village in Yukon. The cost of living and the economy of our community are difficult matters. It's a difficult place to live when it's 60 below and you have to get firewood to keep your house warm, and you have to pay that expensive diesel electric bill that you get every month. There is a lot that happens in these communities that we don't consider.

Nutrition North Canada, for example — food prices. You have a young mother wanting to raise and give healthy food to her child. That's not possible unless you make a lot of money. So there has to be opportunities to grow the economy of our communities. Rural community economies are important, and I will work with my colleagues and Minister Pillai to ensure that the communities' local economies are important. It thrives and it sustains us where we are, and that is happy Yukoners and people if you have food on your table and if you have shelter.

A few weeks ago, Minister Streicker highlighted that he and our colleague, Minister McPhee, and I visited Old Crow. We had the opportunity to visit the school, and we went on a tour of the community. We met some pretty amazing young people. They are leading the way for our community, rooted in our culture and the teachings of our people. I am going to maybe tell you about one particular ceremony that happened while we were there at the community centre. The leadership

and elders hosted a gathering for us as ministers. That was a different experience for me as a minister coming in, not as a negotiator supporting my community. They brought in a young lady — 13 years old. Her name is Tyra Benjamin. Sixty years ago, her grandfather travelled from Old Crow across the Richardson Mountains with the RCMP by dog team and on to Herschel Island. This young lady decided she wanted to follow in her grandfather's footsteps. She wanted to see the land. She was 13. She took one year to prepare herself and her five little dogs, and with the support of the community and the people, she did. She persevered in the cold climate and the harshness and went over the mountains — 350 miles — with the dog team. She is 13 years old. That is resilience. That is rooted in her culture and pride, and the people were behind her all the way. She went there and back.

They honoured her and we had the distinct privilege of being there as they presented her with some gifts that will help her in her journey in life.

At the same time, two elders — a two-time cancer survivor and his wife — decided they had to come over the mountains because they have no caribou meat in their community. This is about the Gwich'in culture. This is about linking the culture — no matter the difficulties, no matter the hurdles we are confronted with. They brought their snowmobile over the mountain. The elder lady stood behind on the handlebar across the mountains and the husband drove the snowmobile, with their six-year-old grandson in the sleigh, over the mountains to our community. They feasted them and gave them food and escorted them back across the mountain. That is resilience. That is pride — pride in where you come from — collaboration, cooperation and working in good faith to see that everyone succeeds and is healthy and happy.

This was no easy task. She did train very hard. As a young person of our community, she forged new paths for other young people. They all huddled around her and supported her as she received her award. I just wanted to pay tribute to her and recognize the significant message there.

Through my previous role working for my community, I negotiated and lobbied for fair program and service delivery for Vuntut Gwitchin, but also for other Yukon First Nations — often with many challenges. In my current role, I plan to continue to collaboratively work in partnership with my colleagues from that negotiating table to ensure that we provide adequate services and programs that are available to all constituents of Yukon. Our self-government agreement has very distinct and specific language that says that this government — the Government of Yukon — must provide programs and services that are fair and equitable like other governments as you define the self-government agreement process — meaning that we need to ensure that our communities have the same services as other Yukoners experience.

Some of the areas that are of significant importance to my community — and I'll highlight it here, as we've noted on our tour in the community, that our health centre is situated on a contaminated waste site. They built it on the waste site and it's still sitting there some 30 years later. It's not accessible for

elders; it's not accessible for emergency care. We cannot get an emergency patient up that stairwell. That stairway has 50 stairs to get up to the top. Not only is it situated on a contaminated site, we built a brand-new, state-of-the-art facility next door to that. "Experimental innovation", it's called — innovation in housing. How do you address climate change and build a foundation system that will adapt and change? We built super-green insulated on a contaminated site two years ago that we were not notified of, and now we have to deal with that. I have to deal with that as a minister, but I negotiated that agreement to build that new, state-of-the-art innovation house on that property adjacent to the health centre, and now I'm realizing that — hey, why weren't we notified previously? That's what we need to do. We need to inform and be transparent.

Our high school students are most in need. Working in collaboration — this is demonstrating that we as partners and colleagues in this government will work with one another. I will work with Minister McPhee to address some of the challenges in our communities. We are still taking our children out of our community. I stated earlier that my grandmother was taken away from home when she was six years old. I was taken away from home when I was 13.

My siblings were taken away when they were 13. Children are still leaving home at that young age. That has to be addressed.

With regard to business and economic development, Yukon First Nations have generated remarkable wealth and successes in their business ventures.

Vuntut Gwitchin, as a co-owner of Air North and multiple real estate properties and businesses in Yukon, will continue to support economic development in the Yukon and recognize First Nations as large contributors to the success and the diversity of Yukon's economy.

I do want to stop and apologize. As the Speaker previously stated, we are learning, so if I am misrepresenting in how I present, I apologize and I will learn in time. I take anything back that I've said, using first names, and I will attempt — but don't hold me to it because I may go back to that old habit. I'll be cautious.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. Frost: Yes. I will have it right here so I don't mess it up.

Child facilities, childcare facilities in rural Yukon, affordable and accessible — key priority. Vuntut Gwitchin — key priority. We have this 75-year-old grandmother running our daycare centre because of the requirements for certification to get childcare in our community. It's impossible and it's ridiculous, and that's what we have to rely on. She came out of retirement to ensure that we have — that's what we do as a people, but it's not a solution and we need to certainly address it.

Our land, our water and the Porcupine caribou herd are pillars of who we are as Vuntut Gwitchin. The herd is part of our livelihood, our food security and, with changes to climate and the uncertainty in the US government with the Arctic refuge and the potential for development, that's a priority. It's

a priority for Vuntut Gwitchin. What can we do to assist, provide and lend our support? That deals with the wintering grounds as well — ensuring that we have effective and proper international caribou management agreements and plans in place, and protecting the wintering grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd. That's what the community is requesting.

One thing I have learned is that change can take time and that we must always be patient by nature. I am an action-oriented person and I am able to make decisions in a respectful and inclusive manner. There are many changes our team has committed to and initiatives that we will undertake during our time serving Yukoners as MLAs of the Legislative Assembly and as ministers. This new role is one that I take very seriously. It was an obvious next step in my contribution to my community of Old Crow, our Vuntut Gwitchin people and Yukoners alike.

The commitments to our election platform, the direction provided in the mandate letters and our new government's enduring priorities represent new approaches to leadership and to governance in our territory. Our team has been elected to bring forward a change, including commitment to work with all Yukoners to make their lives better, focus on creating jobs, and strengthening and diversifying the economy and protecting the environment, work collaboratively government-to-government to ensure that all communities in Yukon continue to grow and thrive. As we move forward we will make responsible investments in programs and services that lead to healthy, productive and happy lives for all Yukoners, especially for the most vulnerable people of our territory.

As my contribution to that, I have to acknowledge at this point that my family, twice a year — we host the dinner at the Salvation Army. We go, we cook and we serve food to the citizens of our community. Why? It is because many of those citizens come from my community. We do that twice a year and we're preparing to do that again shortly. I encourage everyone in this Legislative Assembly to get to know the vulnerable people of our community and hear their stories. That will guide us in making good decisions.

Our new government has been elected by our communities and we have been elected to represent their interests and to give voice to those who do not have a voice in our otherwise complex systems of government. The quiet strength of the Vuntut Gwitchin people, the elders who supported me in my quest for leadership — I am forever humbled and full of gratitude.

I would like to, at this time, acknowledge all the Members of the Legislative Assembly from the Vuntut Gwitchin riding — and this is important: Grafton Njootli, Kathy Nukon, Norma Kassi, Johnny Abel, Esau Schafer, Robert Bruce, Lorraine Netro and Darius Elias. I am reminded every day of their teachings, but also that they all came from different political stripes, yet they represent the interest of Vuntut Gwitchin, no matter in what party they came to this Legislature.

Our communities know what's best for them. They know what they need and they have the solutions. Today I want to touch on what we can achieve in the next five years and how

we can jointly work together — communities, governments and First Nations. The solutions are right here and we are committed to continue to grow and build a strong and healthy Yukon for all. In my role as the Minister of Health and Social Services, Environment, Yukon Housing and Yukon hospitals, I — and our departments and our teams — have been working very hard over the last few months and I'm pleased to share a number of updates with respect to those portfolios.

Making sure that the environment we live and work within is healthy and sustainable is at the core of everything we do. Yukoners cannot thrive and live healthy lives if the environment they live in is not healthy and thriving. Our communities will not be sustainable if our ecosystems are not. Our economy cannot grow if we do not make sure our fish, our wildlife and our plants cannot grow, and through our shared stewardship of this land, that reconciliation with First Nations is fostered. This is why these final agreements especially identify the collaborative establishment of protected areas and natural resources and management.

As first peoples of this territory, the Yukon First Nations knew what they needed to do to protect the environment because that was what sustained them. That was what provided for them. The economic viability of the nations relied on the environment and relied on what was there to sustain them. The people-centred approach to the environment focuses on people through our programs and services to help Yukoners thrive in our shared ecosystems. Yukoners understand the health benefit of being outdoors and active on the land. Visitors to our territory come to enjoy the vast landscape and unique wildlife. The number of hunting and fishing licences as well as camping permits purchased each year continues to increase. This is an indication of why it's important to get our people out on the land so that they can use it — live and breathe and get active.

Strategic investments in our communities are some of Environment's investment for vibrant and sustainable communities. We are working directly with our self-governing First Nations to make sure local concerns are addressed through our collaborative approaches to regulations and management measures. Cleaning up the environment and the liabilities that are associated are all things that we are doing in collaboration with municipalities and with the governments. Strong First Nation relationships are pivotal to our path forward as a government. We work in collaboration with various boards and committees in our communities — management boards, renewable resource councils and fish and wildlife boards. Together with the various levels of government, we will thrive as a nation and as Yukon. The department provides a key role in supporting a diverse economy. That means good jobs can grow when we have a sustainable environment.

With regard to Health and Social Services, a key pillar is the aging in place strategy. What is aging in place? It means age well in place; be happy in place, wherever that is. Oftentimes we look at a Whitehorse-centric model. What does that mean? It means we need to push it out. We need to push the programs out to the communities and ensure that all of

Yukon that normally would not have access to effective collaborative care programs and health care programs are afforded that access and that privilege.

We have a robust home care program. We have no wait-lists. It's provided free of charge for all residents. There are some challenges and we aim to work out the challenges. We extend an offer to all members to participate in that process and give us feedback.

I'm going to move on to kind of conclude here because I know I'm near the end of my time. So going out — regular community visits, supporting and collaboration with our governments, working with the federal government and the ministers — I do want to assure my colleagues that this is an important part of the work that we do.

I look forward to future collaborations. I look forward to the government's setting the priorities and the framework for the next five years through our business models, through our enduring priorities and our mandate letters, which clearly define the path and the direction that we are going. So our goal is to look at aging well in place and having healthy communities. We'll construct the necessary units in the communities in collaboration with our partners.

I'm reminded to stay humble and kind, to always stay grounded in my homeland, which is Vuntut Gwitchin.

As this new government, we will bring voice and carry the message for those who are not able to represent themselves. We have much work to do, and we must embrace the changes before us and work in the best interests of all Yukoners.

Deputy Speaker (Mr. Hutton): Thank you, Minister Frost.

Minister Mostyn.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Speaker: Member for Copperbelt South, on a point of order.

Mr. Kent: Just on a point of order — I know the Speaker mentioned earlier, reminding members — especially those who are new — not to use individuals' names in the House. I believe that actually — and you may want to confer with the Clerk, but that also is for the Deputy Speaker when recognizing members just to recognize them by their constituency. Just a reminder — I know there are lots of new people in the Legislature here today.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was uncomfortable, wasn't it? Silence doesn't go over well in this Chamber. In St. Ambrose's immortal words: "In some causes silence is dangerous." In this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, silence is dangerous. This is where we come to discuss the important issues facing the territory. The last time I checked, this territory is facing many issues.

I got into this work to represent the views of my constituents in this House, in this Chamber, and to give them a voice. So this afternoon, I am shocked and saddened that the good people populating the Official Opposition benches have

seen fit to rob their constituents of their voice in this Chamber. It is not easy to pen a speech. It is difficult work. It is very difficult work, but it is vitally important work. It is important that we fill this Chamber with the voices of our constituents, because through these speeches, my colleagues, the Leader of the Third Party, are representing the hopes and dreams and the aspirations of the good citizens of the territory. The people of this territory want to be heard. We promised to give them a voice. That is what we are here for.

It's important to the people who elected us, to those people who participated in our electoral system, who listened, who read, who spoke to us, those people who shared their concerns, their problems, their hopes and their dreams. They wanted a voice. Those people sent me to this Chamber. They sent us to this Chamber. So yes, I am shocked that the Members of the Official Opposition decided to relinquish their responsibilities as MLAs, to deprive their constituents of a voice. They have silenced their constituents. That they have rendered mute the people who elected them to speak on their behalf in this Chamber — I don't know, Mr. Speaker. That silence sits long on this Chamber. The voice of a huge chunk of the territory's people has been silenced and has not had a chance to respond to the Speech from the Throne and, as we see, we are all poorer for it.

This speech is delivered by me, but it reflects the views and opinions of hundreds of people who put me here, the good people of Whitehorse West. A society thrives on vigorous debate and discussion. It thrives on ideas and visions, visions about our future and what it looks like. The politicians on this side of the House and the Third Party understand this. It seems the Official Opposition doesn't understand — still doesn't understand, Mr. Speaker — but they will. They will.

In here, we represent our community — our whole community. We speak for: Filipinos, a diversity of First Nations, Mexicans, and Syrians, Europeans, Japanese and many, many more cultures; Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Jews and many other faiths besides; bikers and hikers, snowmobilers and skiers, hunters and fishers, filmmakers, writers, artists and cooks; the downtrodden and the wealthy; the infirm, the sick and the elderly; the hungry and the homeless; a few who are both, a few who are neither, more than a few who are a mix of many of these things and more besides; there are youth, seniors; an active LGBTQT community; parents, married and single people and a few middle-aged folks sprinkled into the mix as well.

The point is that our community is wonderfully diverse. It's talented, resourceful, accepting and compassionate.

Because of all this, it has a delightful flavour — unique, rugged and independent, educated and self-taught, cultured but sometimes delightfully bawdy. We are collectively richer for all this diversity — this wide range of views and opinions and approaches. The Yukon is real in a way many places no longer are.

The territory's citizens have challenged me, supported me and inspired me for more than half my life. I arrived here in 1989. I drove up the highway in an old Honda Civic beater — so beat up that I had to fix the tailpipe with a V8 juice can. We

weren't very wealthy back then but we were happy. I had a good life.

I worked for the paper for decades. I covered this Chamber. I remember standing up there in December right after the Legislature finished sitting. I watched Johnny Abel come around and place gifts on everybody's desks after the event had closed. I watched as the House emptied and everybody walked out. I stood up there by that bannister and I watched the Chambers — 1990. I looked and there was nobody here; it was quiet. It wasn't the natural state of this House. This House should be filled with voices. I remember that. I remember how poignant the silence was — how out of place in this hall.

When I ran for office — started in January 2016 — it was a community affair. My sons, my brothers, my entire family and my friends gave up huge blocks of their time to come door-knocking with me. My colleague from Riverdale came with me and it was amazing. We walked that riding for months through the snow and the sun and the rain. It took nine months. These people gave up enormous amounts of their time away from their family and their other friends to get me here. I'm forever in debt for that generosity of spirit.

This territory — the people of this territory have given me more than I have a right to ask for. Fellow members, as you might have guessed, I am honoured to be here representing the people of Whitehorse West. I'm honoured to be here among you in a Chamber that I've followed so closely and admired for so very long.

In January 2016, as I said, I started walking the snow-covered streets to introduce myself to the community. Over the next nine months, I spoke to bankers and police officers, nurses and teachers, plumbers, retirees, cleaners and electricians. I met educational assistants, social workers and doctors, nutritionists, daycare workers and speech language pathologists, truck drivers, miners, contractors and pilots, mothers and fathers, tattoo artists and a librarian.

Whitehorse speaks English and French, Tagalog, Southern Tutchone, Gwich'in, Chinese, Arabic, and a dizzying array of other languages. Some didn't speak at all. Some were deaf, some were sick, some were in wheelchairs and some had polio. They have lived in Old Crow, Watson Lake, Faro, Haines Junction, Beaver Creek, Quebec, Finland, the Netherlands and other places besides. The point is that, geographically compact, this little riding packs a wallop. Arkell, Ingram, Logan, Copper Ridge — it's a neat little package that is in many ways a concentration of the wider territory — its values, its views. It's an urban riding, but it's representative of all of us.

Throughout the winter, as I walked with the friends and family, and through spring and fall, its residents — Whitehorse West residents — were gracious with me and shared their precious time. They told stories; they talked about their concerns about hospital care, mental health, trails, daycare, children in care, addictions, the need for better services in addictions, the state of our roads, our education system and 100 more issues besides. They also spoke passionately about the things they loved. They talked about

their families. They spoke with me about the environment, about politics and libraries. We talked about disadvantaged youth, dogs and animal shelters — mostly about dogs — hundreds of thousands of dogs. It's unbelievable; everybody has one, or so it seemed.

One or two, perhaps more, talked about fracking. I assured them that I'm against it, and I am. As you've heard from my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, so are we all on this side.

You know, the people I talked to also noted their frustrations, their hopes and their dreams for the territory. Connecting with so many people was exhilarating, Mr. Speaker. I know you felt it yourself. It gave me a profound sense of community and I'm sure — as a matter of fact, I'm positive — it was shared by everybody in this Chamber, in this House. If we were to compare notes, I would bet we all had similar experiences talking with our constituents during the last election campaign. That, Mr. Speaker, was the opposite of silence.

It was a chorus of voices, ideas, opinions, information that fed our minds and drove us to the next door — informed our opinions, informed our future decision-making. That connection to our constituents is something we share, that we have in common. In Ottawa, we call it the House of Commons, and we do well to remember this commonality when we engage each other in this House.

I have known the Member for Lake Laberge for decades, since his sister was running the Yukon Quest and his parents were schooling me in cheechako and dog mushing at their remote home on the lake. The Member for Whitehorse Centre and I have known each other for years, and I admire her passion for and desire to advance social justice in the territory. The Member for Takhini-Kopper King and I share a passion for workplace safety and biking. The Member for Copperbelt South and I have known each other for years, and I believe I profiled him when he entered politics. We were both much younger back then and closer on the political spectrum, or perhaps not — time will tell. The Member for Porter Creek North has a storied history in the territory and I look forward to getting to know her better in this House. The Member for Watson Lake and I have corresponded quite a bit lately. She is doing her best to represent her constituents, and I look forward to working with her to solve those problems that she is raising. The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin I know less well, but I have enjoyed our occasional chats. He is an affable fellow and a hard worker, from what I have been told. The Member for Kluane I know only in passing, but his uncle and I have worked together for decades. I look forward to hearing his perspectives over the coming years.

My riding of Whitehorse West is another good example of this commonality. My riding has played an important role in the territory's political history. It is a bellwether riding, electing members to government in 11 of Yukon's 14 territorial elections. It is the home of an incredible roster of distinguished legislators: former Commissioner Ken McKinnon, who we saw today in the gallery; former editor, minister and Whitehorse mayor, Flo Whyard; former

Premier, Tony Penikett; former health minister, Dave Sloan; former Speaker, Dennis Schneider; and former Deputy Premier, Elaine Taylor. They encompass this territory's diversity of political viewpoints. They all contributed greatly to Yukon's society in their own ways, and I have a deep and abiding respect for them all. In fact, over the years since I arrived, I have had the pleasure to meet and publicly debate each and every one of them.

Flo Whyard and I often discussed journalism. She was instrumental in building Macaulay Lodge, a facility that is being replaced by the Whistle Bend care facility, which I have inherited and will finish in the next year or so.

Tony Penikett signed the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and struck the first four land claim agreements — amazing work. He started a process this new Liberal government has vowed to respect, reinvigorate and strengthen after 15 years of neglect. It was the right approach in 1989 when I arrived in the territory, and it is the right approach today. I am proud to be part of a government that is intent on reconciling and building on that early vision.

Dave Sloan, a former health minister, is a friend — a mentor who taught me much about public life.

I interviewed Dennis Schneider a few times and found him to be a caring and thoughtful fellow who served the House well as Speaker.

Elaine Taylor was a dedicated constituency MLA who represented a riding for a record 14 years. She was respected by my constituents in Whitehorse West and we all owe her thanks for her long run in public service. Given this list, I readily admit that I'm standing on the shoulder of giants.

On November 7, Whitehorse West placed their faith in me to represent their views, to listen to their concerns and issues and to advance their cause where possible. They want to be heard and I will listen and give voice to them.

Throughout the months walking in my riding, I was clear with those I met. Representing people, championing them and giving them a voice in public has been my life's work. As I've said, I take this responsibility very seriously.

At the beginning of this talk, you felt how uncomfortable silence can be — so uncomfortable, the honourable member stood up to interrupt it. I can understand that.

As community representatives, we must end the silence. We must foster conversations with everyone. This government is not ours; it belongs to the Yukon people; they put us here. We are their voice, their servants. If we don't listen, the silence descends. Silence of even one voice deprives us all of a perspective, a warning, a thought, an idea that could change our world.

The Premier's throne speech signals our intention to follow through on our government's promise to give the people of this territory — all people — a voice. Members opposite think this is thin. I don't think this is thin at all. This is important work.

As a caucus, we are working together as one government — a group of colleagues who I respect and have learned from already an amazing amount. We are going to forge one government that serves all Yukoners — everyone. This

government has in less than 140 days reframed the Yukon's approach to its 14 First Nations. It has begun reconciliation based on mutual understanding and respect. That is good work. It takes a lot of effort and a lot of time. This government has signed an intergovernmental declaration that provides the foundation for a renewed relationship and future collaboration with our First Nations. It followed through with the Yukon Forum with First Nations. A second will be held next month. This new cooperative approach is providing wide-ranging benefits. It is creating certainty and building the resource sector's confidence in the territory. Tony Penikett knew that back in 1989.

The Yukon Chamber of Mines is now working alongside the government and First Nations, and this united effort is clearly comforting investors and helping to draw them back to the territory. This government's work extends beyond the mining sector, however. My constituents expressed a need for a broader economic focus and this government is listening. Tourism and culture are essential economic sectors in the Yukon.

This government is working collaboratively with municipal governments, First Nations and industry to find innovative ways to make Yukon a destination for Canadians, Americans and the world.

I have met with the Tourism Industry Association and the Wilderness Tourism Association to hear how Highways and Public Works might improve support to that sector. They were more than willing to speak with me. It was apparently something that didn't happen in the past and, of course, highways are an important conduit for tourists as are our airports.

I should discuss my department, Highways and Public Works, for a minute. It is the backbone of the territory. We build and operate roads, bridges and airports that link our communities and bring people food, medicine and other supplies north. People don't think about these things until they go wrong. We assume roads, bridges and airports will be open until they are not. We assume schools and offices will be healthy, safe and warm until they're not. Keeping all this running does not just happen. It takes effort, and when this vital infrastructure is not properly cared for and funded, it fails. Roads wash out and become impassable, bridges and culverts must be closed or collapse, air services impeded or shut down, contracts are not tendered or go wildly off the rails with enormous cost. Members opposite will know a lot of about that. Roofs leak, mould grows and the very business and the essential services we provide our citizens fail, which is to say that the stuff of Highways and Public Works is important. It is the foundation upon which we build communities, our government and our economy.

How government buys goods and services will also shape the future economy, Mr. Speaker. During the election campaign and since being elected, I have met with retailers, contractors, chambers of commerce, engineers, consultants, photographers, air carriers and civil servants on this important topic. Fixing procurement is an important goal of this

government and is a personal goal of mine. These people have been happy that I have spoken to them, Mr. Speaker.

I have heard the complaints about inconsistent application of the rules that has happened in the past, about poor drafting of tenders and requests for proposals has happened in the past, about inadequate reviews, and about local companies losing contracts by a few thousand or a few hundred dollars, about how this hurts the local economy, communities and business. It is a big issue, an important issue, and, of course, the opposition has made hay about our pledge to have a schedule project published by March. I'm in no way concerned by the jibes, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I'm flattered they thought this talented crew could fix years of neglect in just a few short months.

The contractors, retailers, engineers, chambers of commerce — all those I have spoken to; and there are many, more than 100, in fact — have much more realistic expectations and I have assured them we will have a schedule of upcoming projects available for contractors available by March 2018, as promised. This will give people bidding on and executing these contracts more time to build local capacity, plan for and build these public works. This will make for better price estimates, scheduling and execution. It will improve Yukon government spending and build the economy.

The department is also working on other improvements as we speak. The knowledge economy is also a growing player in the territory's economy. In January, there were more people employed in technology than in the mining sector here.

The knowledge economy is also a growing player in the territory's economy. In January, there were more people employed in technology than in the mining sector here. My colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, and I have toured their facilities. We've seen them assembling computers, coming up with innovative methods of hooking remote resource camps into the Internet, writing code, laying fibre and cables and erecting microwave towers to weave our community offices together — our communities together. This is an exciting time. The Member for Porter Creek South and I have been working on securing a new fibre link for the territory. Our goal is to secure a second line that will guarantee Internet access to the territory in the event one line is severed. Such redundancy is important to our tech sector and our modern society. Its existence will save our public and private sector employees millions in lost productivity and sales when a link is severed. Such a cable will provide the certainty the industry needs to grow. As Minister of Highways and Public Works, information is a focus of mine. I'm committed to making public information accessible and available to the people who own it — Yukon citizens — the constituents we all serve.

Highways and Public Works has started modernizing the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. The goal is legislation that reflects today's modern information-driven society while safeguarding citizen privacy. We want to make it easier for people to access more of their government's

documents. We want to make it easier for citizens to interact with their government — this government.

Citizens of Whitehorse West and those throughout the territory expect a modern government with modern services. Past governments have not recognized the strategic importance of an information-driven civil service. Ready access to data and evidence makes the civil service more nimble, simplifies decision-making, eases frustration, and reduces red tape. With our modern computer system, it's astounding our government still sequesters its valuable non-confidential data and research in filing cabinets away from easy access by the public and fellow civil servants. Changing this culture is not easy. It will require leadership and planning and resources — something that this government is willing to provide in spades. But over the next few years, we will modernize the civil service in this vital service to citizens.

I've directed staff at Highways and Public Works to start developing an open data repository to give society access to a wealth of government research and the ability to use it in innovative ways. We've also started developing tools to make it easier for citizens to access government services online. Those new avenues of service will begin to arrive this year and will continue to be expanded, refined and rolled out throughout the mandate.

Airports and aerodromes are similarly important drivers in the territory. The Yukon has four airports and 25 aerodromes. In the last three months, I have met with pilots, air carriers, aircraft owners, skydivers and others associated with this industry. I've heard their concerns and needs: from asphalt to fences to leases and better maintenance. I've also learned this is a complicated field, enmeshed in international, federal and local laws.

The reports — there are scads of them; hundreds and hundreds of pages. I've read them all. It's complicated — this field. We are, for example, dealing with the Dawson City Airport. We're exploring all options to improve that important piece of public infrastructure. We want it to meet the needs of pilots and air carriers. We want it to meet the needs of tourism operators and tourists themselves. We want to make sure it meets the needs of Dawson and the north Yukon, that it meets the needs of First Nations, the territory and the federal government. It is important work. It is dependent on many voices and many conversations.

We welcome that conversation, Mr. Speaker. We embrace it. We know airports are vital to the territory's future and tourism, business, arts and culture and innovation. Many take it for granted, but a three-hour-or-so commute to downtown Vancouver provides a competitive advantage over other cities in BC and Alberta. It makes the Yukon a viable centre for film, technology, law, health or any other economic sector that wishes to balance life and work in this beautiful territory of ours. This government recognizes this, so we'll be making strategic, evidence-based investments to improve air infrastructure in Whitehorse and throughout the territory.

Of course, highways and bridges are also an important pillar of the Highways and Public Works department. I spoke about that earlier. Over the coming years, we're going to

replace the Nares River bridge and repair others to ease transport of goods and people across the territory. We have 133 bridges and 248 structural culverts in the territory. Yukon tourists and travellers all rely on this transportation network to safely get where they're going. They rely on it, Mr. Speaker.

Strategic investments in road and bridge infrastructure ensure year-round access for residents and visitors and encourage economic development in communities across the territory. Over the coming years, we're also going to fix dangerous intersections on the Alaska Highway that cut through Whitehorse. We'll collaborate with the city on other intersections that need to integrate better with the Alaska Highway. We'll continue to maintain and expand our incredible highway system throughout the territory. This work will not be done alone. I'm working in concert with my colleagues in Economic Development, Tourism and Culture, Health and Social Services, Education, Community Services, the Housing Corporation and Finance as one government and alongside our municipality and First Nation partners to launch projects that will improve the lives of Yukoners, build on our economy and ensure sustainable communities.

I would also like to talk about the public service. I work with about 1,000 dedicated professionals in my department. So far, I have spoken to about 550 of them at desks, in offices, in industrial shops and garages from Whitehorse to Haines Junction. I even went through a speed dating exercise with 80 engineers one morning. You ought to try it sometime. It was a lot of fun.

I have many more people to meet and to speak to, and this is important to me because these professionals are thoughtful and dedicated. They know things — policies, legislation and funding programs and how things work that must inform my decisions. They work with me, not for me. They serve our citizens, not the politicians. This is a distinction that is easy to say, but I suspect needs a little care and attention to push through the culture. It hasn't been that way forever. I will work on that, Mr. Speaker. I'll provide the direction, the tools, and the resources to get the job done. I will ask civil servants not just for their best advice, but I will consider when making decisions for all Yukoners, not just a privileged few. Then I will do my best to explain that decision — why I'm listening or not, as the case may be.

My other department is, of course, the Public Service Commission. Here again, we have inherited a host of problems. That's the job — it is to deal with the problems. That's what we're going to do. As we saw late last week, a failure to plan to provide leadership has had a profound impact on the union. It's frustrated. Last week the president issued a call for help and I answered that call. The union president and I spoke. We had a great talk, in fact — a fruitful talk. He outlined the years-long frustration he has had with the previous government. He has asked me to change things, to improve things, to make things better — things the previous government had ignored, that they did not find important. He asked me to listen and I will do that, Mr. Speaker. I assured him we would.

The Public Service Commission is reviewing the hiring and promotion processes to ensure they are open, transparent and efficient. It is important to constantly evaluate this because the demographic shift in the Yukon is going to be challenging as we attempt to transfer corporate knowledge between the baby-boomers and the young staffers who will be coming in behind them.

The commission is also working with Yukon Housing, Community Services, Health and Social Services, Education and Highways and Public Works to modernize the provision of staff housing. So here we are in a new legislative session — 19 people united by our communities and our desire to serve our citizens. It is, as I've said several times this afternoon, important work. It is important to represent our constituents, to listen, to give them a voice — a presence in this Chamber — to work together to make this territory a better place — a better place for all.

Speaker: The member has five minutes.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That's great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought I was out of time.

We have to give people a voice, a presence in this Chamber that we share, to work together to make this territory a better place — a better place for everyone, for all.

There are a few who charge that we have done little in less than 140 days. Those people have refused to stand in this House to represent their constituents through a response to the Speech from the Throne. It is impossible, therefore, to know what their constituents' hopes and dreams are or what their response to the throne speech is. We don't know. We've been denied that, and that's a shame, Mr. Speaker. That's a real loss.

When they have the time, I urge all members of this House to talk to the lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer and two-spirit community. In our first few months, Mr. Speaker, we drafted changes to the *Human Rights Act* to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender identity or gender expression. That's real change, Mr. Speaker. It's a big change and it's an important change to one segment of our community. We heard it was very important to them. It is very important not only to them but to our whole community to hear these voices.

This new Liberal government has also retooled the *Vital Statistics Act* to make it one of the most progressive laws in the country, Mr. Speaker. In the Yukon, lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, queer and two-spirit people will now have their rights respected. Here, they can lead safe, healthy lives and add their own unique voice to our society. That's new. That's something we've done. That's work we've done, Mr. Speaker. It's vitally important because in the past, there has been silence — shameful silence. As we've discovered, that becomes uncomfortable very quickly. It certainly becomes uncomfortable to me, Mr. Speaker.

I take my responsibility to represent my constituents very seriously. I am here to give them a voice, everybody a voice, Mr. Speaker. This new Liberal government respects diversity in its programming and services. It seeks it out. It knows the importance of community and of listening to that community

— our community, Mr. Speaker — all Yukoners — and that's a real change — a substantial change — and one of many.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to address this Legislative Assembly. I am looking forward to working with all of the honourable members of this Chamber to make the lives of Yukoners better. I have been sent here by the people of Riverdale South to represent them. That was not alone and not without the enormous help of what became, around the Liberal office, known as the "Sister Team": Kelly McGill and Michele Shaw. Without their energy and tenacity, I would not be here.

The people of Riverdale South had a difficult decision last November. Our former MLA, Jan Stick, was a caring and dedicated representative. Danny Macdonald brought his own skills and experience to the race. Nevertheless, I am grateful and honoured that the people of Riverdale South placed their trust and faith in me to be in this historic Chamber.

I originally come from a place on the other side of this country where government began close to 300 years ago. The relatively new coming of the Legislative Assembly to this territory in 1978 does not in any way detract from its historic nature. As we mourn the passing and celebrate the life of former Commissioner James Smith, we've been thinking a lot about his vision, his leadership and his achievements. I recognize the honourable member and her dedication and tribute to him today, which was very heartfelt, meaningful and educational as well. Mr. Smith believed in the people of this territory and in them making decisions for themselves to make progress happen. We are wise to learn from those who have gone before us.

The Yukon called me in 1992 and, like many stories, I came sight unseen for a two-year job that I got over the phone, and that was close to 25 years ago. Like lots of peoples' stories, I can remember that when I arrived here, I had to get a cab because I was going to stay at an acquaintance's — a friend of a friend's — place for a day or two, and the cab driver told me before we were even down Two Mile Hill that he came for a fishing trip nine years before that and stayed — went home for his stuff and came back. Then I realized how many times I would hear a story like that again, but that's like my story.

In 1993, I met a Yukoner who has now been my husband for over 21 years. We have an amazing son, and we have benefited — when he was born — not unlike Mr. Hassard — I read your speech from 2011 and understood that we had — I'm sorry, I said his name — the Leader of the Official Opposition. I realized that we had a connection because we dealt with newborns and difficulties with their health — but they are fantastic. I understand his child is as is mine. We benefited from being here in the territory, from amazing medical professionals and then, more importantly perhaps, at the time more amazing professionals at BC Children's Hospital. I am definitely thankful for that.

My path brought me to the Yukon, to Whitehorse and eventually to Riverdale South. Riverdale South is an amazing,

unique place to call home. Mr. Speaker, I know you know of what I speak because you are a very close neighbour. Riverdale South is an established and yet diverse neighbourhood. It has single and multi-family dwellings. It has community clubs, young families, seniors housing, five schools, businesses large and small, wilderness, lakes and world-class hiking, biking and walking trails. Recreation, summer and winter, is on our doorsteps, but then, so is downtown Whitehorse — a unique community.

Last summer and fall I spent evening after evening, like all of you did, talking to my neighbours. I was asking questions and listening. My goal was to learn about what concerned them, what ideas they have for innovative progress in government and how government needs to work for them.

In making the decision to run for office, I thought a lot about why I wanted to seek election — why now? My colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, said something that I made a note of because it stuck with me — because I think she said it was an obvious next step. In a way, that is how I felt as well. I know it is the same for a number of my colleagues on this side of the House. It seemed like an obvious next step. But I had to think long and hard about that and what it would mean for my own work, for my family's life, and what it would mean to be a member of this team.

There are really three experiences that describe what led me to making that decision. One was the broader experience, because during my time as the Yukon Ombudsman, we opened hundreds of files and conducted many, many investigations, as you know, into government actions and decisions. We opened hundreds of files during my terms there. Virtually all investigations at the Ombudsman's office began with my staff and me asking the government workers or officials or complainants — whoever was there, but primarily with respect to the government workers and officials — why they did something in a certain way or what was their authority for making a certain decision or taking a certain action.

On many, many occasions, the answer was: "Because that's the way we've always done it," or "I don't know." That caused me real concern. It didn't show innovation; it didn't show leadership, in my view, and I don't think this is the story that others who have worked with government have not experienced.

The second experience was listening to the radio one morning — as we all do here in Whitehorse — when a story about the Yukon Legislative Assembly came on. I listened that morning to the then-Premier respond to a serious and thoughtful question asked by a member of the opposition by completely ignoring the question, saying something not at all related to the question and then in an attempt to insult the other member, attacked the Liberals for something that allegedly had happened 14 years ago. My first thought was that his approach was disrespectful of this place — the process — and that it was wasting everyone's time and money.

More importantly, the speaker at that time — the former Premier — was forgetting who he was there to serve. Government must understand their responsibility to serve the

public. They must understand their authority to act. They must abide by the rules and foster innovation, progressive problem-solving among a talented public service. You've heard my colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works and the Public Service Commission, speak eloquently on the talented public service. Government must be fair, efficient and accountable. If you don't know the answer, say so. Explain that you'll find out and then find out. There is no place for personal attacks. I know that may sound naïve, given the current political climate around the world and the lack of respect for the truth, but we must — and by that I mean all of us — strive for professionalism and excellence.

In preparing to make this presentation, I read many previous replies to the throne speeches, and curiously, almost without exception, every speaker — no matter the party — spoke of wanting to do things differently, encouraging a more professional decorum in this House, and committed to behaving in an appropriately respectful way. Many of those speakers are in this room today and I urge them to remember and honour those commitments. I'm hoping manners will be the new trend. Should the decorum of this House begin to deteriorate, we must remember what Yukoners expect of us and why we have been sent here — to represent, to govern and to work for the people of the Yukon — all of them.

I was once told by a wise person — a mentor of mine and a very successful politician — "Return your calls. Listen and answer the questions for people. Even if you can't help them, they will appreciate being heard and your respect for them."

Much of my career has been focused on the public interest.

I spent four terms as the first female president of the Law Society of Yukon, until the time that I was asked by my colleagues to represent the Federation of Law Societies of Canada, which is the umbrella organization of 14 law societies, governing bodies of lawyers across Canada — some 90,000 lawyers and notaries. It's an international and national organization. Law societies, to be clear, do not represent lawyers; they operate in the public interest. They provide licensing and standards.

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

Debate on motion re Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 3

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, April 25, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 25, 2017 — 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 Earth Day

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an important annual event, Earth Day, on April 22. It is celebrated across the globe. The international theme of this year's Earth Day is "Environmental and Climate Literacy."

Earth Day organizers aim to build a global citizenry fluent in the concepts of climate change and awareness of its unprecedented threat to our planet. Northerners are very familiar with the threats caused by climate change and we are uniquely vulnerable to its impacts. In Yukon alone, the average temperature has increased by two degrees Celsius over the last 50 years and continues to rise. These warm temperatures have a significant impact on Yukon's infrastructure, traditional ways of living and ecological systems. Thawing permafrost shifts the ground beneath us, challenging the integrity of our buildings and roads.

Biomass areas of distinct plant and animal species are changing. This is causing things like southern species to migrate north, increasing the risk of invasive species entering the Yukon, and caribou and salmon migration patterns to shifting, impacting availability and access to traditional food sources.

Climate change is melting our sea ice and causing unprecedented changes in our seasons.

We can see through our spring thaw earlier this year a direct correlation to climate change. It is also melting our glaciers at a record pace. We have recently learned how dramatic and unexpected the impact of glacier melt can be in our own backyards. It has been widely reported that the Kaskawulsh Glacier in the Kluane National Park has retreated so much that its melting water is now running in the opposite direction. It is now flowing south toward the Pacific Ocean, when it used to flow north into the Slims River on its way to the Bering Sea. The term for this phenomenon is called "stream capture" or "river piracy". This is when a river drainage system or watershed diverts from its own bed to one of the nearby streams.

Some scientists are saying that this is the first documented case of river piracy due to climate change that has occurred in modern times. This event shows us the effects climate change can suddenly have, significantly altering our way of life in the world at any time.

Celebrating Earth Day and reflecting on the reality of climate change is important. We need to be aware; we need to think about and celebrate our natural environment. We need to honour the earth, our land, by taking action to heal the damage already done and to prevent future destruction. As Minister of Environment, part of the mandate entrusted to me is to address the realities of climate change, so that Yukoners see a healthy environment with sustainable wildlife populations and opportunities to enjoy the wilderness as fundamental to the social and economic well-being of our territory.

Our current government hears the needs of Yukoners and it understands how vital it is to the stewardship of the environment. We are working toward reducing Yukon's carbon footprint by expanding the use of renewable energy sources and reducing our energy use overall. We are collaborating across the Government of Yukon, First Nation governments and communities to integrate climate change risk assessments in our policies, processes and projects so that we remain resilient. We are hopeful that the work we do now to address the impact of climate change will help provide Yukoners with a sustainable, happy and prosperous place to call home now and into the future.

Our natural environment deserves our care and appreciation for everything it provides. Today, I encourage us all to give thanks for the gifts of our land and to celebrate Earth Day with all of Yukon as we call this our beautiful home.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to and celebrate Earth Day, which is a wonderful opportunity for us to celebrate the beauty in our surroundings here in the Yukon. It is an opportunity to reflect on the choices we have made as individuals and as a community to get where we are today in terms of reducing, reusing and recycling — those three important "Rs" that we are taught from a young age and continue to instill in our children today. It is an opportunity to think to the future and what more we can do to lay solid groundwork for generations of Yukoners to come so that they may enjoy the Earth and all it has to offer as we do today.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on the importance of continuing the work of the previous government to work toward achieving greener construction and retrofitting schools and other government buildings to limit carbon emissions. The plan to cut emissions by a measurable means was not only one that would result in much needed repairs and upgrades to outdated buildings that contribute to the majority of Yukon's emissions, but would be results-based and achieve the goal of lower emissions.

I would encourage the current government to build upon this plan, which, by creating jobs, works toward cutting emissions in an achievable and measurable way for generations of Yukoners to benefit from in years to come.

This year, the theme for Earth Day is "EarthPLAY". Parents are encouraged to focus on getting their children outdoors as much as possible to play. It is no secret that

outdoor play leads to healthier kids and, in turn, healthier adults.

I would like to thank all those Yukoners who are making a conscientious effort to recycle and limit their waste. Not only are you doing your part in your community by diverting your waste from the landfill, but you are teaching your children and others good habits to carry on and live by.

Our schools are doing a wonderful job teaching our children the importance of recycling, composting and diverting waste. Workplaces are also incorporating these important habits and our communities are increasingly raising awareness. I would like to thank Yukoners for embracing the importance of reducing waste and encourage them to continue to find ways to do more for our Earth.

Mr. Speaker, I'm always fascinated by this Native American proverb that I read many years ago: "We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

Ms. Hanson: On behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus, I rise to pay tribute to Earth Day, which took place this past Saturday and is celebrated around the world.

I don't want to repeat the eloquent words of my colleagues in this House but I did want to take a moment to acknowledge the Yukon Conservation Society, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Yukon and Zero Waste Yukon, which organized an outreach campaign to encourage people to take action for the Earth during this yearly celebration.

Choosing active modes of transportation, carpooling, buying local or reducing the waste that we send to the landfill are just a few examples of how we individually can make a difference, but on Earth Day, and every day of the year, it's also important to remember that protecting our environment is also a collective responsibility. Governments have a critical role to play to ensure that sustainability is more than a buzzword, but rather the way our society is organized — a society based on the knowledge that the beauty and the bounty of our Earth demands our respectful stewardship.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of Education Week

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Education Week, which runs from April 24 to 28 this year. I'm speaking this afternoon on behalf of the Yukon government and the Third Party.

This year's theme is "Canada 150: Stories of the Yukon and Yukon First Nations", which celebrates education and recognizes the histories of Canada and Yukon First Nations. Long before Confederation, Yukon First Nations lived and thrived in this special land that we call home. Education has been part of both Yukon and Yukon First Nation histories as the people who lived here leaned on the land and learned there in their communities and in schools.

Today we continue to support and celebrate learning in many spaces and places in the Yukon. The fifth annual Yukon Robotics Challenge is taking place today, inspiring grade 6 and 7 students to use creativity, collaboration, communication

and critical thinking to accomplish complicated tasks in a fun and hands-on way. Many thanks go out to the educators and volunteers across the territory who help make experiential learning opportunities like this available to Yukon students.

Also this week, the 49th Rotary Music Festival is currently in progress, providing Yukon musicians and dancers of all ages with an opportunity to learn, receive professional adjudication and perform their art. We thank the Rotary Club of Whitehorse, the Rotary Music Festival board of directors, and the staff, volunteers, sponsors and participants who make this special community event possible. I know I said that kind of quickly, but it's the 49th Rotary Music Festival. That's an extraordinary task — an extraordinary accomplishment for those young musicians who have all passed through that process and for the Rotary Club of Whitehorse, which has put it on for many, many years.

Lifelong learning requires partners in education. Learning happens at home, in class, in communities and on the land, due in part to the collaboration and contributions of many, including: parents and families, school councils, including the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees and the Catholic Education Association of Yukon; the staff of the Education department — from the dedicated staff at each of our schools to the many people working behind the scenes at the main building and in the schools to support Yukon education; Yukon First Nation governments, elders, and communities are also partners; and the French community, the franco-yukonnaise, the francophone school board and the Canadian Parents for French are also partners; the educators and staff at Yukon College and the service providers for advanced education, who provide learning pathways and training opportunities for adult learners and job seekers. I encourage my colleagues and the public to find out more about Education Week events on the Department of Education website or by connecting with their local school. There are lots of activities happening throughout the territory at the individual school level.

At the heart of all of our work together is the learning journey of each of our students. You, the learners of the Yukon, are why we do what we do, and your success is our success.

Thank you. Merci beaucoup. Shaw nithän.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to celebrate Education Week in Yukon. Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation means 150 years of education in this country. This year, the theme of Education Week is "Canada 150: Stories of Yukon and Yukon First Nations".

I am proud to speak today about the history of education in our territory and the path we take forward. It is the job of parents, teachers and, indeed, all community members to provide our students with the knowledge and history of our past and guide them through the present to ensure healthy, successful futures and lives.

The Yukon government over the past number of years has worked on ensuring First Nation content and history has been

rolled into the Yukon curriculum. This inclusion of the history of residential schools in Yukon allows students a better understanding of our territory and how we came to be the Yukon we know today. By educating current and future generations of Yukon youth, we are contributing to the healing process and to a better understanding of each other. Education has been redesigned and reinvigorated over many years, and this still continues as we learn new methods and incorporate new ideas. The network of public, private, culture, language and religion-based educations allow parents to place their children into a stream of schooling that they see as best fitting the needs of their child.

In recent years, by placing emphasis on the trades for our youth, we are seeing an increase in young people obtaining successful and gainful employment in areas where they can thrive in a hands-on environment. By providing support and guidance for our students pursuing post-secondary education in the territory and across Canada, we are seeing Yukon students succeed, with many remaining and returning home to work, play and raise a family. Experiential learning programs have been incredibly successful over the years in enabling students to follow their passions. They have pursued knowledge through experiencing the outdoors, sports, music, drama, culture and arts.

I welcome the addition of more Yukon-specific content and more focus on our First Nation history and traditions. I also look forward to seeing how students will develop within this new curriculum. I remain hopeful that the government moves at a reasonable pace to ensure that the changes they plan on making to student assessment have the support of students, parents and educators. I encourage parents and students to engage themselves in these changes and lend their voices and opinions to the government to ensure they have a say in the future of education in Yukon.

I would also like to give thanks to the teachers, school administrators and parents for all of the contributions that they made to ensure their children have the building blocks they need for successful futures.

To those organizers of events throughout the week, I wish you all great success and offer my thanks for your contributions to Education Week. As we raise Yukon's future generations, let us continue to focus on an amazing education system that will give them the best possible chance. Through a commitment to lifelong learning, we will succeed.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, it is with great love that I see three people who I love very much in my life: my mom is here today, Rhoda Istchenko; my sister Harmony Istchenko; and my nephew Rowan Istchenko. I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker — I told them I was re-elected and I still had a job. I'm not sure if they're just checking up on me, but it's great to see them in the House today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 5, entitled *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act* —

Speaker: Order. We have a few more procedural matters to go through here. Thank you, minister. We'll be with you in a short few minutes.

Once again, are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 5: *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act (2017)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. Frost: I knew that you were going to skip through those other things, so here I am — similar to what you did yesterday. I guess I was ahead of that.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 5, entitled *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act (2017)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services that Bill No. 5, entitled *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act (2017)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 5 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to:

(1) immediately use the protected area provisions provided for in the *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act* to designate and protect sensitive and damaged areas until a comprehensive ATV management plan is in place; and

(2) meet with stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan for the management of ATVs in the territory for tabling in the Fall Sitting of this Legislature.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to call witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation to appear in the Legislative Assembly to answer questions during the 2017 Spring Sitting.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to call witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation to appear in the Legislative Assembly to answer questions during the 2017 Spring Sitting.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to support the development of communications infrastructure in rural Yukon, including improving access to emergency services, by working with the private sector to expand cellular phone coverage to people without service in rural areas including Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fox Lake, Ibex Valley, Junction 37 and Mendenhall.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to complete and make public an economic analysis of the impacts that the creation of a statutory holiday for Aboriginal Day would have on Yukon, including but not limited to:

- (1) Yukon businesses;
- (2) municipal governments;
- (3) Yukon government and its corporations and agencies;
- (4) First Nation governments and their development corporations;
- (5) the Government of Canada; and
- (6) non-profit and non-governmental organizations.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Carbon tax

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has known since last December what the cost per tonne is going to be for the carbon tax. In fact the Premier's own press release announcing the carbon tax came attached with a document that states — and I quote: "The carbon price should start at a minimum of \$10 per tonne in 2018, and rise by \$10 per year to \$50 per tonne in 2022." So it's clear that the Premier has all of the information that he needs to do an analysis of what the impacts will be on Yukon families and businesses.

With the carbon tax only eight months away from being implemented, will the Premier finally get to work and tell us what the cost of this carbon tax scheme is going to be on Yukon families?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise again today in the Legislative Assembly to speak to this issue. It is clear that the members opposite are struggling to understand a little bit of the background about the carbon pricing.

Carbon pricing is a federal tax. It will be collected by the federal government and it will be administered by the federal government. I'm surprised that the member opposite doesn't seem to be aware of this reality, especially when it is his government that originally committed Yukon and all of

Canada to this tax. In March 2016, the past government signed the Vancouver declaration, which outlined a national carbon-pricing system and they have committed basically to a carbon-pricing mechanism by doing so.

As we discussed yesterday in the Legislative Assembly, we're waiting to hear from Ottawa to provide information for the next logical steps so that, from a regional basis, we can start implementing how we can best deal with the federal pricing mechanism.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, leadership isn't about blaming others. Leadership isn't about making excuses. Signing on to this carbon tax scheme was the Premier's decision and his decision alone. The Premier has the information he needs to do this analysis of the impacts of this carbon tax scheme on Yukon families. He has delayed this Legislature by a record six months and has had plenty of time to get answers for these questions.

Will the Premier please show some leadership and tell Yukoners how much this carbon tax scheme is going to cost them?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the member opposite already relayed, we know how much it is going to cost at the pump — the federal pricing mechanism — but again, I am surprised that the member opposite doesn't seem to be aware of the reality that this is not my tax. This is a federal carbon-pricing mechanism. We can go over that over and over again in the Legislative Assembly. The Yukon Party can try to make it seem like we are implementing this carbon-pricing mechanism. It is not; it is a federal tax. But I will say that I believe in carbon pricing. I believe that it is the most effective way to deal with a global issue and we should all be concerned about that — absolutely. However, in March 2016, as I stated earlier, the past government did sign on to the Vancouver declaration, which outlined a national carbon-pricing system. That's not assigning any blame. That is just getting the facts out there in the Legislative Assembly.

Now, somewhere along the line, the former government began discussing an exemption. There is no such thing as an exemption. There never was an exemption. An exemption was never an option. No province or territory was ever offered an exemption.

These are all things that we know are true, and we, again, are looking forward to working with the opposition and working with the private sector when we get the information that we need from a federal carbon-pricing mechanism to make sure that 100 percent of that tax stays in the Yukon so that it is truly revenue neutral for Yukon businesses and Yukon families.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. The Premier says that there are no exemptions, but he didn't even bother to ask, so how would he know?

Yesterday the Premier told Yukoners that they will feel the pinch at the gas pumps due to this carbon tax scheme, so clearly he knows his carbon tax is going to increase costs for Yukoners. If he is so proud of this carbon tax scheme, why won't he be up-front and tell us today: How much more will we be paying for our fuel at the pumps, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the member opposite told us how much we are going to be paying at the pumps, so he already knows. This is an interesting game we're playing here in the Legislative Assembly. As well, I am not sure how he knows that I didn't ask for an exemption. We went to Ottawa and we asked: "Are there any exemptions?" They said very clearly, "No, there is not". This is a global phenomenon that needs regional development. It's interesting that the member opposite believes that he knows all of the conversations that we had.

Again, we believe in the carbon-pricing mechanism. Yukoners are going to get the deal that we promised, which is a revenue-neutral tax, collected by the federal government and returned to Yukoners. He knows what the price is going to be at the pumps, but keeps on asking what the price is going to be at the pumps.

The federally imposed carbon-pricing model will not increase the tax burden to Yukoners. As I have said over and over again, this is a federal tax and it will be collected by the federal government. We appreciate that Yukoners are interested in knowing how this will work and when we get the information from Ottawa, we will absolutely engage with Yukoners and we will move forward for their federal pricing mechanism.

I don't know what else he wants me to say, other than we will wait until the actual designs based on the annex and also on the pan-Canadian framework, which his government signed, comes in.

Question re: Liberal Party ethical standards

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, during the 2016 territorial election, a candidate for the Liberal Party was discovered to have been using inappropriate tactics to get vulnerable people to vote. The Chief Electoral Officer looked into the issue, found that there had been violations of the *Elections Act*, and that candidate has since been charged by the RCMP. When the media discovered and reported on this issue, the Liberal Party admitted that their candidate had "made a mistake" but the Liberal leader said that she was well-intentioned and genuine in her desire to help vulnerable people vote.

Does the Premier believe that being supposedly well-intentioned and genuine is an excuse for breaking the law?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What I do believe in is "innocent until proven guilty".

I don't know how much more to say to the member opposite. I appreciate his concerns about the democratic process and I appreciate his concerns on election rules and procedures. We're very aware that the RCMP has conducted an investigation in this matter and they are going to be proceeding with that. Unless the member opposite knows something that I don't, no charges have been laid and, until that time, it's in the courts. I really don't know what else to say, other than innocent until proven guilty, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, for Yukoners to have confidence in the Premier, they need to understand his judgment. When the Liberal Party learned that their candidate had "made a mistake" and broken the law the Liberal leader

chose to defend her, saying she was well-intentioned and genuine. When the Chief Electoral Officer found that the candidate had violated the act and referred the matter to the RCMP, the Leader of the NDP called for the Liberals to ditch the candidate, but the Liberal leader chose to maintain his firm support.

Mr. Speaker, when the Liberal leader learned that his candidate had, in the words of his campaign chair, made a mistake and violated the *Elections Act*, he chose to ignore calls for her dismissal. The question is very simple: Why?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Just to clarify, charges were laid. I'm sorry. But again, at the same time, the investigation is still going on and is in front of the courts — is what I meant to say in the first supplementary.

So, you know, to answer the member opposite's question, this is a team. We'll stick by the team when we're moving through an election or when we're moving through a five-year mandate. We're going to be a team and we're going to stick by a team — again, innocent until proven guilty.

I was on the record yesterday and I'll repeat it again that we do know that Ms. Goeppel is appointed to the Assessment Review Board and that was reviewed by our government in December 2016. We are following the principle, again, of innocent until proven guilty and we will maintain that. I know that the member opposite would be very interested in making sure that we follow the rules of the *Elections Act* and we commit to do so. But at this time, there's really nothing more to report, other than we're going to wait to see how the court comes out at the end. We'll make a decision as far as Ms. Goeppel's appointment to the Assessment Review Board, based upon the decisions of the court. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, this issue is no doubt embarrassing for the Liberal leader. Yukoners have a right to understand how he sees the world and how much tolerance he has for ethical lapses inside the Liberal Party team.

He knew that one of his campaign star candidates had broken the law, yet he chose to defend her and refused to kick her off his team. Since that time, Yukoners have learned how serious that violation was. The RCMP has charged that Liberal candidate with three very serious offences under the *Elections Act* and the punishment will soon be decided by a territorial judge.

In light of this, Mr. Speaker, does the Premier now regret his decision to defend the candidate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'll just say that the member opposite is wrong. Charges have not been laid — I mean, have not been put through the court. We're still waiting for that determination so he might want to check Hansard as far as his supplementary. There's no embarrassment over here, Mr. Speaker. We're going to wait to see the courts come to the end and if charges are going to be laid, we'll move forward from there. But again, we have no information to gain here in the Legislative Assembly and we'll wait for the courts to do their due diligence.

Thank you to the member opposite for this question.

Question re: Joint labour management committees

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Premier. Last week, the Yukon Employees' Union withdrew from all joint labour management committees with the government. They did so because so many government representatives on these committees don't have the power to take action, as they are on temporary or acting assignments.

The union reports — and the government has acknowledged — that there are at least 11 deputy or assistant deputy ministers and 17 directors who are in acting positions. We do understand that a transition in government does not happen overnight but, after nearly six months in power, we have yet to see how this government manages the public service differently than their predecessor.

Will the Premier outline how his government's management of the public service will differ from that of the previous government?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her question. This government will manage the civil service well. That is the answer to the member opposite's question. You are right. The president of the Yukon Employees' Union did reach out to us. He has issued a news release — really, a cry for help — and after years of neglect and problems, he came to me. I met with the president of the union. We had a cordial, productive first meeting. I have talked with him several times since then. As a matter of fact, I have spoken to the president of the union more than I have spoken to my son in the last couple of days. I have spoken to him again and again. We are having great talks, and I have every confidence that we are going to be able to meet an amicable resolution to the issue of these important committees, which deal with health and safety issues and return to work. It is important work and we want to make sure they work. We are working with the union and we will get that working.

Ms. Hanson: You know, it is kind of unfortunate that it took six months. We do know that the minister did meet and speak with the president of the YEU last week, and that is a good thing, but it should not just happen because of their dissatisfaction becoming a news story. In fact, as the minister alluded to, this is a long-standing issue, an issue I raised with the minister in December. In 2013, the government conducted an audit of its staffing practices, and the conclusions were far from glowing. One of the most troubling findings was that non-competitive hirings far outnumber competitive ones across the Yukon government. We are talking about 60 percent of 1,900 staffing actions for the audited year. That leads to perceptions of favouritism and perceptions of a system that is not based on merit. It leads to a demoralized public service.

So here is a good starting point for the minister: Will the minister commit to reducing the number of non-competitive hires in the public service and report on the progress made during the Fall Sitting of this Legislature?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for her question. There was a review done of the situation in 2013. There were 15 recommendations. I had a conversation with

the head of the Public Service Commission this morning, and 14 of those recommendations have been acted upon and answered to the satisfaction of the auditors who actually conducted that review. The 15th one is still outstanding. It has to do with security clearances and that type of thing. It's a fairly complicated matter, and we are looking into that throughout the civil service. But that is not where the work ends, Mr. Speaker — with one review that the previous government was forced into. This problem that I have inherited — I am going to work with the civil service and my Public Service Commissioner and the members opposite and the president of the union and the president of the YTA to fix it — to fix the issues that we have inherited. This review process that happened in 2013 was one review. I have committed to keeping that review process incremental and on a regular basis. That is what we are going to do. This is not something that is going to be fixed overnight.

It's not going to be fixed in 140 days. This is a problem we have inherited; it's throughout the civil service. There has been a lack of oversight and we're going to change that.

Ms. Hanson: It was an audit, not a review — an audit of staffing — and his response should make it clear that the tabling of this response requested in this second supplementary should be an easy task for this minister.

Like any business or organization, the government sometimes needs to take extra staff on to cover for holidays or to handle a seasonal peak in activity. Auxiliary-on-call staff can help those needs, but we have all heard stories of people who have worked full-time for years as auxiliaries on call without getting a secure position within government. This makes planning for the future nearly impossible for auxiliary-on-call employees, whether that means buying a car, starting a family or taking on a mortgage.

Mr. Speaker, what will this government do to make sure that people who have been auxiliary on call for months or years, people whose work is critical — I'm not just talking about the seasonal ones, but those who are critical for government operations — are treated with respect and given the permanent status they deserve?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for her question. It's a good one. This government respects the civil service. We respect the people who work for us. They do hard work. They do valuable work. There's more to come on this file. The Premier, the Minister of Finance, has signalled that we want to actually get to the true cost of government and we're going to do that. Stay tuned — there will be more coming out this week.

Question re: Carbon tax

Mr. Kent: I want to follow up with the Premier on his carbon tax scheme.

Yesterday, we established that the Premier's plans for the carbon tax mean that tourists who visit here will be forced to pay more to visit the territory. In fact, the Premier has bragged to local media about this fact. This tax on tourism will make it more expensive for people to visit the Yukon. Since he was so excited by this tourism tax, will the Premier tell us how much

more expensive it will be for people to visit Yukon as a result of his carbon tax scheme?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It feels like Groundhog Day in here, and if we're going to hear the exact same thing, I'm just going to continue to stay on my side of the dialogue, I guess.

I'm happy to speak to this. It's clear that the members opposite are struggling to understand whose tax this is. The carbon tax is a federal carbon tax. It will be collected by the federal government. It will be administered by the federal government. I'm surprised that the member opposite does not seem to be aware of this reality, especially when it was his government that originally committed Yukon and Canada to the tax.

Every jurisdiction in Canada will have an opportunity to decide how to implement a federal carbon-pricing mechanism. We're no different, and we will engage with the opposition if they are interested in helping to design how we're going to make sure that this remains revenue neutral and also how the federal government commits to our annex, making sure that we implement the tax where we can actually make a difference but not impede businesses. We've said that from the get-go. We have a plan to work with the businesses, to work with stakeholders. The Yukon Party's plan was to put their head in the sand and talk about an exemption during the election campaign. That exemption doesn't exist.

I answered the question earlier from the Leader of the Official Opposition as to whether or not we ever asked for an exemption. We inquired about it. The answer is "no", and we will get back to the member opposite as soon as possible to give more details.

Mr. Kent: Considering the Premier has been in government for almost six months and had four trips to Ottawa, he certainly doesn't know very much about the carbon tax scheme and what it's going to cost. I take it that the answer to my question is that he doesn't know what the cost to tourists will be as a result of his carbon tax scheme.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has promised it will do evidence-based decision-making. However, yesterday we learned that the government signed on to this scheme without any analysis or evidence about the financial impacts on Yukoners and their families.

Why did the Premier not make a decision based on evidence?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am perplexed as to the question, as it was the Yukon Party that signed on to the Vancouver protocol. Now the Vancouver protocol committed this government to many things, including a carbon-pricing mechanism. So I guess I could ask the same question of his party. When they signed onto the Vancouver protocol, did they know the implications of the carbon-pricing mechanism? Did they know what it was going to cost the tourism industry? Did they know what it was going to cost Yukon businesses? No. They signed on and, during the election, their plan was to call for an exemption after signing on to the Vancouver protocol.

Mr. Speaker, we've done a lot of work and we showcased that yesterday. We've talked about how, in this government,

we're doing a whole-of-government approach. It won't just be one department. We're going to be working with Finance, we're going to be working with Environment, and we are going to be working with Community Services. We will engage with Yukoners. The members opposite know exactly how much this is going to cost. We don't have a lot of options here as far as different types of mechanisms — cap and trade, and these types of things — but we're looking into all of those options. It's going to be the federal backstop. Members opposite know it's going to the federal backstop. They also know how that's going to increment from 2018 on. They also know that there'll be analysis in 2020 to make sure that the intent of the carbon-pricing mechanism is kept whole. I would love to give them some more information. They've read the annex — more details to come — and that will include Yukoners as far as how —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So what we've established here during my questioning today is that the Premier has no idea how much the carbon tax is going to cost Yukoners and he has not made any decision based on evidence. Earlier today, the Premier said that he does support carbon pricing, or his carbon tax scheme, for the simple fact that he believes it is good for the environment.

So can the Premier tell us how much his carbon tax scheme will reduce Yukon's emissions by?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the question. I do appreciate the concern of the Yukon Party when it comes to the carbon-pricing mechanism. Anything that is going to increase costs — I understand it, but I don't think they're understanding the concept of revenue neutral. This carbon-pricing mechanism — and I'll repeat it again — is revenue neutral.

As far as what the cost will be — well, at the pump it has been already decided from the federal backstop how much money it's going to cost at the pump. We have committed to making sure that it is revenue neutral, so that money is going to come back to Yukon businesses and Yukon individuals.

If the members opposite would like me to, in a silo, make a decision on how that's going to work — well, I don't have the expertise myself personally to do that, so I'm going to rely on the business community to give me information as to how they want to help with this rebate program — more details to come on that. But we are happy to be on the right side of history when it comes to man-made climate change. We're happy to be on the right side of history when it comes to doing our part to make sure that the Yukon is not only just following along, but is at the leading edge when it comes to new technologies in the environment — new technologies to get us off of fossil fuels.

There is money to be made in the green economy and it's too bad the Yukon Party seems to be a little bit more on the fossil side.

Question re: Carbon tax

Mr. Istchenko: Thanks to the efforts of the previous government, along with other northern premiers — and I was

part of this file, Mr. Speaker — the Yukon was successful in negotiating language for a northern exemption to the carbon tax. However, even though getting an exemption for the Yukon was the right thing to do the Premier was more concerned with pleasing Ottawa so he signed on without even knowing the impacts. I wish the Premier would have shot for gold and not settled for silver here. Recently, the Premier of Nunavut has said that Nunavut is still in negotiations with Ottawa for an exemption to the carbon tax.

Can the Premier let us know and let Yukoners know if there are any negotiations that he is having with Ottawa for the same thing?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What I will let the member opposite know is that every one of the three territories is working on their annex. I hope the member opposite has read the annex for the Northwest Territories. It sounds like he might be a little bit confused as to what the other territories are looking for. They all will be using the federal backstop mechanism.

Again, the concept that the Yukon Party put forward was: “No, we’re going to get an exemption”, but no, the territories all believe that is not possible. It’s interesting that we’re going to continue to flog this horse, but fine. That’s fine. If we’re going to use all of your questions on the federal pricing mechanism, have at her.

Interestingly enough, when you talk about what the other territories are doing, they’re trying to take a look at the Vancouver protocol — the rules and regulations set off there. The annex that was done based on conversations that they’ve had and we’ve had from the pan-Canadian framework forward as to how we make sure that Yukon businesses and Northwest Territories businesses are not affected in those areas where they cannot be effective — where they’re not going to be able to reduce their emissions.

We are committing — I guess to Ottawa as well — but more importantly to the environment — more importantly to a modern way of thinking about how to get off of our reliance on fossil fuels. We’re committed to it and we’re committed to making sure that Yukoners are in the process when we get to that time and that will be within the next month or so.

Mr. Istchenko: I’m just here asking questions for Yukoners, Mr. Speaker. The most asked question to me is what’s this going to look like.

Life in the north is expensive. The Premier’s carbon scheme will raise the cost of food, groceries, clothing and gas. I believe that prior to the election the now Premier said the price of diapers are going up. The Premier has claimed that Yukoners are going to get a rebate to get some of the money back, but has provided no details.

Can the Premier describe to this House what his rebate will look like? How frequently will Yukoners receive the rebate cheque? Will all Yukoners receive the same amount of rebate? How much paperwork will Yukoners have to go through to get their rebate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The last supplementary is a good question and those details have not been worked out yet because we still have to engage with businesses and Yukoners after we finalize Ottawa’s part of this, which is analyzing the

annex as I went over — analyzing the annex based upon the pan-Canadian framework, which is based upon the Vancouver protocol which the previous government signed on to which is based upon the Paris agreements.

Interestingly enough, my most asked question when I went door to door wasn’t necessarily whether or not we’re going to get an exemption because Yukoners are smarter than that.

Yukoners have been paying attention from the federal government when they said there are no exemptions. The biggest question that I was getting was: We know what your plan is; it’s to do a revenue neutral — giving the money back to Yukoners and to Yukon businesses. What we don’t know is what the Yukon Party’s plan is.

So I pose the question back to the Yukon Party: What would they do? Knowing that there isn’t an exemption; knowing full well what the regulations are — the federal backstop — how would they do it? We haven’t heard anything from them as far as what their plan would have been. We didn’t hear it during the election campaign. They lost the election campaign based upon this — based upon not having a plan — and now here we are. It seems like we’re still in the election campaign, talking about a federal carbon-pricing mechanism.

We have a plan and we will be engaging with Yukoners to make sure that this is revenue neutral to Yukoners and to Yukon businesses. But at the same time — and I’ll reiterate this — we believe in carbon-pricing mechanism as the best mechanism to combat global warming.

Mr. Istchenko: I’m going to fundamentally disagree with the Premier. I have talked to many placer miners in the Klondike area about this carbon tax and they’re very, very confused. They don’t know if they’re going to be able to hire as many people.

Can the Premier tell us how he intends to track how much extra Yukoners pay as a result of the carbon tax so we can ensure that they get everything back?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question when it comes to placer miners. I had many conversations out in the goldfields during the election campaign about, what exactly is this going to look like? The concept that you cannot have an electric D9 CAT came up; the concept of making sure that we’re not penalized for growing businesses — it’s really important and we had that conversation. The conversation went along the line that we’re going to establish those areas that we can reduce emissions for placer miners. I have friends who are placer mining with a small camp — two to three members. They’ve changed to solar arrays for their camps, saving up to \$800 a month in fuel costs. This is exactly what we’re talking about. This is about placer miners also wanting to give back and wanting to make sure that they’re doing all that they can in those areas that they can. So we’re working with the placer miners. We’re going to make sure that we do that.

Now, with the opposition, when they were the government, their plan, again, was to say “no” and stick their heads in the sand. In that case, all of that placer miner money

that would have gone toward this carbon-pricing mechanism would have gone to Ottawa and Ottawa would have decided how to then take that money back and distribute it into the Yukon. So those are the two options that placer miners who were paying attention to the election campaign had to consider between the Yukon Party and the Liberal Party. I guess the results are here. We're in government.

Again, we're working with the placer miners. Excellent question — good concerns. We want to make sure that they're not penalized in those areas where they cannot reduce their emissions but actually have incentives to go forward.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

CONSIDERATION OF SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 26(2), that consideration of a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, if not concluded today, will take place on Wednesday, April 26, 2017.

NOTICE OF OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, April 26, 2017, should consideration of a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be concluded today. They are Motion No. 6, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, and Motion No. 9, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South.

Ms. Hanson: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, April 26, 2017, should consideration of a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be concluded today. They are Motion No. 2, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and Motion No. 5, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Motion No. 11 — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, moved by Mr. Gallina; adjourned debate, the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, you may or may not recall that yesterday in the afternoon I was speaking about how much of my career had been focused on the public interest. I spoke a little bit about my work with the Law Society of the Yukon, the Federation of Law Societies of

Canada, and I was about to say Yukon school councils — belonging to F.H. Collins, where I served for two years, one as co-chair — you may or may not recall that. I will go forward from there.

The 2011 throne speech, the last one delivered in this House by the Yukon Party, made numerous references to “my government”. Almost every sentence began with that phrase. The deliberate language you heard last Thursday from the Yukon Liberal throne speech made reference to “your government”. This illustrates a fundamental difference. This government works for Yukoners in the public interest — a fact that we will not forget. That does not mean that we can please all Yukoners all of the time, but we have promised to listen and make decisions based on evidence — a topic that came up earlier today.

Evidence is something that I know a little bit about. For almost 25 years here in the territory, I have had a litigation practice that focused on criminal and regulatory prosecutions, administrative law, labour law and child protection cases. Consideration of evidence was a daily concern. Detours from that practice included developing materials and training Yukon justices of the peace, working with the team that developed the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court and serving a five-year term as Yukon Ombudsman and Information and Privacy Commissioner — an officer of this House. All of those roles required a deep understanding and daily assessment of evidence.

Sound decisions are based on solid, knowable evidence — evidence that provides the basis for decision-making and is communicated in support of a decision fosters greater transparency, accountability and understanding. Even if you ultimately don't agree with the decision, communicating how decisions are made and what facts are taken into account in making them is the responsibility of government. It will foster transparency and will allow the public to understand how we're working for them.

You may recall yesterday that I was giving reasons as to how I got here or why I decided to take this road, and I mentioned two of them. The third reason I decided to pursue this form of public service now is that I know that women bring a unique perspective and need a greater voice in politics.

The team of Liberal candidates in the fall of 2016 approached gender equity, something that has never been done in the Yukon before. Three female MLAs were elected to the Liberal caucus, two were elected to the Yukon Party caucus and — something that we should all strive for — a completely female caucus for the NDP.

I must say that I am truly disappointed with the Official Opposition's decision to silence the women in their party by deciding to only introduce one response to the throne speech. I was very much looking forward to hearing from the perspective of the honourable member from Watson Lake and former Speaker of this House, taking into account her experience here. I was particularly disappointed not to hear at this time from the Honourable Member for Porter Creek North and former Commissioner for the Yukon. She is a very well-respected leader in the aboriginal and wider Yukon

community, and her voice should be heard. The decision to introduce only one reply to the throne speech has also had the effect of silencing one of the Third Party members on this topic.

In my profession as a lawyer, your reputation is everything. It precedes you, people judge you by it, and they react to you based on it. Earning the trust of my peers, superiors, clients and the public has always guided my work. My career has been dedicated to fairness, equality, collaboration, and respect for all people. My work has often focused on finding real solutions, improving government processes and instigating change. I will continue to do this as an elected member of this Legislative Assembly, representing Riverdale South as the Minister of Justice and Attorney General for the territory and as Minister of Education. This is a true privilege.

As I was writing this address, I was thinking about all the things and experiences that I've had over the past several months that I'm thankful for. I'm thankful for all of my neighbours in Riverdale South and for many new friends like Jeff Wolosewich and Colleen Grandy, who gave up precious family time and energy to help me and believed in me even before they really knew me. I will not let them down.

You heard about this team yesterday. I'm thankful for the very experienced, diverse and talented team of colleagues. Their dedication, commitment and work ethic is second to none. They are working every day, all day, for Yukoners. I'm thankful to the people of the Vuntut Gwitchin, who welcomed some of our team into the warmth of their homes and their community.

They generously shared their pride of culture, their wonderful food — including caribou head soup — and their spectacular land with us. It was a truly great learning experience.

I'm thankful for the hundreds of public servants who have worked so hard during the past months to teach me about their jobs, the programs they run and the services they provide. I'm thankful for the singer who stands outside my office window on an irregular basis and brings joy by sharing her talent with all of those who can hear her. I am thankful for the LGBTQ-two-spirit individuals who bravely shared their stories with us. I'm thankful for our indigenous courtworkers and the lawyers and staff at Legal Aid who face access-to-justice issues on a regular basis but keep going strong to help their clients. I'm thankful for Yukon students who show up to school every day, excited about learning — those with whom I have shared pancakes, moose stew and the Commissioner's Canada 150 sugar cookies. I'm thankful for all of the women who put their names forward and worked so hard in the election. I am very thankful to those of you who are here, my sisters on this journey.

At every table, dinner table, campfire, ball field or coffee shop here in the territory, ideas happen — ideas for community development, economic growth and entrepreneurial innovation. Your government is asking to hear those ideas. We believe that one of the roles of government is

to listen, to understand and to facilitate the growth of those ideas.

Our caucus has met with literally thousands of people since the election and commit to: improve transparency in government, operations and finances; a legislature that incorporates First Nation values and culture; and a caucus that is respectful, accountable and responsive to Yukoners.

As your new Minister of Justice and Attorney General, I have been mandated by the Premier to work with my colleagues and community partners to expand crime prevention through environmental design with all interested rural and remote communities. There is a tremendous example of that having already taken place with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, so it's not just rural and remote communities that are valued and benefitting from this. In fact, several Whitehorse and other larger communities will do so as well.

I'm going to work with the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and community partners to improve services for victims of violence and sexualized violence. I have been told to develop alternative correctional therapeutic environments for individuals with disabilities, mental health and addiction problems. We will be engaging with Yukon First Nations to develop culturally relevant programming for offenders.

Another piece of my mandate includes working with the Law Society of Yukon to introduce legislation to update the *Legal Profession Act* to improve access to legal services and protect the public interest. This is a task — and they all are — but this one in particular is very important to me because I wrote the letter to the Yukon Party government in 2004 as the then-president of the law society seeking those very changes. Unfortunately the modernization of those laws in the interest of the Yukon public were never a priority for that government. We'll make that change this year.

I'll be working with the Women's Directorate minister and the Health and Social Services minister to review legislation, policies and practices to make sure that they do not discriminate against LGBTQ-two-spirit communities or individuals. I'll also work with the Women's Directorate and the Health and Social Services department and ministers and other colleagues to make sure that all of the work that is required to make the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls meaningful and successful. In fact, Mr. Speaker, work on all of these initiatives has already begun in this department and others.

I take a moment to emphasize that because many of the questions we've had in the last couple of days indicate that for six months, we haven't really been doing anything. The truth is that the Yukon Party members, having been previously in government, know exactly how much work is done outside of sitting in this House, and the preparation and the work of government is in both places. So the work on all of those initiatives has already started.

Yesterday, the Leader of the Third Party mentioned the Auditor General's report on corrections. I agree with her and the work is already being done. In fact, I understand that all but one recommendation has been completed, but I'm

confirming that and I will get back to her on it because it's a valid and important question.

Challenges in the Department of Education are abundant because our children and their futures are something that concerns us all. This government's goals for education are all designed to enhance educational achievements for all Yukon students. A key element is the new curriculum. We will soon be implementing the student-centred curriculum, which is Yukon's version of the revised British Columbia kindergarten to grade 12 curriculum. That curriculum focuses on skills development and experiential learning while maintaining academic standards and improving graduation rates. We are committed to providing a school system that incorporates local and First Nation content and that is responsive to the needs of all students. Students must see themselves in their school's activities and learning. The government supports the First Nations Education Commission in their efforts to realize their vision of education — something I'm very excited to work on over this mandate.

The continued planning and construction of the French first language high school will occur through 2017 to 2018. School resources, teacher-hiring practices and assessments and student assessments are all issues that will be addressed in the near future.

Increasing collaboration between schools, parents, families and students is critical to student success, and efforts to enhance such opportunities will be a focus. Positive, flexible and experiential learning environments are the goal so that every student can reach their potential and have a successful future that they dream of.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that for every problem, there is a solution when you tackle it with an open mind, hard work and integrity. Indira Gandhi, when she was Prime Minister of India, related that her grandfather once told her: "There are two kinds of people: those who do the work and those who take the credit. Try to be in the first group, as there is far less competition there." I look forward to us all working for Yukoners and together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker for this opportunity.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, honourable members, friends, people of the Yukon — Jeanie Dendys [*Member spoke in First Nation language. Text unavailable.*]

I am Jeanie Dendys. I am a member of the Tahltan Nation and I come from the Wolf Clan. I am proud to say I come from [*Member spoke in First Nation language. Text unavailable.*] people from Telegraph Creek, BC.

Tahltan people are matrilineal people, which is why I always introduce myself as Tahltan first. I am also Norwegian on my dad's side. My ancestry comes from other places; however, I was born and raised in the Yukon. In fact I was born right across the river at the Whitehorse General Hospital and so I really do consider myself a part of this land. That's a really important point to make here today.

The Yukon Territory that we all so proudly call home and that we so proudly — all of us in this House — represent, is on the traditional territory of the Yukon First Nation people.

We stand today on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and I thank them for allowing us to do so.

It was a very short time ago when treaties were entered into by our government and Canada. In fact, it was 10 years ago for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and 15 years ago for the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. In my mind, that's when official permission was given for us to share this land. With those treaties in mind, I encourage each and every one of us to always remember our history and current relationships when we acknowledge the traditional territories.

There are many people who I have to thank today and I wish that I could see them all here. I'm going to imagine them all here. I acknowledge the support of all these great people who believed in my ability to do this job on behalf of all Yukoners. Today I will take the time to thank them properly and give them the respect that they really do deserve. I would like to go back in time a bit though, first to remember my mom, Thelma Norby. She was and is the reason I exist. She was my first and most important teacher. For those of you who knew her, you knew her to be determined, strong, hard-working and very, very kind. She was always willing to help and she never discriminated. She never shied away from a challenge. She was truly courageous, which she demonstrated by her perseverance when she became a widow in her thirties with eight children. This was prior to meeting my dad. She instilled all of those really important traits in me and I'm proud of that.

My dad was a heavy-equipment operator and a placer miner. I shared that story a week or so ago in Dawson and they were shocked that I had the first 12 years of my life on a placer claim every summer in Clear Creek. My dad helped to build every major road and highway in the Yukon, which helped to create the connections that we all enjoy today.

Both my parents, Thelma and Vern Norby have passed on now; however, they walk with me each and every day. They were proud Yukoners. I know that they would have been extremely proud of me for stepping into a role of leadership. You see, I was raised to serve. My mother always taught me that it was never about how much you can take, it was about how much you can give. She taught me about service to others and about doing what you can to make our world a better place to live. This is the most important thing you can do. She taught me that you live your life to become the best elder you can be. That's a huge responsibility for all of us.

I'm a granddaughter to two of the greatest elders of my time, the late Grace and George Edzerza — both Tahltan but also very proud Yukoners. They contributed a great deal to Yukon. Those of you who knew my grandfather knew him for his wisdom, his strength, his determination, and his deep commitment to Liberal values. To say that he had strong political views would be a very huge understatement of his passion. My grandmother on the other hand was our strong, yet gentle matriarch. She was truly the backbone of our family, the real boss of the Edzerza family.

Today I would certainly be remiss if I didn't take my opportunity to really remember and pay tribute to my Uncle

John Edzerza. He was my mentor and I miss him every single day. John gave many years of his life to politics in the Yukon and contributed many insights and advancements to our beautiful territory. He is deeply missed by all and especially by me and I know many others.

I know my Uncle John would have supported my decision to take on this responsibility and would have encouraged me to work hard on behalf of all Yukoners. He was always a voice for the less fortunate, especially the most vulnerable — for those who struggled with social issues, particularly those living in poverty and those struggling with addictions and mental health issues. John always had good advice for those who wanted to listen. He always said, “Don’t judge a person unless you’ve walked a mile in their moccasins.” He said this to me many times. In other words, you don’t know what it is to live the life of that person, what experiences have made up their life and why they are the way they are. His teaching was one of tolerance and seeking understanding to the extent we can ever understand another person’s perspective.

As my stories demonstrate, I have had many great role models in my life and high expectations to live up to. Family is the most important thing in life. I carry many titles that provide names for my roles; however, my most cherished title is “Mom” to my amazing sons.

My son Colin came into my life when he was five years old, and he has been my wonderful, kind son ever since then. Colin is a journeyman electrician. He is also a very talented athlete. He played competitive hockey from a very young age and represented Yukon during the 2007 Canada Winter Games. He recently played for the Huskies and won the Coy Cup for the Yukon, so I am really proud of that. My younger son Jedrik, equally wonderful and kind, will be graduating from Vanier high school next month and will go on to post-secondary education. Jedrik is also a talented athlete. He participates in a diverse range of sports, from volleyball to Dena games. He represented the Yukon during the last two Arctic Winter Games and won a bronze medal in Fairbanks and then two gold medals in Greenland. He will represent Yukon at the upcoming North American Indigenous Games. I truly believe that your greatest responsibility in life is raising your children to the best of your ability, and I consider my sons my greatest achievement. They are the reason I strive to be better and to make our community healthier, safer and more vibrant.

I am also a sister to 11 brothers and sisters and an auntie to 62 nieces and nephews. Having the youngest position in such a large family builds character. Believe me, I know how to build relationships, to negotiate, problem-solve and stand up for what I believe in. With those roles come huge responsibilities in life and they also hold the greatest blessings a person can have. My mother was the eldest of the Edzerza family of 18 and also had many nieces and nephews for whom she took full responsibility. I was also blessed with many mentors along the way, most of whom remain with me today. Many strong women blazed the way for all of us younger women to follow. I know that the path I forge today will set the stage for other young women and men to come.

I will mention a few of my mentors here today and people who I really look up to: Judy Gingell, Shirley Adamson, Margaret Joe, Audrey McLaughlin, Barbara Fred, Adeline Webber, our own Geraldine Van Bibber, Chief Doris Bill, Ione Christensen and the late Jean Gleason — all strong women who led the way for us in the territory.

Many other people also took the time to share their skills and experiences with me, for which I am deeply grateful. My campaign was supported by an amazing team of people. Again, I wish they were all here today. Many of them are managing different things in their lives. The first person I will mention is Gina Nagano. She put in absolutely endless hours supporting me to get to this place, and she believed in me so much. I had the pleasure of having Sheila Clark work on my campaign, and she was fierce. Anyone who knows Sheila knows what I mean. Victoria Fred and Mike Gladish — Mike Gladish and I were in a nomination race and he graciously stepped aside for me to take the nomination, and I am really grateful to him. He and his wife, Denise Chisholm, then went to work on my campaign and they worked right to the very last moment of the day on November 7th. I’m really so grateful for them. I also had Cherish Clarke, Karee Vallevand, Lana Selbee, Melissa Carlick, Thelma Asp, Conal Slobodin, Shayne Fairman, Kelly Fielder, Teresa Waugh, Loretta Dawson and many others. My son Jedrick said, “You’d better mention that we did the signs, Mom.”

All of these great people spent endless hours on the campaign trail with me. I will forever be indebted to each of them and I thank them for sacrificing their time and, again, for believing in me. I would like to truly thank the people of Mountainview — which includes Valleyview, Hillcrest, Granger and McIntyre — for placing your faith in me and casting a ballot to elect me as your Member of the Legislative Assembly. I’m here to serve you and to be your voice.

Mountainview was a tough battleground, but the inspiration and support that I gained from talking to my constituents one-on-one gave me the strength to endure. I’m proud to be part of this Liberal team and will do my part to make the team successful. Our leader, now Premier, attracted the talent that you see here today. I have to say that I absolutely love the work that I did for Kwanlin Dün. However, I knew, as others have said here in their speeches, that it was the next logical step into a political position. I really want to thank our Premier for putting his faith in me and making me a member of the Cabinet. I really truly appreciate that. Thank you.

During these past couple of months, I have worked closely with my departments and I’m so grateful for all of the effort demonstrated by our staff to ensure that I am fully up to speed on my areas of responsibility. We have incredible public servants who I have a great deal of respect for. I would like to thank Tourism and Culture’s Heritage branch staff, the Women’s Directorate, the Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board staff and the board members themselves for all of their efforts.

Tourism is an important part of our economy and I will work to promote the Yukon and the strategic development of tourism products and brand. I believe we have untapped potential for innovation and expression of hospitality as Yukon hosts the world. The multi-year tourism strategy development process will have a diversity of people engaged to ensure all creative ideas are included.

I would like to just speak a little bit on the question about carbon pricing yesterday. I have in fact met with many operators, organizations and associations in regard to tourism in the Yukon. We have not had any concerns about carbon pricing raised with me directly as the minister responsible. In fact, in January, I hosted a roundtable with Minister Chagger, the federal Minister of Small Business and Tourism, with our tourism industry. We did not have this question or concern raised with us.

That being said, we will, through our strategic planning and consultation process, be hosting sessions with industry and we will have open conversations with them. I have offered an open door to the industry to speak to me directly on matters that concern them. I will also offer that to each of the members opposite.

Our marketing work will remain active and well-supported as we work to extend the season, including winter tourism. We will host a winter tourism summit to contribute to new plans. Tourism and the vitality of our society depend on culture and heritage.

Yukon culture, and the preservation and expression of it through the arts, is part of our shared identity as Yukoners. First Nation culture is a fascination for many of our visitors and is fundamental to who we are as northerners and Yukoners. Our government plans to work with First Nations to preserve and respect First Nation culture, history and languages. We are also committed to supporting the development of First Nation tourism in the Yukon. Capturing and preserving our history and heritage resources is important for Yukon, Canada and the world. We have an internationally important contribution to make. What we have and what we will create have the power to attract interested people.

Destination Canada, our federal corporation responsible for marketing Canada to the world, is going through a rebranding process right now. It places Yukon as the third-highest potential for tourism growth in Canada. This is good news for the Yukon and truly opens the doors for more authentic cultural experiences to be developed and marketed in the Yukon. Adventurers, tourists, knowledge-seekers and others will come to the Yukon to learn and seek the inspiration that our amazing, beautiful landscapes have to share. Growing tourism and the knowledge economy contribute to a diversified and sustainable economic base for vibrant communities.

I was able to present awards at the TIA awards on Friday and it was really great to just have that opportunity to be with tourism providers and to acknowledge all of their accomplishments. I just wanted to mention that here today. I believe people want to visit a place where the governments are

committed to honouring treaties and protecting wild spaces and promoting fairness and equality.

Gender equality is another top priority for our government. The legislative changes proposed were outlined in the throne speech. The resources of the Women's Directorate, for which I am responsible, will form an important part of the team of public servants supporting this work. Gender-inclusive diversity analysis and advice will be provided in the development of legislation, policy, programs and services across government.

I am also leading the Yukon in the work of the federally appointed National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The first regional meetings were held in the Yukon. As a result of the high-quality dialogue, adjustments are being made to the way in which the national inquiry will continue with its work throughout the country.

Both men and women have been lost to violence. The issue is far too close to home, as we have been reminded by our recent deaths of one man and two women from our First Nation communities. My thoughts and prayers remain with the families and communities grieving their losses. Community safety and well-being of all our communities and our commitment to protect all of our citizens in the Yukon is a priority under our "vibrant communities" banner. As a team, we will work together to respond to community needs and lead inter-agency community-based planning and improved community life. I am confident we will be successful in recruiting the support of all Yukoners, including the members opposite, in the community plans and implementation leading to positive change.

Business owners — non-government and government employers — are important partners in supporting health and safety. In my role as Minister responsible for the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, I pledge to focus on prevention of workplace deaths and injuries. In cases where injuries occur, we will continue to improve our ability to respond to workers' needs, provide fair compensation and support return to work as soon as possible, when that is an option. This Friday, we will all participate in the Day of Mourning.

We are committed to responding to the unique needs of first responders suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. I intend to carry out my responsibilities while bringing life to our enduring Liberal priorities.

We have promised to be approachable, transparent and accountable in serving the Yukon people. We have promised active engagement of all Yukon communities, citizens and stakeholders of all kinds. Our people-centred approach will reach Yukoners of all ages and circumstances. For me, that commitment includes the most vulnerable individuals and families. Inclusiveness, equality and respect for diversity are all fundamental to the society we are building together.

We are committed to effective government-to-government relations with First Nations in implementing the land claims and self-government agreements and supporting

the path to self-determination of those First Nations without agreements.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has brought light to a path forward, and I will do what I can to support the intergovernmental commitments to implementation and reconciliation. We must work together to decolonize our legislation, policies, programs, services and practices.

Yukoners elected all of us because they trusted us enough to be their voice. Think about that for a moment.

It is truly an honour to be a voice for even one other person, let alone an entire territory of people who have put their faith in all of us. My intent, in this House, is to really listen and to understand all of the positions that each individual brings here. When you ask a question of me, I understand that you will be bringing that question on behalf of all Yukoners, which is an important responsibility that you have. When I answer your question, I will be speaking to all Yukoners. The deeper you think about this, the more meaningful it becomes.

As you all do, I see things in a certain way. I always look for equality, I always seek understanding and fairness. Relationships are important to me, and I believe that is what we are going to be doing in this House — building relationships with each other. Each day we will have a choice — to create a good dialogue that is truly grounded in respect. This is why I just have to say that I am saddened that we didn't get the opportunity to hear each person speak about why they are here and what motivates them.

This is my first Sitting of the Legislative Assembly. I was genuinely excited to hear from each of you. I have to just say that. Most of you have had your opportunity to give your first speech in the way that it was intended. For most of us, this is meaningful and a part of the process of the Legislative Assembly, so I am saddened that we didn't get the full experience of it in the way that you have had the chance.

I do not believe that it is the formality of the procedures that we follow in this House, our House, that somehow produces respect. It is the intent expressed through your words and your actions. When I speak to you, it is not just me. It is the voice of all Yukoners, and it is the voice of my ancestors expressed for the good of those who live now and will come in the future generations.

I see leadership as a position of service. I see leadership as a place of great responsibility. I intend to keep ego in check by working to stay humble and always acting out of kindness to others.

I can't say that every day in this House will be perfect, because nothing ever is — especially when we have so very much at stake. I will strive to be the best that I can be and to do the best job that I can. I can only do my best for the territory if each person in this House and all of our citizens take part in our democracy. I see our roles and responsibilities on each side of the House coming together like the body of an eagle connected to two wings, with each wing serving a purpose. The balance and harmony achieved between the wings allow for flight.

In closing, I would like to again thank all of you for listening and, again, I would have liked to hear from each of you.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, honourable members, friends, people of the Yukon, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. First and foremost, I want to thank the residents of Porter Creek South for allowing me to represent you in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. I am humbled by your support.

It is a great honour to serve you and I vow to carry out my duties as your elected official with dedication, integrity and sincerity. I heard your thoughts, concerns and successes while canvassing door to door during the candidate-nomination process and during the campaign last fall.

Thank you for welcoming me into your living rooms and your kitchens in your homes during those 85 days I spent during the nomination and campaign process leading up to last year's election.

This process gave me an understanding of what an amazing and diverse group of people you are. You own and work for businesses that contribute to Yukon's private sector in many facets: mining and resource development, tourism, technology and service industries are all represented and even an MLA who is here with us today. I will state that no matter how testy it gets here, when I'm outside of the Legislative Assembly, I'll remember I work for you.

I learned of concerns with social programs, health and education, and also of the desire to foster good relationships with our First Nation governments in our territory. My commitment is to serve this community and tackle the issues that are important in our everyday lives. Providing a safe environment for your families to enjoy continued access to greenspaces are just a few promises I make to you. You can trust that work is well underway in conveying these messages to my colleagues within the Yukon government and to the elected officials with the City of Whitehorse. His Worship, Mayor Dan Curtis, and I had great conversations regarding traffic and road safety and we are now working to implement a strategy and a series of solutions that will meet the needs of the citizens of Porter Creek South once and for all.

I will continue to work in partnership with organizations such as the Porter Creek Community Association, Friends of McIntyre Creek, and school councils at both the high school and junior high.

My goal is to have solutions in place quickly into this mandate. In past discussions with a very experienced Canadian politician, I was reminded of the importance of my constituents. For the constituents of Porter Creek South, it is to you I owe this seat behind me. It is yours and I am indebted to you. My door is always open and I encourage you to reach out when needed.

A note of thanks also to the team of people who took time out of their busy schedules and lives to assist during the campaign: Brad, Lawrence, Jonathan, Chris, Don, Kim,

Henry, James, Kayla, Tim, Zara, and Celia, just to name a few. Thank you.

Each and every one of us has been granted the exceptional opportunity to sit here today in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. We have stories of what brought us to this point. There have been mentors along the way and people we are thankful for. I want to take this moment to recognize those people in my life. My mom, Johnena Lee was my first and continues to be my most significant mentor in my life. As a single mother in small-town Nova Scotia, she has shown me what it means to overcome adversity and persevere in the wake of a challenge. In 1974, she quietly had me baptized in the Catholic Church when it was considered unacceptable to do so as a single mother. She continued on in her career as a registered nurse and made sacrifices in her life to provide for me time and time and time again.

She has been an unwavering supporter. Regardless of the storm I created, she believed in me and pushed me to be a better person. She has shown me what it means to be dedicated and to give yourself to something you love and believe in. I will state to my colleagues, on this side and that side, that to this day she keeps tabs on all of us — you across the way, my colleagues here. You would be astounded. On the other side of the country, she could give you a bio on each and every one of you — a review and a criticism — and that includes me too.

As a nurse, she was recognized by her peers at the Nova Scotia nurses association as nurse of the year a number of years ago and also as palliative care nurse of the year that same year. Staying true to this dedication, she returned to work just six months after retiring and battling cancer last year. She just can't stop working.

At 10 years old, my stepdad, Jeff Lee, entered my life. He balances responsibilities as a parental figure with friendship and has always been a calm and steady supporter. Like my mom, he chose not to criticize me when making questionable choices earlier in my life and has always encouraged me to make better decisions.

My dad, Dr. N.G. Pillai, has an incredible work ethic. He entered medical school at age 19 and he continues to practice 58 years later. For this I have the utmost respect. Along with this, he taught me to stand up for what is right and to take action. I even respect that as he does it as a chief of staff and he does it when he is taking on the Liberal government in Nova Scotia.

My grandparents — Mary Lauchie MacLellan — had a profound impact on my life. My grandmother was a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse. She imprinted on me the value of lifelong learning. She was a kind soul who contributed greatly to family and community. She always stressed this importance to me.

My grandfather, during his life, worked in sectors that I stand here today proud to be responsible for: mining, agriculture and forestry. He was a hardrock miner in Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario and, later in his career, worked in forestry. Throughout his life, he and his family operated a

farm with dairy and beef cattle and the most incredible vegetable farm garden you have ever seen.

Our family lived off the land. I was often by his side working on the farm or in the woods. He understood the importance of taking a responsible, balanced approach to resource and development, a value I share by myself and with others here and with my colleagues in the Liberal government. I keep his helmet that he last wore as a hardrock miner in my office as a reminder to make decisions based on these balanced principles.

Father Stanley MacDonald was the man who took a chance and baptized me as an infant. This is when our friendship began. He was a boxer and a hockey player at St. Francis Xavier University and I looked up to him throughout my younger years. At just eight years old, he would bring me along on visits to the Coady International Institute. The Coady Institute uses a community-based approach to educate leaders from around the world in methods of addressing contemporary local challenges and opportunities. There are thousands of graduates and partners from 130 countries involved with the teaching at the Coady Institute. This experience first opened my eyes to a world of culture and diversity in community and the economy — topics I would have otherwise may not have been exposed to in a small town growing up in Nova Scotia.

Father MacDonald continues to be a good friend of mine. He travelled to the Yukon to preside over my wedding in Haines Junction a number of years ago. To this day, I seek guidance from him from time to time.

Lastly, my wife Delilah and our two boys Taylor and Calum — from the moment my wife and I met, she has believed in me — so much so that she sacrificed in her own life to support me in what I wished to pursue. Taylor and Calum offered continued patience at times when the duties of my work take me away from spending time with them. I urge the opposition — we can continue on with the political rhetoric that we're not working and that we didn't hit the ground running — but please, as former ministers across the way, understanding how much time you've taken away from your friends and family and for what my colleagues have done — challenge me on my ideology, challenge me on decisions I've made, challenge me on mistakes I'll make — don't challenge us or me on work ethic.

The expressed interest in my work and the responsibilities I have been privileged to accept — travel for work and nights away from our family, whether it be for city council, the campaign trail, or in this new role — all would not be possible without the level of support and understanding that Delilah and our boys offer me. I'm extremely grateful and appreciative. I don't know what else to say. When you have that level of support from someone — I'll just leave it at that.

I would like to put partisan politics aside for a few moments. Before the Legislative Assembly undoubtedly becomes more intense, I will express how happy I am to be here with each and every one of you. I have the utmost respect for the Leader of the Third Party and Member for Whitehorse Centre. I commend her on the strength that she has shown us

over the last number of months. Her husband Doug was my friend and mentored me to be a better person.

The Member for Takhini-King continues to show us the importance of authenticity and commitment to constituents.

The Leader of the Official Opposition and Member for Pelly-Nisutlin — I congratulate you for being selected as the interim leader. He has the ability to park politics, when appropriate, and has focused commitment to govern Yukon communities, and I respect that greatly. Thank you for your help and your guidance in the early couple of months.

The Member for Kluane has undying energy and commitment to his work and leadership within his community. Whether it be his time with the Canadian Rangers, volunteering to assist an elder, or lending a hand to a friend in Champagne or Klukshu, he is always willing to help.

The Member for Watson Lake also has a track record for her community commitment as a member of town council and her participation in the Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce. I am confident that she will hold my feet to the fire and not allow me to lose sight of the importance of the people in her riding.

The Member for Lake Laberge is the longest-serving member of this 34th Legislative Assembly. This is no small feat. He has experienced his political success through his undying commitment to his constituents. Also, I think back to a time when the member, based on his own values and prerogative, made a tough decision to leave the party and sit by himself. I do not believe anybody here, other than he who experienced it, could understand the strength it would take to make that decision. I remember the conversation we had in the parking lot here, and I commended him for that. That is something that nobody can ever take away from him — standing for what he believed in — and I respect that immensely.

I commend the Member for Copperbelt South for his work as the previous Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. He has been a tireless advocate for the resource sector. At every meeting that my associates and I have had, whether it be at PDAC or Roundup, we have commended him on his work, and commended him and his colleagues on the foundation that was laid here in the Yukon. I do not think we would be here seeing the success we are having now if it wasn't for him.

The Member for Porter Creek North is a class act who has a phenomenal professional career to date: Chancellor of Yukon College, Commissioner of Yukon Territory and an esteemed member of the Order of Canada. I still remember the first time I ever met you — how nervous I was. We sat in the atrium in the Haines Junction convention centre. It was 2009, at the Association of Yukon Communities' first meeting. I remember the table we sat at. I remember you had an orange juice and I had a coffee. I remember how excited I was to be sitting with you, thinking, "Man, I have made it. I am sitting with Commissioner Van Bibber." I have listened to you and watched you, and you absolutely have always been a class act — having the opportunity to see you in action as a chancellor.

I am proud to be here and, when not here, to work for you as your MLA. As for the team I stand with in our Liberal government — I could not feel more blessed. This is an exceptional group of individuals with accomplishments too great to list here today. I am appreciative every day to have been given this opportunity. They keep me focused, motivated and energized in our pursuit to provide Yukoners with a different approach to governing. From the moment we began, this caucus has worked long, day after day, despite what the opposition has been saying about the time we have taken to get to work and call a session. I know the former government officials understand the same time commitment and the time it took away from their families. We all understand the amount of work happening when the House is not in session — hours upon hours.

Premier Silver has granted me the privilege of also representing this new Liberal government with responsibilities as your Deputy Premier, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, Minister of Economic Development and Minister responsible for Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation. This role at times will be challenging, but I'm moving forward to accomplishing the tasks laid out in my mandate letter in a methodical and informed manner.

The grouping of these portfolios allows me to support a number of this Liberal government's priorities. The overarching theme of my work will be to grow, strengthen and diversify the economy in a way that balances development with environmental stewardship to benefit all Yukoners now and in the future. On this journey, we will work alongside our First Nation and federal and municipal counterparts in achieving our goals. We will engage with the business community to build capacity. We will listen to the people of this territory and we will be their voice. We have been working hard to lay early groundwork for achieving our goals.

I want to thank my colleagues at Yukon College — who I spent about 10 years with — for helping to shape my perspective in starting to learn. I'm excited to work with them at the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. I want to thank the leadership at Northern Vision Development and my colleagues there. That gave me an opportunity to branch out and understand and take a leadership role in the private sector, and I think that will help me in my decision-making here — understanding that it's not just about government but the important role the private sector plays in our economy. I would also like to thank Chief Steve Smith and the council of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations for giving me the opportunity to be their executive director — to be supportive of my decisions to enter territorial politics and, probably most importantly, to have become great, great friends of mine. Whether it be from the time in post-secondary education, the time in the private sector, or working with a self-governing First Nation, all of those elements and experiences I will take into account in my decision-making in this role.

On day one, we inherited a government that was faced with the lowest GDP in the country. There were broken relationships. There were disputes over land use and land planning. There was uncertainty in the resource sector due to

Bill S-6. The support for Bill S-6 by the previous government caused deep divides between the Yukon Party government of the day, First Nation governments and the resource sector. There was a gap in energy infrastructure as we looked to our future and financial instability. There were plenty of ideas left by our predecessors on how to proceed — some very, very good ones — but there was no social licence. There was a lack of trust, and trust doesn't come easy. Trust is earned and it is built over time. What we intend to do in this government is build that trust.

The first step in doing so was bringing together the self-governing Yukon First Nations in signing a memorandum of understanding on mining, agreeing to work together in a respectful and collaborative manner on processes related to mining in the Yukon. By bringing everyone together at a single table to collaboratively work on improvements to all aspects of mineral exploration and development, we can bring an added level of certainty to resource investors. I have no doubt that more of the world's top gold mineral producers will see the Yukon as a favourable place to invest.

We are currently developing the work plan and prioritizing topics that we will be addressing at the MOU table. I want to stop and just thank the chiefs who signed the MOU with us. They signed the MOU because they were willing to put trust in us and that's the trust of my colleagues sitting next to me — that's why. They will challenge us and we will challenge them, and we will continue to communicate and work and seek guidance from industry so all parties involved in this can get by the stumbling blocks that we've seen in the past.

Early in our mandate we committed additional support for mineral exploration and we promised continued improvements to resource roads in the Klondike region, as we stated yesterday.

Infrastructure is important for the mining industry and we are working hard to support companies in realizing their needs where possible. We have initiated conversations aimed at building agreements with affected First Nations in working toward the Yukon Resource Gateway project, and we are looking to identify federal infrastructure funds for the Stewart-Keno transmission line.

Beyond mining, we are focused on growing Yukon's agricultural sector in a way that not only improves food security at home, but grows the industry beyond our borders. We'll enter into discussions in securing the successor agreement to the Growing Forward 2 program. I look forward to meeting with my federal, provincial and territorial counterparts in July to finalize this agreement.

Our forestry sector is set to expand with robust growth in biomass, supported by the implementation of the biomass energy strategy, which carries on the good work of our predecessors across the way. We have met with First Nations and industry proponents interested in biomass opportunities. This is one way we realize our commitment to increasing the availability of renewable energy solutions while reducing the reliance on non-renewable sources. We will focus on our off-grid communities, which rely on diesel to power their needs.

We are working with other levels of government, First Nations and communities to move this forward. We will focus on smaller renewable energy investments and develop local, renewable and clean energy technologies.

We want Yukoners to be part of the solution. This will support innovation and diversification in our energy sector.

We will look to support and grow our existing tech sector and knowledge-based economy. Working toward redundancy and connectivity for our territory is one way we will realize this. We are currently reviewing two potential routes and we will make an evidence-based decision that meets the needs of Yukoners in a responsible manner.

When it comes to the oil and gas sector, we will continue to explore opportunities outside of the Whitehorse Trough and without fracking. My colleagues and I will not make decisions without having done our due diligence. This includes the relevant data, completing risk assessments and moving through proper consultation so that we can make informed decisions that will benefit Yukoners in an environmentally responsible manner.

My colleagues and I are focused on building vibrant, healthy communities through the creation of economic conditions that allow Yukoners to thrive. We are investing in our people, our businesses and our industries to diversify the economy by creating new opportunities in key areas such as mining, tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, green energy and information technology.

We are committed to working collaboratively with all levels of government — First Nations, municipal, federal and neighbouring jurisdictions as well as communities, businesses and Yukoners to ensure Yukon is a great place to do business and invest. I would like to invite Yukon businesses, First Nations and their development corporations, and all MLAs to discuss these ideas and opportunities in their communities. It is these commitments and investments that will lead our Liberal government to success.

I truly state to the members across the way that when the Assembly gets more intense and we begin to have more challenging conversations, when those subside — please — I have had good discussions with almost everybody across the way and, at the end of the day, I understand what happens. I have watched politics for a long time, but at the end of the day, my focus is to get things done. I know how hard you all work for your constituents, so please, no matter what or how tough the conversations get, when we walk outside, if there is something we have to work on together, let's do it.

My colleagues and I have been granted this incredible opportunity to serve in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. As I outlined, the residents of Porter Creek South enabled me to earn this seat. I am endlessly grateful, not only for the support of my constituents, but also for the opportunity to address the concerns of my community and the important priorities of our Liberal government.

The 85 days I spent campaigning prior to the election were the most dedicated and tireless days of my life, and every day since taking office has been much the same. I look forward to serving this term as an elected official with our

Liberal government, embracing a new way of governing with the same reliable, steadfast dedication that I have had since the start of my commitment to the people of Porter Creek South.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am very honoured to rise today to speak to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I would like to begin like all of my colleagues by acknowledging that we are on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

I am incredibly honoured to be elected as the MLA for Klondike for another term. Dawson is my home and I represent the Klondike region with great pride. I am honoured to represent the Klondike and I will do so to the fullest of my abilities.

It is a true privilege to learn from the Yukon First Nation people, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have shared traditional knowledge and practices with me that have shaped who I am as a Yukoner. When I moved to the Yukon, I did so as a schoolteacher. Like so many others, I moved to the north for the promise of a job and immediately fell in love with the Yukon.

I worked first in Whitehorse and then moved to Dawson, where I discovered a sense of belonging in the Klondike Valley. Arriving in Dawson in 1998, I quickly got involved with the tight-knit community, volunteering for many community organizations. Everyone in Dawson volunteers. Everyone in the Yukon volunteers. It's just one of those proud things. I volunteered for the Dawson City fire department, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, White Ribbon Dawson and the Dawson City Music Festival, among others. I coached. When I was teaching math at Robert Service School, my community provided me with endless opportunities to learn so very much.

I am so very grateful for all that I have learned and to be part of such a unique community. My job takes me here to Whitehorse, but I live in Dawson and Dawson is never far from my mind and is always in my heart. It goes without saying that it's quite a feeling to go from being the lone member of the Third Party to the Premier's office. A very key issue in our campaign, and one that was very important to me as an MLA for the rural area of Yukon, is our commitment to Yukon communities. All communities matter to this government. Our government will work directly with communities to support local solutions for local problems.

Throughout the campaign, we used the slogan "Be heard". We will be available to all Yukoners. Regardless of who you voted for, it is now our responsibility to govern on behalf of the entire territory. We are committed to ethical, responsible and accountable government.

Thank you to the residents of Dawson for continuing to have confidence and electing me for a second time. I worked hard as the lone Liberal MLA and you had better believe that I'm going to work even harder as the Premier.

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to the members of my community who so greatly contributed to my campaign: Jody Beaumont, Mark Wickham — they both led

an incredible team of volunteers — too many to list. Some highlights of great people who worked tirelessly every day were: Bonnie Duffie, Ashley Doiron, Ricky Mawunganidze, Jack Duncan, Megan Waterman, Cara MacAdam, Viki Paulins and Evelyn Pollock. There were many more as well. I have never felt so much encouragement and support, so I want to thank them all for all their time and effort. To Laura Cabott, who ran the election campaign for the Liberal Party, and to Devon Bailey, who served as our president, thank you very, very much for your hours and hours of time. To the candidates who ran under the Liberal banner in the last election who were not successful, thank you very much for being part of the team. To former leaders of the Liberal Party — Jack Cable, Pat Duncan, Arthur Mitchell and Darius Elias — I would like to thank you all for being the leaders before me. I have learned something from each of you along the way. To our federal Member of Parliament Larry Bagnell, I want to send out my appreciation for all the help you have given me throughout the years. To our former Senator Ione Chistensen, thank you for your guidance.

To all my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly — all honourable members on both sides of the Legislative Assembly, and of course my team here in the Yukon Liberal government as well — thank you for all your dedication. I could spend a lot of time talking about you all — and I have — but I do want to do a special shout-out to a good friend of mine and now a colleague in this Chamber, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. We have been friends for a long time and I'm glad you came to me so many years ago about running for office. I was complaining one day, and I believe the quote was: "So what are you going to do about it?" It's a very special memory for today.

To my opponents in the 2016 election campaign, Mr. Jay Farr and Mr. Brad Whitelaw, thank you for letting your names stand for public office. You are both role models in our community and I want to thank you for putting your names forward. I'm very proud to consider both of you as friends of mine as well.

This is the second time that I have had a chance to do this. Back in 2011, I was a first-time member representing Klondike and I'm extremely grateful today to the people of Klondike for letting me have this seat in the Legislative Assembly. We don't own them. We just occupy them.

I'm also very grateful that Yukoners have chosen our government to work with them over the next couple of years to build a stronger Yukon. I'm incredibly proud of the people who sit with me on this side of this House. They are new to the House, but they bring a tremendous amount of experience and they're all leaders in their own way. They bring a wealth of knowledge that I rely on day in and day out, and Yukoners can rest assured that they are putting their knowledgebase to good use every day. They have already been working — ever since we were sworn in December 3, 2016.

It is very interesting to hear some of the members opposite talking about getting down to work, implying that we have to be in this Chamber to get anything done. Being here in the room, as everybody in this Assembly knows, is only part

of the job. There have been a lot of hours meeting with constituents, business groups, NGOs and other levels of government. We have responded to hundreds of letters, built a budget, brought several pieces of new legislation and addressed the concerning financial situation left by the previous government. We have done it right and we have taken the time to do it right. We're proud of the work that we have done over the last few months.

By the same token, it's very interesting that all members of the Official Opposition — after raising such a fuss about getting down to business and getting to work — chose not to do the work of the day today or yesterday and simply abdicated any responsibilities to reply to the Speech from the Throne. To my colleague, the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, it is a great opportunity — for all the public servants who are listening today — to share who we are as individuals and what motivated us to be here. I hope that the members opposite give us that opportunity at some point, because this is a very political response — not talking — and one that has not matched in their boasting in recent weeks about being eager to get to work. Day one — they made a conscious decision to largely boycott the proceedings of the House.

We've seen lots of former governments on the federal level being more interested in gamesmanship than getting down to work, and the results are certain and they're terminal. I'll give the Yukon Party some free advice: voters in the Yukon rejected that game-playing approach in November 2016. The Yukon Party lost the election because of this type of behaviour. Voters rejected it. This kind of stunt plays well when voters are not engaged and when there is not an active media. Neither of those apply here in the Yukon. Voters are engaged. They pay attention. They know what's going on in their communities. We have some of the highest voter turnouts in Canada. We have an active media as well, and I'm sure that they will be taking note of the approach of the Yukon Party today and yesterday in this Chamber — simply refusing to do the work that the public elected them to do. I can only hope that they change their ways of thinking and actually contribute as we go through this legislative session.

It's quite a contrast to the approach taken by the NDP in this Chamber and also their approach since the last election. The Third Party has consistently signalled their willingness to work on priorities that we share and has also laid out other areas they think we should be doing more work on as well. It has not gone unnoticed by this government, and I'm sure it has not gone unnoticed by the general public. I believe that when you have the confidence in your convictions, you can stand behind the issues of the day and talk about them in the Legislative Assembly.

The opportunity is there and it will continue to be there for all members opposite to contribute to the dialogue in the Legislative Assembly and to work together with this government. It's unfortunate that only the NDP at this point is willing to take up on that opportunity and that offer, but I'll continue to put it out there. The Yukon Party is refusing to maximize a voice for those who elected them. It's very

disappointing. It's too bad, and the result is that the views of their constituents are held back. My mother was a Liberal and my dad was a Tory. I know that the good people of the Yukon here who are Conservatives would like to hear the issues of the day being debated and would like to hear the members who they elected in this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, from the limited participation of the Official Opposition, there were some comments I would like to respond to. I believe it was the interim leader of the opposition who referenced a prolonged search for senior government officials and somehow made the leap that this is something that we created. I just want to point out that in 2015 alone, 11 Yukon government departments saw one or more new deputy heads appointed. Five of these departments saw nine acting deputy heads appointed. If the member opposite is concerned about government's inability to — and I'm quoting here — “get senior managers in place in a timely fashion”, I think he needs to look at the mirror a little bit more. The member also said that contracts were being held up because of the budget being delayed — again, wrong. The warrant was issued to ensure contracts would be let and could be let — not as quickly as we would have liked that done, but again, we're new and next year we will have that change in place. Again, contracts are being let every day. Rome was not built in a day and it will take some time for us to unravel 14 years of a previous Yukon Party government.

I was disappointed to hear the member opposite attack the character of members of the government as well — just totally uncalled for.

Members opposite mentioned tax cuts. I would urge them to stay tuned. He also said that the former government had a strong record of taking action to improve our business climate. The Conference Board of Canada said that we had the bleakest economic outlook of any place in Canada last year. Under the Yukon Party government, our economy shrunk two years in a row, so these are conflicting statements.

The members opposite mentioned the offshore oil and gas ban. We let the Government of Canada know that we disagreed on their approach to this issue. We also mentioned unilateral actions by Canada. We agreed that it was a unilateral action by Canada, but it was also the Yukon Party that wrote the book on unilateral actions. If we look at Bill S-6, for example, that unilateral action has resulted in another court challenge that we are working to resolve. Does the member opposite now want to speak?

He said there was no money for medical travel — again, wrong. Finally, he accused us of abandoning negotiations on carbon tax exemptions. We heard that a little bit today. It is impossible to abandon something that has not happened. There was no negotiation for an exemption — quite the opposite, in fact. The Yukon Party signed the Vancouver declaration and was involved in carbon tax negotiations.

It is not necessarily my plan to blame the Yukon Party for everything, but if they cannot change for the sake of better governance, then I will take my father's advice and never start a fight, but always end them. We are going to move on and we are going to look for more positive work that the government

is doing to serve Yukoners. I would like to speak about that today.

All members of Cabinet were given mandate letters and they are posted on our government's website. They outline the priorities of each of the ministers and their individual departments. Last week, the Speech from the Throne set a new tone for governance and presented those individual mandates in a larger context for our priorities. The speech is about listening to Yukoners. It is about working with them. It sets out the agenda for upcoming years. Our government is working with all Yukoners to make their lives better. We are focused on creating jobs, strengthening and diversifying the economy and protecting the environment. We are working collaboratively, government to government, to establish that all communities in the Yukon can continue to grow and thrive.

As we move forward, we will make responsible investments in programs and services that lead to healthy, productive and happy lives for all Yukoners. These priorities are drawn from hundreds of conversations with Yukoners. They are based on an understanding of what is important to Yukoners. I would like to go through some of those priorities. First of all, we are taking a one-government approach and breaking down the silos between different departments of government. While individual issues have lead ministers or lead departments, they will be addressed in a collaborative manner with input from many voices.

On aboriginal relations, our government is committed to improving relations with First Nation governments across the Yukon. We are working collaboratively with Yukon First Nations and businesses to promote Yukon as a stable, profitable place to do business that honours the commitments of our land claim agreements.

We want our First Nation communities to be healthy and prosperous and we are working to foster traditional knowledge and culture in partnership with First Nation governments. One of our very first acts as a new government was to establish National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday so that Yukoners can pause to acknowledge the importance of our relationship with our first peoples.

I want to recognize the economic strength of First Nations. We'll work with them and all Yukoners to diversify and strengthen our economy, protect the environment and improve the quality of life. I do want to give a shout-out to the NDP for their commitment to this statutory holiday in the 33rd Legislative Assembly.

In the Executive Council Office, our government is committed to working with First Nations on shared priorities. We will lead efforts when it comes to responding to the truth and reconciliation report. We will be a strong voice for Yukon with our federal, provincial and territorial colleagues.

In finance, our government is committed to strengthening and diversifying the Yukon's economy to make a better life for all Yukoners. We are working within the fiscal constraints created by the past government's management, but we have a responsible, long-term plan that will help create jobs and improve the quality of life for all Yukoners while protecting our environment. We are investing in our people, in our

businesses and in our industries to diversify the economy by creating new opportunities in key areas such as mining, tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, green energy and information technology.

On economic development, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is committed to the development of a diverse, prosperous, strong economy that benefits the lives of all Yukoners. We are focused on creating jobs for a skilled workforce, increasing investment opportunities and protecting the environment. We are working collaboratively with First Nations and communities to ensure that all communities in the Yukon will continue to thrive and grow. We are working on improved regulatory certainty so that Yukon is seen as a competitive place to invest. We are continuing to work with local governments and businesses to promote Yukon as a great place to do business.

On energy, mines and resources, our government is working toward a stronger economy for the benefit of all Yukoners, while continuing to be leaders when it comes to the environment. Our top priority remains economic diversification and innovation when it comes to Yukon's natural resources sector. We are increasing the availability of renewable energy sources while reducing the reliance on non-renewable sources, such as diesel, and lessening energy consumption. We are promoting our oil and gas industry and encouraging responsible resource development. We are working government-to-government with Yukon First Nation partners so that responsible resource development benefits all Yukoners.

With the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation, our government believes that renewable energy sources play an important part in strengthening our economy. That is why we are making an investment to support innovation and diversification in all energy sectors.

With regard to education, our government understands that responsible investment in education will achieve better outcomes for Yukon's social, economic and community goals. We are committed to working with parents, teachers, and other educational partners, including First Nations, to ensure Yukon students acquire the skills that they need for happy, healthy, productive futures.

We will improve Yukon's education system by updating our curriculum, better reflecting First Nation culture and ensuring all Yukoners have access to the education that they deserve.

From our justice system, our government is working to make lives better for all Yukoners and that is why one of the first pieces of legislation entrenches non-discrimination for the LGBTQ2S community. This is long overdue.

We also want to ensure that our communities are safe for all Yukoners. Our government is committed to working with police, with justice stakeholders and with First Nations to ensure that our justice system is balanced. We are promoting victims' rights while providing rehabilitation that reduces reoffending and addresses the needs for those suffering from mental health issues and addictions. It will make sure that our laws meet acceptable standards for equality, fairness and

respect for the rule of law. It's about making lives better for all Yukoners.

With regard to our environment, the environment remains top of mind for our government as we move forward with a plan to build on a prosperous and well-defined economy. We are working to lessen our carbon footprint while expanding the use of renewable energy sources. We know that a healthy environment means protecting our wildlife populations and our wilderness and that a healthy environment and prosperous economy go hand in hand. We are committed also to protecting the Peel watershed.

For our health care system, our government is committed to improving the health and well-being of all Yukoners. In our first month in office, we negotiated a deal with the Government of Canada for an additional \$6.2 million for home care and \$5.2 million for mental health services for families in Yukon and for youth. We are making changes so that Yukoners of all ages can live healthy and happy lives.

We are investing responsibly in our health care system to provide better hospital infrastructure, better supports and communities, and supports for those who are on the front line providing us with quality health care.

On our housing needs, our government understands that adequate and affordable housing is an important part of healthy communities. We are working with the Yukon Housing Corporation board, First Nations and community partners to implement the housing action plan. We will work to access Yukon's fair share of new federal housing funding. Our plan will increase affordable housing options across the territory.

On community services, the health and the happiness of Yukon communities is a priority for our government. We are committed to working with our partners to find community-based solutions for improving the quality of life for Yukoners. We will make responsible investments in community infrastructure and work collaboratively to increase affordable housing options across the territory.

On French language services, our government recognizes the contributions of French Yukoners. We are committed to working with the francophone community to promote and provide more government services in French with a focus on emergency and mental health services. We are also moving forward on the construction of a French first language high school to meet the needs of Yukon's francophone students.

At our liquor corporation, our government will work with the Yukon Liquor Board, business community and Yukoners to assess whether the current *Liquor Act* meets our needs when it comes to economic opportunities and social responsibility.

On infrastructure and highways and public parks, our government is making investments that support economic activities and diversification.

We are working with local businesses and First Nations to make targeted investments in important industries such as innovation, science and IT. Our government is bringing forward changes that will increase the ability of local businesses and First Nations to secure government contracts.

We want Yukoners working on Yukon projects. This is an area that needs a great deal of attention. We are reducing barriers for Yukoners who are accessing government services.

Respecting our public service — our government believes in our professional, skilled, and merit-based public service. We are making sure that Yukon public service is open, transparent and inclusive when it comes to hiring practices.

On tourism and culture, our government is committed to growing Yukon's tourism industry while protecting and promoting our rich heritage and history. We are working with First Nations and community organizations to make innovative investments that will lead to a strong economy and vibrant communities. Our government knows First Nation culture, knowledge and languages are an important part of our shared history. We are working together toward innovations and initiatives that attract more visitors to Yukon and educate them on what makes this territory great.

On the role of the Women's Directorate, the safety of Yukoners is a top priority to our government. We are committed to building safer communities by increasing efforts to reduce violence against women. We are taking action to address the high incidence of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls across Canada. Our government is also reviewing legislation to ensure non-discrimination for our LGBTQ2S community.

Workers' compensation — our government recognizes the important contributions of first responders who keep our communities safe. We are committed to making changes to the *Workers' Compensation Act* to address the need for those first responders who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Mr. Speaker, this is the road map forward for our one-government approach. As I mentioned, we have been working diligently since our swearing-in on December 3rd on all manner of things. For example, we are making strategic investments in healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities. So far, we have many accomplishments to point to: negotiating \$11.4 million in federal funding to support critical home care needs and mental health initiatives for Yukoners; securing an additional \$25.6 million for health care through the territorial health investment fund; awarding historic resources; funding two projects supporting the preservation and the revitalization of Yukon First Nation languages and oral history; launching a new website to share information about research and monitoring, conducted by or in partnership with the Yukon government; negotiating a new agreement with Canada that increases funding for French language services; and making free take-home Naloxone available across the territory as part of a national effort to address opioid overdoses.

There are also several new or enhanced initiatives, including: planning a facility to view discoveries made over the years in the fossil-rich Klondike goldfields; funding the cultural centre component of the new Carcross/Tagish First Nation learning centre; implementing the plan to jointly manage the Conrad historic site with Carcross/Tagish First Nation; supporting community events across the territory to commemorate Canada's 150th birthday and the 75th

anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway; investing in solid-waste diversion and recycling programs and facilities across the territory; improving waste-water infrastructure in several Yukon communities; engaging Yukon partners, communities and First Nations in developing a broad, long-term strategy to drive growth in Yukon's tourism industry; hosting a summit to define opportunities and investment for sustained growth in the winter tourism market; and building a new francophone secondary school in Whitehorse; collaborating with the federal government on climate change preparedness and commitment to returning revenues on the federal price on carbon to Yukoners.

I will also mention that Yukon will be co-hosting the ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie with the federal government in June as part of Canada's 150th anniversary celebrations. We are taking a people-centred approach to wellness that helps Yukoners thrive. As a government, we have: introduced a Yukon version of the revised BC curriculum focusing in on skills development, hands-on learning and northern ways of knowing and doing; opened a temporary emergency shelter in partnership with Kwanlin Dün First Nation to provide needed shelter for vulnerable people; initiated a conversation on Housing First to end homelessness in Yukon with national experts, local NGOs, stakeholders and front-line government staff; shared a government perspective on women's economic empowerment at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women; introduced changes to the *Human Rights Act* to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender identification or gender expression and introduced changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* to represent the rights of LGBTQ2S Yukoners.

Other new and enhanced initiatives include: supporting full participation in the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; making an enhanced and greater investment in programs for our young people and the youth groups that deliver them; increasing teachers and educational assistants in Yukon schools; and enhancing community addictions programs in eight communities. We are working with Yukon's legal community and other stakeholders to develop a new *Legal Profession Act* to improve access to legal services and protect the public interests.

We have also focused on building strong government-to-government relationships, fostering reconciliation. In this area, we have signed an intergovernmental declaration with Yukon First Nation chiefs as a foundation for a renewed relationship based on reconciliation, cooperation and collaboration. We have signed a memorandum of understanding on mining with Yukon First Nation chiefs to work together for a stronger economy. We have taken a collaborative approach with Yukon First Nation chiefs at this year's Yukon Days in Ottawa, jointly advocating for federal programs, services and funding for the Yukon. We have re-established the Yukon Advisory Committee to support work on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls to support our common work during the national inquiry and participated fully in the national inquiry as well.

Our last pillar is focused in on welding together a strong, diversified economy and a healthy environment. In that regard, we have approved amendments to allow work on a new open pit at the Minto mine, and showcased the collaboration with Yukon First Nations at the annual mineral exploration Roundup conference and with the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada annual conference.

We supported the first annual Arctic Indigenous Investment Conference in Whitehorse to advance economic growth through new relationships and partnerships. We've partnered with Kwanlin Dün First Nation to enable it to register leases on settlement land and in the Land Titles Office to allow development for housing and commercial development. We've concluded a new free trade deal that opens up new markets for Yukon products while retaining safeguards for local needs. We do appreciate the work that the Yukon Party has done previously to help in the signing of that deal.

We are also working on a new agreement with the federal government to support Yukon farmers and agricultural producers. The Member for Lake Laberge has done a lot of work in that capacity as well and I commend him on that. We are working with Yukon First Nations and the Chamber of Mines to restore confidence in the territory's development assessment process.

We have: signed the pan-Canadian accord to address and adapt to the impacts of climate change and support the shift to a cleaner, renewable economy; expanded programs for film development and production to give Yukon media producers access to local and national funding; launched a new website to share information about research and monitoring conducted by or in partnership with Yukon government; and signed a water management agreement with British Columbia to collaboratively manage shared water in the Mackenzie River Basin, specifically in the Liard River and its tributaries.

We're providing \$300,000 for resource road improvements for the Yukon placer mining industry. We are: increasing funding to \$1.6 million this year for mineral exploration; developing an open data repository to give entrepreneurs access to a wealth of research and the ability to use data in innovative ways; providing a new suite of e-services for Yukon businesses and organizations through the corporate online registry; engaging Yukon partners, communities and First Nations to develop a broad, long-term strategy to drive growth in Yukon's tourism industry; providing ongoing marketing funds directly aimed at consumers. We have: initiated a comprehensive visitor survey to help tourism businesses better understand the interests and expectations of visitors; hosted a summit to define opportunities to invest for sustained growth in winter tourism markets; developed a broad-based arts and culture policy to enhance growth in Yukon's cultural industries. We are collaborating with the federal government on climate change preparedness, focused on energy planning and working on smaller First Nation- and community-driven renewable energy projects.

So that's a lot of the stuff that has been happening. It speaks to the fact that when we're not in the Legislative Assembly, there are things that are happening in each department. Folks are working very, very hard on this side of government and, to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources' comments as well, the work ethic on both sides of this House should not be criticized. I think that everybody in this Legislative Assembly works extremely hard.

So there is a lot that is going on in the Yukon. Take a look in general at what's happening in the Yukon these days — especially this summer. Half of the world's largest gold producers are investing in Yukon mining properties. Barrick Gold has invested \$8.3 million in ATAC Resources at the east of Keno properties.

Newmont Mining is investing \$6 million this year in an exploration program at Goldstrike Resources' Plateau project east of Mayo. Victoria Gold is moving forward with its plans to mine in the Dublin Gulch area. Kudz Ze Kayah and Coffee Creek mining projects have entered into the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment process. There is a great deal happening in our economy and that bodes well for the future. We are not going to take credit for any of those. This is industry; this is the boom-and-bust industry. It's going to boom and it's going to bust. It's going to be cyclical. We need to prepare for production and we need to prepare for reclamation and we need to prepare for those years when there is not so much interest.

I do want to give credit to the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for all the work that he has done with the industry. He is very well-respected in the industry. I hope that we get an opportunity to work together.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the work that we've done in the first few months in office. I am very pleased to see the New Democrats are on board to work with us as we move forward into the future. Mr. Speaker, as I conclude my remarks today, I want to thank the Commissioner of Yukon for his work on the Speech from the Throne. We will not be distracted from the work at hand.

I commend this speech to the House. Thank you very much.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Gallina: Over the past two days, this House has heard some very personal and powerful speeches in reply to the Speech from the Throne. Some of the themes that I took from these speeches include family, tradition, culture, working collaboratively to find solutions, respect and respectful governance, reconciliation, inclusion, giving thanks, raising our children and the next generation, experience, passion, working to better the lives of all Yukoners, and leadership. These themes have shaped the values that we, the Liberal caucus, pride ourselves on. We have now opened up and shared with people what is most important to us and how we plan to conduct ourselves when we sit in this House with

members, engage with our constituents, work with departments and collaborate with governments.

On leadership, I would like to take a moment to recognize the Premier for bringing this team together. Our support for him and his leadership is evident in our presentations made here in this House.

We have had the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne. Each member has taken the time to reiterate their commitment and their position as a member of this Assembly. The Speech from the Throne sets the tone for this Legislative Assembly. It guides the business of this House and directs our path forward. Each member has responded by outlining their role in this Legislative Assembly and their personal goals over the coming weeks and months. I would like to thank those members opposite who respectfully listened to our speeches — namely those members for Porter Creek North and Whitehorse Centre, stalwarts of this House, who I believe listened to every one of the presentations.

We have set out four priorities to guide our government through the coming years. We will take a people-centred approach to wellness to help Yukoners thrive. We will make strategic investments that will contribute to healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities. By building and maintaining strong government-to-government relationships, we will foster reconciliation.

We will support a diverse, growing economy that will provide good jobs for Yukoners in an environmentally responsible way. We made these commitments to Yukoners last fall when we asked them to elect us as the new Yukon government. We will continue to reiterate these commitments because we will use these to guide our decision-making going forward.

Our people-centred approach is the cornerstone of this government. We will work to support programs and services to support the well-being of Yukoners of all ages. This includes newborn health and supporting midwifery in Yukon. It includes learning opportunities for school readiness and quality childcare, and it continues on to elder care, from the Whistle Bend care facility to exploring options for aging in place.

The wellness of Yukoners extends to safety as well. Today we introduced amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* and changes that will be debated in this Assembly. The proposed changes will make our act one of the most progressive laws in this country. We have committed to participate in the inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls, as we believe this inquiry is an important look at the issue of violence against women and girls in our communities.

We believe that all communities matter. Communities are very important to our territory. We believe that community-led solutions are the best solutions for Yukoners. Whether for roads, infrastructure, programs or service, we believe our job as elected officials is to work with individual communities on their unique needs.

Government-to-government relationships are essential to the future of this territory. First Nations in Yukon are leading

the way in terms of self-governments and modern treaties. We must work with First Nation governments if we are to develop a successful future in this territory. We believe that our governments must work together, and to do so we must have a mutual respect and understanding.

Our fourth commitment is to support a diverse and growing economy. We will do so by respecting the environment and respecting Yukoners. We will do so by supporting education so that our students are ready to enter the workforce after graduation. We will work with the college to align training programs with the needs of employers. We will support all Yukon industries.

The mineral exploration industry is a key driver in the Yukon. We have seen some really positive announcements from this industry recently and will continue to support a responsible exploration and mining industry in this territory. We also support the diversification of Yukon's economy and we support a number of industries in this territory.

We are proud of our rich tourism industry and we will continue to support its growth and development.

I mentioned earlier in my remarks that I am here today because I have a desire to serve — a desire I know I share with all of my colleagues in this House. Yukoners want their government to serve them and we are here to do just that. Though the work is challenging and difficult decisions must be made, we must not forget that it is a privilege and an honour to sit in this House and to serve the people of Yukon. To do so responsibly involves listening to them, engaging their ideas and putting their voices into action.

As members of this Legislative Assembly, we give public voice to the diversity of our constituents who comprise this wonderful territory and it is our duty to speak to our constituents about the work that we do and the decisions that we make that affect their lives.

It has been, and continues to be, an honour to speak to our constituents, represent their interests and serve them in this House. Yukoners deserve no less.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I commend this motion to the House.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yea, six nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 11 agreed to

Motion to engross Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to the Commissioner in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to the Commissioner in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor.

Motion agreed to

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 2: *National Aboriginal Day Act* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 2, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege and honour to once again speak to the bill I introduced just yesterday here in the House. Bill No. 2, the *National Aboriginal Day Act*, amends the *Employment Standards Act* by adding National Aboriginal Day as a general holiday in the Yukon.

The bill supports this government's priority to build inclusive, vibrant and proud Yukon communities. Recognizing and celebrating the rich heritage, culture and achievements of Yukon's aboriginal peoples is critical to that goal. Aboriginal peoples have long celebrated the summer solstice as it holds an important significance within many aboriginal cultures. Celebrating National Aboriginal Day on June 21st as a statutory holiday for all Yukoners contributes to reconciliation by allowing us all the opportunity to learn more about indigenous peoples and to participate in cultural events. We believe that all Yukoners benefit from a unified society that celebrates and shares in the culture of indigenous peoples.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide a little background on how we arrived at this important day.

On December 9, 2015, former NDP MLA Kevin Barr submitted a petition with more than 500 signatures to put forth Motion No. 1039 to make National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday in the Yukon. Yesterday, I stood in this House and thanked Mr. Barr and today again I would like to say thank you to him for bringing forward this petition.

On May 16, 2016, then-Minister of Community Services, the Hon. Currie Dixon, brought forward a motion which I believe was passed unanimously in this House to go out to the Yukon and to seek opinion on National Aboriginal Day. I thank him for bringing that forward and for the Yukon Party for bringing that forward. That amended motion was unanimously passed that day that urged the Yukon government to seek public input about the possibility about declaring National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday here in the Yukon.

Through a survey conducted by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, all Yukoners were invited to provide their comments on how and whether they might benefit or be affected by National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday. For two months, from May 16th to July 16th of 2016, the government sought input from all employers. This included local businesses and chambers of commerce. I know that the chambers were reached out to and we asked them to take the survey to all employers. This also included the public, First Nation governments and First Nation development corporations.

The survey was conducted in the summer so that all employers would have a strong sense of how a holiday in June might affect their businesses. In particular, the Yukon government wanted to hear from local businesses and labour organizations to understand what financial effects an additional statutory holiday might have on seasonal businesses or companies operating within a collective agreement.

We have posted the survey results on the Community Services website and, as people can tell from those survey results, we had over 1,400 Yukoners responding directly to the survey. I'm pleased to say that 88 percent of all respondents supported the creation of a statutory holiday to recognize National Aboriginal Day. Ninety percent of First Nation citizens and employees believed there would be benefits to National Aboriginal Day being a statutory holiday.

When asked how a statutory holiday on National Aboriginal Day would affect their businesses, 48.7 percent of employers and members of the business community felt they would be either only slightly affected or not at all. By the way, Mr. Speaker, 100 percent of First Nation governments already give their employees this day off with pay. As well, 26.9 percent of employers and members of the business community said they would be negatively affected through loss of profit and increased costs and 20.2 percent of employers and members of the business community felt that they would be positively affected by the holiday. Many employers said that they felt that the holiday would increase employee morale, profits, tourism and First Nation community support.

Mr. Speaker, I will let you know as well that after being sworn in, I did sit down with several of the chambers of commerce and we talked about National Aboriginal Day. All of them did express some concerns, but all of them also expressed support for National Aboriginal Day. They were all supportive of seeing National Aboriginal Day come here to this House. I found that to be a strong endorsement, Mr. Speaker.

We appreciate that this newest statutory holiday will have implications for local business operators to varying degrees. We realize that this new statutory holiday may have added payroll and operational costs for some businesses and organizations, including the Government of Yukon; however, we believe that the benefits of the holiday outweigh the challenges and we are happy to see that the majority of the public and business community agree. More than half of the survey respondents identified Yukoners' ability to celebrate, respect, acknowledge, understand and recognize First Nation history, culture and traditions as the reasons why they supported the creation of this new holiday. As well, Yukoners told us that the day would encourage spending and economic growth for the territorial economy and local businesses.

Mr. Speaker, we anticipate Yukon-wide benefits, such as increased revenue from tourism and recreational activities, as well as improved morale in the workforce. Our government is committed to building strong government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations to foster reconciliation and to advance a modern Yukon that is diverse and inclusive.

Yukon is leading the way on many fronts: self-governance; modern treaties; strengthening our Yukon economy with the government-to-government relationships; and reconciliation initiatives. As well, there are several reasons on a social front where this has such a strong influence on the future of the territory. I think it's important that we continue to lead the way in recognizing and celebrating First Nation culture together as a community. Across Canada, jurisdictions have between six and 10 public statutory holidays embedded in their employment legislation. If we pass National Aboriginal Day, we will then have 10 and we will be joining the Northwest Territories, which has officially recognized National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday for the past 15 years, since 2002.

Coming together as a community to celebrate is a tangible way to support the revitalization of First Nation culture, which has benefits for all Yukoners and ultimately enhances Yukon society. Mr. Speaker, the creation of this new statutory holiday supports our government's people-centred approach to wellness. We recognize that there are costs to this holiday and we believe that it represents a strategic investment that will move Yukon toward building healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities.

I thank officials from various departments for their work on preparing this legislation and on conducting the survey. Again, that survey is available for all Yukoners to see the results. We put it up on our website yesterday when we tabled the legislation. I hope that this House can approve June 21 as a special day so that we can collectively recognize and

celebrate the culture, heritage and achievements of the indigenous peoples of Canada.

In Yukon, a statutory holiday for National Aboriginal Day will give Yukoners and visitors the opportunity to recognize and celebrate the contribution of indigenous peoples to the fabric of Canada. National Aboriginal Day activities offer an excellent opportunity to celebrate the First Nation heritage and culture that make Yukon the unique place that it is.

Finally, we believe that it is important that Yukoners have the opportunity to participate in the cultural events that take place throughout our territory. I am honoured to stand before you and present National Aboriginal Day in its second reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kent: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak at second reading with reference to this bill to create a National Aboriginal Day here in the Yukon. First of all, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the officials who provided the briefing this morning.

I thank the Government House Leader as well for organizing the various briefings that are to take place with the legislation and budget and various departments. I would also like to just quickly congratulate a couple of members on the other side, starting of course with the Premier, the MLA for Klondike. I believe he is the first Premier from that riding in our modern government, in our responsible government, so congratulations to him. We obviously worked together an awful lot over the past five years and I'll look forward to continuing to work with him in the years to come throughout this mandate.

I would also like to congratulate the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, the Minister of Community Services, on his election. There were some very close elections, I think, last time around, and he and I were both in a couple of them. So congratulations to you, and I know that you will do a great job of representing the constituents of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes as well as working as a minister. I'm pleased to be the critic for this department and others, and I look forward to back-and-forth with you on this bill and department business over the next while.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start by outlining what our approach in the Yukon Party Official Opposition will be in responding to this bill at second reading. I'll start by providing some context and history. I know the minister provided some in his remarks, but perhaps I will provide a little bit more. Then I will outline some of the considerations that we as legislators should take into account as we decide on this matter, and finally, I'll explain where we sit on this issue at this point in debate on this bill.

The discussion on making National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday did not begin in the Yukon, nor will Yukon be the first jurisdiction to enact this as a statutory holiday, should this bill pass. In 2001, members of the 14th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories debated and passed the *National Aboriginal Day Act*, which made that territory the first jurisdiction in the country to mark June 21 as a statutory

holiday for National Aboriginal Day. June 21 was, of course, picked based on its cultural significance as summer solstice and as a day that many aboriginal groups traditionally celebrate their heritage.

Since that time, annual celebrations have grown and are held nationally on June 21 to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding achievements of aboriginal peoples across our country. These celebrations are not only for First Nation people, but all Canadians are encouraged to take the opportunity to participate in various ways. Here in the Yukon Territory, events are held right across this jurisdiction in just about every one of our communities.

With regard to the idea of National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday, credit, of course, must be given where it is due. The former NDP MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, Kevin Barr, deserves considerable credit in sparking this discussion. On November 2, 2015, he gave notice of a motion, Motion No. 1039, urging the Yukon government to declare National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday. Later that Sitting, on December 9, 2015, Mr. Barr called that motion for debate on private members' day. He spoke passionately and persuasively in favour of his motion and, regardless of where any of us sit on the issue, he deserved credit for bringing forward an issue upon which he held such strong beliefs. Indeed, several of his NDP colleagues also spoke in favour of the motion. The position of the NDP on this matter has been unequivocal and clear since the passage of that motion.

For our part, Yukon Party MLAs intervened in the debate on Mr. Barr's motion — Motion No. 1039 — with an amendment. That amendment sought to have the Yukon government consult Yukon First Nations, employers, employees and the general public about the possibility of creating this new statutory holiday. As Yukon Party MLAs explained at the time, the creation of a new statutory holiday does not come without considerable cost. That cost will be borne by employers like the Yukon government, other levels of government, such as municipalities, and perhaps most profoundly, by small- and medium-sized businesses. The Yukon Party argued that if this idea was to be considered, then it was only fair to let Yukon businesses and other employers have their say about what it would mean to their operations and livelihoods. We were pleased that all members who were present for the debate agreed, and the amendment passed unanimously. With that, the amended motion passed through the Yukon Legislative Assembly on December 9, 2015.

The record of debate and the tallies of voting show quite clearly the positions of the Yukon Party and the New Democratic Party. What is curious, though, is the conspicuous silence of the Leader of the Liberal Party. As Leader of the Third Party at the time, he did not speak on or even vote on Mr. Barr's motion. This means one of two things — either he had other priorities or he had not made up his mind. In fact, in the entire five years of the 33rd Legislative Sitting, the now-Premier never once raised the matter of whether or not National Aboriginal Day should be a statutory holiday — no

speeches, motions or questions, and not even a favourable vote on an otherwise unanimous —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Leader of the Third Party, on a point of order.

Ms. Hanson: I would just like to raise to the House that it is my understanding of the Standing Orders that it is inappropriate — not allowed — to comment on absences from this Legislative Assembly by members.

Speaker: Member for Copperbelt South, on the point of order.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order — I was merely stating the fact that the Leader of the Third Party at the time, the now-Premier, did not participate in a vote. I did not reference an absence from this House.

Speaker: I don't think I heard a reference to an absence from the House.

Ms. Hanson: That is correct, Mr. Speaker. It was certainly implied, and the member who made that statement is fully aware that the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party were in Paris at the climate change summit.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Thank you. On the specific point that the Leader of the Third Party made, subject to being corrected in Hansard, I did not hear a reference to an absence. I understand the Leader of the Third Party's point in any event.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, even if we were to pass this bill as expeditiously as possible, we have only been given a few weeks to decide on it before the statutory holiday may come into effect. It would still only leave businesses, other levels of government and even the Yukon government just a few weeks to prepare. In our opinion, that is hardly fair warning for Yukon's large, medium and small businesses whose busy summer seasons have already begun.

It's hardly fair warning for the territory's municipalities, whose current budgets won't contemplate this new cost, and it's hardly fair warning to Yukon government departments, who will face additional costs as a result of this — that is, unless the government's budget already contemplates this cost, which would be evidence that the Liberal government views this debate and deliberation as a mere afterthought.

Either way, it is clear that the government, in an effort to honour a campaign commitment, has rushed this bill somewhat and has come to this decision without adequate consideration of the impacts on Yukoners. Furthermore, they have certainly not given members of the Assembly adequate information to consider in our deliberations of, again, following the passage of Motion No. 1039, which was amended by the Yukon Party to allow for consultation.

The Yukon government sought input on this matter in a consultation process that concluded in the summer of 2016. Several months ago, we requested a copy of the consultation

material and the responses from Yukoners from the minister. All we received was a letter saying that Yukoners were very positive — in favour — and that some increased administration costs were identified. The government refused to provide actual submissions from Yukon businesses or even a "what we heard" document at that time, which is standard practice following public consultations.

This lack of transparency makes it difficult for us as legislators to make an informed decision about whether to support this bill. We know that there are added costs for employers but we do not have any details at all on what those will be. Now we see that the minister has chosen to post a consultation summary online late yesterday. I do want to thank the Premier. I did speak to him prior to the throne speech last week and I mentioned my concerns with not being provided this information, and he must have had a conversation with his minister and the document did go online, as I said, late yesterday.

I should note that the document was only made available to us less than 24 hours ago, and the individual submissions from businesses have not been included. I think the full document would be interesting for us to take a look at, rather than just the summary. I'll repeat my request to the minister to provide that full consultation document prior to us going into Committee of the Whole so that we can consider the full context of this.

In his letter to us, the Minister of Community Services again indicated that he has had verbal discussions with members of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce. I also reached out to the chamber, and what I understand from them is that they urged the government to conduct an economic analysis of the impacts of creating a new statutory holiday. We agree that this would be beneficial. Again, I introduced a motion earlier today that asked for such an economic analysis to be conducted. I'm not sure whether or not that has been created. There are going to be costs associated, as I mentioned, but again, we've heard that some in the survey and others expect there to be benefits as well.

Such an economic analysis would answer some important questions: Will this hurt the growth prospects for businesses or their ability to hire new staff? Will it hinder their ability to create jobs? Will it make them consider laying staff off, or will it hurt their bottom line? Are there ways these impacts can be mitigated? The Liberal government's unwillingness to conduct any detailed analysis of this decision makes these questions difficult to answer.

We also don't know what issues Yukon municipalities have identified with this legislation. In most communities, the municipality is the leading employer. What does this mean for them? Can they afford the increased costs that will come with this new statutory holiday? Earlier this year, we heard from the Mayor of Whitehorse that this will cost the City of Whitehorse hundreds of thousands of dollars, in his estimation. Will it mean that they have to reduce services or raise taxes to deal with this shortfall? Again, these are questions that we can't answer without the benefit of a proper

economic analysis and cost analysis of what we're about to undertake.

Next, we don't know what impact this will have on Yukon's largest employer, the Yukon government. What will a new statutory holiday cost the Yukon government? Is this something that Yukon government has calculated? I know the Premier, at the time of this announcement, said that in discussions with Finance officials, it was felt that this was something the government could afford, but again, we don't know what the numbers of a new statutory holiday are and what that additional cost will be to the Yukon government. If they have done that costing, it would be helpful, I think, to table that for MLAs as well as the public to take a look at.

Mr. Speaker, there is a chance that the Yukon government knows the answers to these questions and simply, perhaps, isn't sharing the information with us. However, there is also a more disappointing possibility, and that's that they didn't do this work and they simply don't know, or that they haven't done any analysis on this decision at all and have completely abandoned the notion of evidence-based policy-making. If they do know any of the answers to these questions, they haven't shared them with MLAs and we would be eager to hear from them. If they don't know, or haven't sought the answers to these questions, then they should be very clear and honest with Yukoners. They should tell employers and employees, First Nation governments, municipalities and indeed all Yukoners that the impacts of this decision are not being taken into account and that their minds are made up, and that when it comes to this, no evidence or analysis will sway them. We hope this isn't the case, Mr. Speaker, but at this point, we simply don't have enough information to believe otherwise.

I want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by outlining our party's position on this bill at this stage. We fully support National Aboriginal Day. We think it is incredibly important to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding achievements of aboriginal peoples both here in Yukon and across the entire country. We believe that here in the Yukon, the celebration of Yukon First Nations enriches the lives of all of our citizens. For this reason, we believe the Yukon government has an important role to play in taking part in this recognition and celebration.

During our time in government, we tried to ensure that recognizing First Nation heritage and culture, or celebrating the outstanding achievements of aboriginal peoples, wasn't something that was confined to a single day. It occurred throughout the year and throughout the lives of Yukoners, whether that was through the work of the Department of Tourism and Culture in helping Yukoners engage with First Nation culture and the resulting cultural resurgence that Yukon has experienced of late, or through the work done to help preserve and teach First Nation languages in Yukon communities and schools, or through our earnest support for the Aboriginal Employees Forum and the Aboriginal Employees Award of Honour that showcased the talents of individual aboriginal public servants, strengthened pride in the

public service and called attention to the good work of aboriginal employees in the Yukon public.

We believe that government can and should take action to help in this celebration and recognition. These are just a few examples, Mr. Speaker, but we know that there is more to be done. We would be happy to support the government in taking further action. Indeed, we would certainly support the Yukon government increasing its support for celebration, activities and events on National Aboriginal Day.

If the Liberal government has other ideas of ways that either the Yukon government or the Yukon Legislative Assembly can aid and support the celebration of National Aboriginal Day, we would be more than happy to engage and offer our support. However, the issue of creating a new statutory holiday is about more than just government action or spending. The creation of a new statutory holiday, however noble the cause, is something that will have real impacts on Yukon citizens, businesses and governments.

Because the Yukon government hasn't taken the time or done the work to understand what those impacts are, we are left with numerous unanswered questions that I will explore during Committee of the Whole. Some of the most pressing bear repeating. Why hasn't an economic analysis of this been done? Why did they refuse to share the results of the public consultation until very recently and why haven't they done a cost analysis for their own departments? We're eager to participate in the discussion about this issue, but it is difficult when so many of these questions are unanswered and so much is unknown.

While it is our hope that some of this information may come to light during examination in Committee of the Whole, we're worried that the Liberals simply haven't gathered or considered this necessary information. As legislators, we're compelled to make decisions based on the evidence provided to us and, at this point, it is apparent that much of that information is missing. Hopefully we learn more during Committee of the Whole.

We will be offering our support for this bill at second reading. Again, it is a very straightforward bill, and again, I look forward to getting into Committee of the Whole debate and see if we can identify some potential mitigation for, in particular, the small business and medium-sized business communities that will be affected.

The Klondike Placer Miners' Association, in a letter to the previous Minister of Community Services — which I understand was shared with the current minister as well — suggested that for them perhaps — they were very supportive of National Aboriginal Day being named a statutory holiday — there would be an opportunity to look at taking away one of the other statutory holidays that is celebrated during their operating season. I think there are some creative ideas that the business community has brought forward. I know that the government committed in their platform to eliminating small business tax and reducing the corporate tax as well. Perhaps that's a mitigation that could be enhanced to help protect the bottom line for businesses, but again, I will look forward to the debate in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, just before I sit down, I should apologize to the Premier. It is correct. There was a trip to Paris for the climate change summit that he participated in and that is my oversight. I do apologize to the Premier for my statement earlier that said that he had not voted on this motion. Again, my apologies to the Premier, to the Member for Klondike, for that erroneous assertion that I made earlier during my second reading speech. I hope that he will accept my apology. Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you to the Member for Copperbelt South for that clarification.

Ms. Hanson: It is indeed a great honour to speak today to Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*.

Mr. Speaker, my only regret is that debate on this bill occurs on a day when Kevin Barr — who is, as people have acknowledged already is the former member of this Legislative Assembly for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — is unable to be here to bear witness to the debate on this significant, if largely symbolic, step toward reconciliation.

When Kevin and other members of the New Democratic Party caucus talked about the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015, we were moved by the depth and breadth of the report. It is really a profound document. Our discussions were at times animated and often emotional. That should come as no surprise to anyone who has read any of the 364 pages of basically the summary document, which is not all of the documentation — the 364 pages that are largely in circulation.

The mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to inform all Canadians about what happened in the 150-year history of the residential schools. By revealing this history, they also challenged us to peel back our blinders and to be open to the truth of history and, in doing so, in being open to the truth of history and to be guided and inspired in a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. The guiding principle of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was that the truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free and pave the way to reconciliation.

The first step, the difficult step, was to uncover the truth. You know this truth about residential schools is hard. One truth is that many children went missing. Many families lost their loved ones and never learned their fates. We heard personal experiences of the recollection of that history yesterday. Thanks to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the truth can no longer be denied, but in fact must be forever etched in our collective memories. But that is only the beginning. The next step is reconciliation. We use that word a lot. Governments use it and politicians use it. When we ask what reconciliation is, there really is no one way to define it.

Over the last two years, I have been moved by the language by Justice Murray Sinclair, now Senator Sinclair, who has a succinct way of expressing it. He says: “Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining respectful

relationships. There are no shortcuts.” Forging and maintaining respectful relationships, Mr. Speaker — it bears repeating. Respect is relational. It is mutual. Respect is never unilateral. It is not telling somebody you respect them.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we need, I think — just from the comments — and I am reacting to this because it brings back so many of the somewhat ugly debates that we had over the last five years — that we need to be truthful and acknowledge that here in the Yukon, we have a long way to go to maintain truly respectful relationships with First Nations.

Even before considering the calls to action, including call to action 80 that are contained in the summary of the report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, we need to take a moment to reflect on our local situation. Mr. Speaker, the *Umbrella Final Agreement* sets out a framework — a framework for respectful government-to-government relationships. The fact is, not all Yukon governments have respected the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. Going to court to resolve issues represents a failure of a relationship. The fact that we still have in place a number of court cases shows us all how far we have to go in this territory to develop truly respectful government-to-government relationships.

For reconciliation to be realized, substantial changes in how we resolve differences will need to be implemented. We have a long way to go, but here’s the good news: I think today, together, we can be starting in this new legislative setting on that reconciliation journey. Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*, can only be considered a part, albeit an essential part, of the complex mosaic that the fulfillment of the truth and reconciliation recommendations creates for Canada.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we have heard often about the 94 calls to action contained in the summary of the final report. As that report said — and I quote: “No Canadian can take pride in this country’s treatment of Aboriginal peoples, and, for that reason, all Canadians have a critical role to play in advancing reconciliation in ways that honour and revitalize the nation-to-nation Treaty relationship.”

You know, Mr. Speaker, I have spoken many times — and again just today — about breathing life into how we honour the agreements that were entered into on behalf of us all. However, I found the language of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission most compelling. I’ll quote from it. It said on page 238: “Reconciliation not only requires apologies, reparations, the relearning of Canada’s national history, and public commemoration, but also needs real social, political, and economic change”, because, as the TRC put it, “Reconciliation begins with each and every one of us.”

When I re-read the TRC summary report, I found myself personally challenged. The history that I was taught — like many in this House — was supposed to be objective. It was supposed to be balanced and, in short, it was supposed to be the truth. As the layers of the work and research done over the last number of years by both the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and now the Truth and Reconciliation Commission show us, it’s not the truth.

Mr. Speaker, we heard earlier today a line of questioning coming from the Yukon Party with respect to Bill No. 2 and heard it again just now — a line of questioning that, if we stand back even just at a slight distance, demonstrates how far there is still to go in addressing the challenge of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I wonder whether the Yukon Party or its predecessor members of the Yukon Conservative Party question or questioned whether Discovery Day or Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous were appropriate. Perhaps, as the TRC pointed out, some of us are more comfortable with the notion of our history as represented by the idea of the settler society.

Mr. Speaker, during the debate on the motion on December 9, I just thought it would be good to go back and revisit a comment that Kevin Barr made. I'll quote here: "The misunderstandings of what has transpired over many hundreds of years here in Canada — and I'll say North America — leads to the statement..." — he was sitting with Art Johns — many people know him, Elder Art Johns — and they were at the Moosehide Gathering having an ice cream cone, he said. He said, "... there were a couple of other tourists there from the States. They were saying, my goodness what a wonderful weekend they had. Who would have ever thought that they would stumble upon this Moosehide Gathering. They were telling us of the great time they had at this gathering.

"Then they went on to talk a bit about their understanding of not only Canada, but North America, and how glad they were that Columbus had discovered North America. Elder Art Johns looked over. It was just the way we hear elders speak so many times. He said, 'He discovered nothing; he was lost'..." Kevin said he laughed and it was a moment of clarity for him because with that simple statement it was clear: "As history is written, it certainly has not been written from the perspective of indigenous and First Nation people." I think that's really clear when we are comfortable with the notion of Discovery Day, but we're not comfortable with the idea of recognizing a step toward reconciliation in National Aboriginal Day.

Mr. Speaker, of course I've done my same thing where I scribble notes to myself and then I try to find where I am.

Recognition of National Aboriginal Day is reflected not only in the call to action 80, but we should recall that, with respect to consultation, as the minister opposite pointed out and as the Member for Copperbelt South alluded to, the original motion that the former MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes put forward was amended by the Yukon Party, and essentially that amendment was a delay tactic. The NDP motion was, as we've heard today, introduced in the Fall Sitting of 2015, with a view to having it in effect in 2016. Nonetheless, the motion introduced by the Yukon Party changed the intent from the symbolic unity of the Assembly declaring National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday to simply — in quotes: "consulting with Yukon First Nations, employers, employees and general public about the possibility" — the possibility, Mr. Speaker — "of declaring it as a statutory holiday."

One thing you learn in this Assembly is that sometimes it is best to keep focused on the end-game. The amended motion

introduced by the Yukon Party was an insult not only to the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, but it was an insult to the integrity of the discussion and debate that had occurred over the many months about what we meant by reconciliation — all the platitudinous language that was put out there about how much the Yukon Party was doing for indigenous people in this territory — not "with" — "to" or "for".

That Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes had provided to this Assembly an array of indicators of support for the declaration of Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday. He had, as we heard today, tabled a petition. He had in fact gone back to provide a history of National Aboriginal Day — the impetus, the historical background. It does go beyond and well before 2001 when the Northwest Territories finally passed that legislation. In fact, in 1982 the National Indian Brotherhood, now the Assembly of First Nations, put forward the idea of establishing national aboriginal solidarity day. Wouldn't it be nice to have that concept in there as a day of recognition?

In 1990, the Quebec Legislature established June 21 as the day to celebrate aboriginal culture. You will remember in the mid-1990s, there was an incredible tension — Oka comes to mind. Tensions between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples led to renewed calls for a national day of recognition. It was one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. In 1995, the Sacred Assembly of aboriginal and non-aboriginal spiritual leaders — a national meeting organized by Elijah Harper that encouraged the federal government to establish a national first people's day as a day of unity and acknowledgment. On June 13, 1996, National Aboriginal Day was proclaimed by then Governor General Roméo LeBlanc. Later that month, the first National Aboriginal Day — it didn't take them years to consult on that — was celebrated on June 21. There is a history to the idea that we should be thinking and working toward that.

Mr. Barr read into the record the support this idea had received. As we heard today, all 14 Yukon First Nations, the Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Assembly of First Nations vice-chief, the Yukon Employees' Union, the Yukon Federation of Labour and other unions along with positive feedback. He was clear, Mr. Speaker, not to mislead this House. He was clear that he had had positive feedback — not commitment — the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the City of Whitehorse and the Association of Yukon Communities. While the latter had not in December 2015 formally endorsed the proposal, they all underlined the importance of recognizing the role of First Nation contributions to today's Yukon.

As Kevin Barr put it, we have an opportunity, along with the Northwest Territories, to signal to the rest of this great country — to signal in this, the 150th celebration of Confederation — that we recognize and celebrate the realities of the deep and vibrant histories and cultures that preceded those initial gatherings of the Fathers of Confederation in Charlottetown.

Mr. Speaker, that makes me think — if nothing else, imagine how much richer our modern sense of history and

culture will be when we embrace and understand the power of the matrilineal structure of governance of indigenous peoples across this land.

As I said earlier, I have heard from both sides already today mentions of the cost. I guess my first reaction is cost with a great big question mark. Collectively could there be a more profound act of reconciliation than to reject the notion of Discovery Day? But you know what, National Aboriginal Day wasn't about that. It's not about that. It was put forward in a spirit of generosity and reconciliation. That's what motivated Kevin Barr. That's what motivated the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. That's what motivated the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples to make this suggestion.

As we commend this bill — I guess it's fairly clear that the New Democratic Party will be supporting this bill — I ask that we keep in mind as we join together to support the recognition of National Aboriginal Day that we keep in mind some of the words that arose when in November 2012 — and I'm quoting from the closing words of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: "In November 2012, Elders from Indigenous nations and many other cultures gathered for two days on Musqueam territory in Vancouver, British Columbia, to talk about how reconciliation can help Canada move forward". In this statement they said — and I'm quoting here for Hansard, page 363 of the TRC: "As Canadians, we share responsibility to look after each other and acknowledge the pain and suffering that our diverse societies have endured — a pain that has been handed down to the next generations. We need to right those wrongs, heal together and create a new future that honours the unique gifts of our children and grandchildren.

"How do we do this? Through sharing our personal stories, legends and traditional teachings... Our traditional teachings speak to acts such as holding one another up, walking together, balance, healing and unity. Our stories show how these teachings can heal their pain and restore dignity...

"We invite you to search in your own traditions and beliefs, and those of your ancestors, to find these core values that create a peaceful harmonious society and a healthy earth."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hutton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise in this House today to speak in support of National Aboriginal Day becoming an annual statutory holiday for Yukon.

As a lifelong resident of Yukon, I have been present for the entire modern land claims journey that Yukon First Nations, starting with Elijah Smith heading to Ottawa with a group of chiefs in 1973 to present the document, entitled *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*.

I shared in the pride, joy and sense of accomplishment by the chiefs of the three Northern Tutchone-speaking First Nations in the Mayo-Tatchun riding when, after 20 years of intense negotiations, a deal was finally reached and the first four Yukon First Nations were able to sign off on their final and self-government agreements in 1992 and 1993.

I also shared with the First Nations in my riding a tremendous sense of optimism that First Nations were finally being recognized as being the first people of this territory with the right to govern their own affairs on their land while co-managing the rest of the territory with their federal and territorial partners.

In 1995, with the full ratification of their agreement, Na Cho Nyäk Dun embarked on another journey every bit as challenging as the actual negotiation process. The First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun struggled for many years — and their challenges continue to this day — to be recognized and respected as the original government in this territory. Na Cho Nyäk Dun find themselves today, in 2017, still struggling to implement these agreements, 22 years after the federal and territorial governments committed and agreed to work with Yukon First Nations in a government-to-government relationship. It saddens me, as a non-native Yukoner, that 22 years have gone by — a full third of my life — and it has been wasted by the federal and territorial governments. They haven't built this relationship. I am so proud to be here today as part of a government that is going to rebuild these relationships and that is going to get us back to where we were. Today, we should be partners with our First Nation friends and neighbours.

I share the frustration of Yukon's first peoples in trying to find a way forward with governments that have not understood the spirit and intent of these agreements, but instead have chosen a method — if I may quote Chief Simon Mervyn of Mayo: "Implementation by litigation." This is what all First Nations in this territory have seen as an implementation process. It has been solved in court instead of in rooms with people talking to each other. It's a terrible way of doing business, Mr. Speaker. This approach has not only failed First Nations; it has failed all Yukon residents who embrace diversity and honour and respect the culture of our First Nation friends and neighbours.

Providing an annual statutory holiday will enable all Yukon residents to celebrate the culture, tradition and history of all Yukon First Nations. National Aboriginal Day becoming an annual statutory holiday here in the Yukon is a small but very important step forward on the path to reconciliation with First Nations. We know this will be a long and arduous journey. I'm extremely pleased to be a part of this government that has taken this small step forward on what I hope will be a journey whose destination is a new, improved, respectful and honourable relationship between Yukon's governments and the people of all cultures and traditions in this territory.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of Hansard, I will provide the interpretation after today. So I'm going to say in my language [*Member spoke in Gwich'in. Text unavailable*].

The values we live by — that's who we are as indigenous peoples of this territory — my values as a Gwich'in person, our values as Yukoners. Despite the comments that were made

with respect to costs associated with the Aboriginal Day celebration, I have to say that the honour of representing the indigenous community in this House far exceeds any costs associated with our culture. Our culture is rich in history and the countries of the world come to the Yukon to celebrate indigenous aboriginal cultures. That's value — the value of what attracts tourists to our country — to our Yukon. That will far exceed any expenses associated with one day of recognition.

We had a bit of a history lesson from the Official Opposition House Leader dating back to 2001. Mr. Speaker, since time immemorial, Bluefish Caves in my traditional territory and in my grandfather's and grandmother's traditional territory — we've been living there for tens of thousands of years. During that time, we demonstrated that we far exceeded — going back to the comment about, well, who found who? We were here and we were here far before anyone else. We have a dark past. There are dark chapters in our history of colonization — residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, discrimination, rights to vote, and racism. I myself only acquired my Indian status in 1985. Why? Because the system decided that my mother, who is a full-status Indian, did not deserve her recognition in this society because she married my father, who is a three-quarter-status Indian. She was stripped of her rights. That is discrimination. The National Aboriginal Day celebration is intended to recognize and give back. That's reconciliation.

Our land claims agreement — Vuntut Gwitchin — was one of the first signatories in 1993 to sign off on our self-government agreement. The objective of that was to give back to the First Nations their rights in society, their rights in our Yukon — the rights to those individuals who have been scooped from their families and stripped of their indigenous rights to be recognized in society as indigenous.

Deeply rooted — tens of thousands of years rooted in our culture and our traditions and our practices. We are nations, in Yukon — all of us — that are determining our own future based on our needs, our values and our principles, not by anyone else's. The Constitution of Canada speaks about protecting indigenous rights associated with our self-government agreement — indigenous rights as we've earned them, as we've negotiated, that have been recognized by the Government of Canada. The analogy used — and I quote: "The noble cause derived from history". As the respectful Leader of the Official Opposition spoke about the national brotherhood, the Assembly of First Nations, members of our Yukon First Nations participated in those early discussions, and the call for the creation of aboriginal solidarity today. Following that, the Assembly of First Nations, in 1995, post our signatory agreements, had a conference of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. The amalgamation of the Yukon Indian Brotherhood, the status of Yukon Indians and the non-status Indians merged and put forth solidarity in recognizing their indigenous roots.

In 1995, following the assembly, the royal commission designated National First People's Day. The country is now on a roll in recognizing indigenous rights. The Yukon has

since signed off on 11 self-government agreements — half of that of Canada. We are blazing and leading the way. Times are changing. National Aboriginal Day was announced in 1996, as stated by the Governor General of Canada Roméo LeBlanc, declaring June 21 of each year as National Aboriginal Day. Roméo LeBlanc also recognized from every jurisdiction in Canada, indigenous youth — indigenous youth who were to carry forward the message about reconciliation, about the health of indigenous people, and about promoting our culture and our integrity. I was privileged and honoured to have received the Governor General's support at that time to promote and bring that message forward. I'm still doing that today — advocating for change.

Ironically, June is Aboriginal History Month. We need to celebrate. We celebrate aboriginal history. The history that comes with this is the changing of seasons. Culturally, the principles around celebrating National Aboriginal Day are that we change seasons; we celebrate. We have a fall harvest feast. The indigenous populations celebrate the changing of the seasons and that's part of the celebration of values and principles behind that significant day.

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* — Canada officially adopted that in May 2016 after years of objections. I'm sensing that not everyone in this House is in 100-percent support of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in bringing forward true reconciliation. Among other things, it affirms that indigenous peoples, of all other peoples, contribute to the diversity and the richness of our civilization and cultures that constitutes our common heritage. We celebrate our heritage in the Yukon. It's used to respond to the pressures that we've heard earlier. It allows us to promote and share our rich resources. Our traditional cultures and teachings state that what we own and what we earn as indigenous peoples, we never keep that to ourselves. We pass it on for knowledge and we share because it makes us a richer place. Our society becomes richer for it.

As I stated earlier and I'll restate again, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report stated that reconciliation is not an aboriginal problem — it is a Canadian one. Virtually all aspects of Canadian society may need to be reconsidered. The question raised by many is: What is reconciliation? What does it mean? I would ask the Official Opposition party: What does reconciliation mean? What does recognition of Aboriginal Day and enacting Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*, as an act to recognize and appreciate reconciliation, and mutual respect for our diverse cultures mean?

Justice Murray Sinclair, the chair of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission said, during the release of the TRC Summary, "Starting now we all have an opportunity to show leadership, courage and conviction in helping heal the wounds of the past as we make a path forward for a more just, more fair and more loving country." Among the 94 calls to action, one that stands out is a call to create a new national statutory holiday, the national day for truth and reconciliation — Aboriginal Day.

It's a symbolic move in the right direction. There are many calls through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but that's the beginning — that's the one that stands out for me, for all of us. It recognizes us as distinct and unique and that we are a contributor to our society. Aboriginal Day is about celebrating cultures and indigenous peoples. It's about learning and educating Canadians. It's about sharing our history based on reconciliation and a path forward. The 2001 discussion about the Northwest Territories — they saw value. They implemented the laws of practice to recognize the rich culture and history.

Less than a year ago Canada adopted the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* — a little slow, but it's there. It's there to support our process. We want to do the same here in the Yukon.

This new holiday will allow people to participate and engage with communities as they celebrate who they are, from Southern Tutchone to Northern Tutchone to Tlingit to Vuntut Gwitchin. We all celebrate our very rich and diverse culture, and we share it with the world.

This provides all Yukoners with the opportunity to continue to learn about our 14 Yukon First Nations and the eight distinct spoken languages across our territory. The recognition and acknowledgement brings new hope in the spirit of reconciliation in the territory. We should be proud of taking this step and the step of enacting a law that will make this a reality for all of Yukon — for all of Yukon indigenous peoples.

To quote from former national chief Shawn Atleo: "As First Nations move toward a better quality of life for our people, where our communities are strong and healthy and our governments are supported and our economies are strong, we do so with an important balance — living and learning according to the wisdom of our ancestors while gaining the knowledge and support we need to fulfill our dreams."

On Aboriginal Day, we celebrate the traditions and teachings of our ancestors to look to our youth to carry forward the message. First Nation young people are the fastest growing population in our country. We know that to be true also in the Yukon. They must be supported in their efforts to motivate change for future generations. Their journey forward and beyond reconciliation will be long. It won't be easy, but it is necessary. It may be uncomfortable, but it's necessary. This new holiday will be change and change is sometimes very difficult, as we heard, and sometimes uncomfortable. For us to grow and learn together, we must welcome the vulnerabilities and discomforts. We need to come together and promote something new and different that enhances and enriches our Yukon.

Here in the Yukon, I am very proud to say and share that our territory has public and private sectors, including First Nation governments, that have worked in partnerships and collaborations to offer cultural events to celebrate First Nation peoples' day. We have been doing that since we signed our self-government agreements in every community. The question is: What is this going to cost First Nations? My response — and their response, I may venture to say — is that

it's not of concern to the First Nations. It's about what do we do? How do we share? How does this enrich other people, other cultures and our society?

The Adäka Cultural Festival started with the support of the Commissioner of the Yukon in the 2000s, and that was to celebrate Aboriginal Day. We held it in Rotary Peace Park to commemorate our rich culture. It started back then. The federal government, the regional government and every First Nation participated in that process with the Commissioner of the day, I might add.

Events like the Adäka Festival currently still happen in support of sharing our rich cultures with partnerships of First Nations and the Tourism sector. This contributes to the richness and vibrancy of our territory. Our team here — the Liberal team — is happy to follow through on our commitment to introduce the statutory holiday — another step toward forging a better relationship with Yukon First Nations based on respect and recognition. As a Gwich'in person, I am proud to stand here today to speak about the importance of National Aboriginal Day, the honour of our elders and our ancestors. We are a strong and resilient people and our contributions are significant to this territory. Our grandchildren and the children of tomorrow will honour us for that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleagues of the Legislative Assembly to help me in welcoming to the gallery one of my most loyal and hard-working volunteers: my son Liam.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that we are conducting our business this afternoon on the traditional territory of the Ta'an Kwäch'än and Kwanlin Dün First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to be here in this House today to speak about this historic and overdue act to make National Aboriginal Day a general holiday in Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, as borne of a dark history at odds with our perceptions of our national identity — a history of residential schools, and lost status as we heard today and of the suppression of languages and cultures, the suppression of peoples. National Aboriginal Day celebrates the diversity and strength of Yukon's aboriginal peoples and also of those across Canada. The cultures and traditions of our first people are woven into the social fabric of our community, our territory and our country. Their contribution to the development of Canada cannot be overstated. What we're doing today and in the days to come is about reconciliation. There were 94 calls to action, and this is one of them. The Leader of the Third Party —

Speaker: Order. The Member for Kluane.

The Minister of Highways and Public Works, if you could continue please.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member of the Third Party — the Leader of the Third Party, rather — spoke with passion and almost a sage-like knowledge of the truth and reconciliation document. My colleagues — many in the House here — have lived it. They said the cultures and traditions of our first people are woven into the social fabric of our community, our territory, and our country and their contributions to the development of Canada cannot be overstated.

Taking all this into account, and also our commitment to re-engaging First Nations in government-to-government relations, it is essential that we celebrate this day, that we actually recognize it and make it a statutory holiday. It is an essential step toward reconciliation — a small step, the first one.

Shortly after being sworn in as minister, I joined my colleagues, the Justice minister and the Member for Porter Creek Centre in a blanket ceremony at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. It was a very moving ceremony, Mr. Speaker — very moving — and I am richer for it. There at the centre, we abandoned our names, our titles, our professions, our identities. It was an anonymous ceremony. Together there, we listened to a succinct and compelling history of indigenous people in Canada. We listened as First Nation people spoke about what it was like to grow up in Canada, in the territory. It often wasn't easy to listen to. We learned about oppressive rules — spoken about this afternoon — shocking practices that had a tremendous impact on families and individuals in this territory — shameful rules, shameful practices. In recent history, this happened — often surprisingly recent.

But there were also moments of compassion and sharing and hospitality that infused the ceremony. Working together as strangers, we traded food and goods, learned about subsistence life and about traditional territories. We also learned how those territories were whittled away over the life of this country to reservations and small slivers of land. Afterward, we talked candidly among ourselves while sitting in a circle, sharing our thoughts and perspectives, talking and sharing together.

It was, as I said, a moving ceremony and brought to mind other ceremonies. Decades ago in Watson Lake, I was invited to participate in a sweat lodge. I was a young man at the time — from the suburbs in Ontario. Years ago, that cloudy afternoon in Watson Lake was something remarkable in my life — a first and, despite 30 years of memories competing in my aged mind, I can clearly remember that ceremony today. Again, I am richer for it.

In our caucus, we have had smudging ceremonies. Such a ceremony — again, a first for me — promoted sharing, candor and discussion. It bound us closer together as colleagues and moved us toward true friendship. I am richer for it.

During our swearing in, we had the Dakhká Khwáan Dancers perform. As my colleague and Minister of Tourism and Culture noted, it was the first time the drums had echoed

off the walls of the Legislature — the main building — the first time, Mr. Speaker. I found that remarkable at the time. What was remarkable was the fact that it had not been done before. I still find that remarkable today, and I also find it sad — a loss. Our predecessors for some reason denied themselves the pleasure of that thunderous music, that vibration, that culture. The visitors I brought to that ceremony — my family — had never seen anything like it. They were moved to tears by the performance. We agreed again that we were all richer for having seen it.

My point is that we are surrounded by a vibrant culture. This government is committed to righting more than a decade of neglect. This government will live up to the spirit and intent of the land claims agreements that we have signed. This government will live up to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This government fulfills its promises. This government was elected to bring a new statutory holiday — National Aboriginal Day — into existence, and we are going to do it.

I am immensely proud of my colleague, the Community Services minister, for his hard work drafting this legislation. However, I would also like to take a moment to recognize the hard work that the Third Party and the former Official Opposition put into making this new holiday a reality. The former MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, Kevin Barr, worked tirelessly, consulting communities, business organizations and other levels of government. I would like to thank him very much.

I would also like to thank the Leader of the Third Party for her courageous and considered remarks on the subject this afternoon. Her understanding, passion and authenticity on this issue were truly inspiring to me. She was ferocious and true to her beliefs and to her colleagues, to the debates in this House. For that, she is to be commended for her efforts making this holiday — should it pass — a reality. This is a great thing.

It is a great moment for Yukoners, Mr. Speaker, for all Yukoners — a great opportunity. This is a chance to better understand our neighbours, our friends and to strike new ones. My colleague from Mayo-Tatchun spoke very eloquently about this. This is the chance to knit ourselves a little closer together. Some members of the Official Opposition seem reluctant to embrace this new opportunity, this holiday. They question the work that has been done by former MLA Kevin Barr, by the Leader of the Third Party. They ignore the evidence, Mr. Speaker.

Here is what members of the Yukon Party are ignoring: Community Services and the Yukon Bureau of Statistics consulted 1,400 Yukoners — 1,400 Yukoners, Mr. Speaker; that's a huge number — and 83 percent supported a statutory holiday — 83 percent. Only 13 percent opposed such a thing. Three percent were neutral on it.

Then they raised questions about the cost. Of course, there will be some costs. Some things are easy to put on a ledger to account for — accounts. Other things are not so easy to account for. These are the intangibles we have in society — the righting of wrongs, the opportunities that change opens in society. I answer: What is the cost of not implementing this

statutory holiday? What is the cost of refusing to take one of these important steps in the reconciliation process? There is simply no way to put a dollar figure on such an important act. I must also say that it's very fitting that we celebrate National Aboriginal Day on the longest day of the year. It's an important day for Yukon's first people. This holiday celebrates our history and those of our first people. It dates back thousands of years. We will launch it during the 150th anniversary of our nation and the 75th anniversary of the Alaska Highway. Those are all important anniversaries, Mr. Speaker — shared anniversaries — things that had great good and had great costs associated with them as well.

I started this on sort of an upbeat, but today we are discussing a matter that our descendants will enjoy — a legacy. We are creating a new statutory holiday in this House — something that hasn't been done in many, many years — in a good cause, to celebrate an important history. It will foster healing and reconciliation. It will bind our society together. It will strengthen it, Mr. Speaker. I have no doubt that it too will make us all richer.

Thank you.

Mr. Adel: I know the time grows short but we'll go on with this. We are on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dūn First Nation and Ta'an Kwāch'ān Council. I always like to start off with that because it does show the respect that they deserve. My esteemed colleague has pointed out the where and whys of how this came to be, and I'm going to take a different tack.

Looking back on my personal experiences, I have had some dealings with not being included or accepted within a community. My family history is one of persecution in Europe during two great wars, before and beyond. What I learned was from the stories — and it's the stories that are important here — that my grandfather's family told me. These stories enabled me to understand the why of this non-acceptance and to create a narrative to present to my peers to help them understand the culture that I came from and to foster an acceptance and a respect in the community so I could move forward.

For me, this is why National Aboriginal Day, as a national holiday, as a holiday in the Yukon, is so important to us, to our indigenous people, to the rest of Yukoners. It provides a showcase for our First Nations and a venue for Yukon's first people to tell their stories to the benefit of all.

This is a quote from a constituent of mine, Mathieya Alatini, who is also a former chief of the Kluane First Nation: "Accepting National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday within the Yukon is another step toward reconciliation by recognizing the contributions the indigenous people of Canada make to the Yukon and Canada as a whole. Yukon's first peoples are leading the way in so many initiatives, and a holiday such as this will allow the opportunity for Yukoners to take the time to learn about and celebrate the 14 Yukon First Nations. These nations are made up of eight unique linguistic groups, and 11 of them are signatories to the benchmark of modern treaties for Canada. The majority of modern treaties within Canada are held here

in the Yukon. This is an achievement to celebrate and, of course, implement. I applaud this Liberal government in continuing the initiatives started by the former Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes MLA, Kevin Barr."

My two youngest sons were born and are being raised as Yukoners, and this holiday will create another opportunity for them to understand First Nation culture and how it forms so much of the narrative that is Yukon. This venue can help them shape themselves into being leaders for tomorrow when they continue to make First Nation relationships a priority for their governments, to continue to forge strong relationships with First Nation governments that build on partnerships based on respect and cooperation. Celebrate the diversity and strength of our first peoples.

Let's come together on June 21 to hear the stories, because the stories are important, to celebrate a vibrant culture, to foster understanding for all Yukoners of our rich aboriginal history. Thank you. Mahsi'cho.

Speaker: We are very close to 5:30 p.m. so I'll call order at this time.

The time being 5:28 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 2 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 4

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, April 26, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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| Hansard Administrator | Deana Lemke |

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, April 26, 2017 — 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 Daffodil Month (Cancer Awareness Month)

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Canadian Cancer Society as we mark the 60th anniversary of Daffodil Month.

Daffodil Month is one of Canada's largest running fundraising campaigns. Each April, thousands of dedicated volunteers all across this country smell freshly cut daffodils and wear lapel pins. Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many daffodils are sold in the Yukon but there are many. The Canadian Cancer Society reports that more than seven million flowers are sold in Quebec and Ontario during some years.

Over the past 60 years, generous Canadians have donated more than \$1.4 million to the Canadian Cancer Society during its April fundraising drive. That money has helped fund lifesaving research and support services that have saved or improved the lives of countless Canadians — not just here in Canada and in the Yukon, but around the globe.

More than 20 years ago, some of that money funded research by a Canadian doctor named Eduardo Franco. His research contributed to the discovery of the human papilloma virus. HPV causes cervical cancer that, in turn, led to the development of the HPV vaccine.

I am proud that today, this government announced that we are expanding our HPV vaccination program here in the Yukon. Starting in the 2017-18 school year, Yukon will be offering free HPV immunization to boys in grade 6 as well as to all at-risk males. Protecting young Yukoners is a priority for this government and expanding our immunization programs to include boys will help protect our youth from HPV-related cancers and other serious health problems.

Today I also want to honour and thank all Yukoners who volunteer countless hours of their time and energy to help raise money to fight cancer. This is a fight that must go on because some 40 percent of all Canadians will receive a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime. Thanks to those local volunteers, the Canadian Cancer Society continues to support Yukoners through its toll-free Canadian cancer information service, its cancer connection peer support program, operating the Smokers' Helpline through funding provided by the Yukon government, and providing access to services and

programs for Yukon patients who are undergoing outpatient treatment in British Columbia.

I also would like to briefly mention a recent campaign that was led by the Department of Health and Social Services, working for and with the Council of Yukon First Nations. The ColonCheck Yukon campaign encourages all Yukoners aged 50 to 74 to take the FIT and to follow up with their primary health care providers in order to prevent colon cancer in Yukon or to catch it early.

Colon cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death in men and the third most common in women, yet it can be prevented or detected at an early stage. I believe that our well-received "Wherever You Sit Do the FIT" campaign will make a difference here in the Yukon. It's a great example of our people-centred approach to wellness that will help Yukoners thrive.

Thank you again to the Canadian Cancer Society and its many volunteers for their ongoing efforts to save the lives and reduce suffering. I encourage all Yukoners to support their cause, not just in April, but throughout the year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of Denim Day

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing today, Wednesday, April 26, as Denim Day. Denim Day is a new fundraiser for the Yukoners cancer care fund. This fund helps Yukoners battling cancer and their families cover some of the out-of-pocket costs that can be incurred during cancer treatment. On Denim Day, Yukoners are encouraged to purchase a \$5 Denim Day pin and wear their jeans to show their support for the cancer care fund. While we can't wear jeans in the Legislative Assembly, many of us here are wearing our Denim Day pins to show our support.

Cancer touches all of us. It has touched everyone in this Assembly in some way. I have lost family members and friends to cancer. In Canada, cancer is responsible for 30 percent of all deaths. In 2016, it was estimated that more than 202,000 Canadians were diagnosed with cancer and 140 of them were from the Yukon.

On a very personal level, 13 years ago, I myself faced a diagnosis of breast cancer. This isn't something that I have ever shared in a public forum, but thought that it was fitting today. This changed my life. All of a sudden, I was faced with a battle for life and for the chance to raise my children. I am one of the lucky ones. Having an early diagnosis and very good Yukon and BC medical care was the key to my survival.

Supporting the Yukon Hospital Foundation's cancer fund is one way that we can help Yukoners who are struggling through difficult times. We have good health care coverage for treatment and drugs. We have medical travel programs that benefit cancer patients who must travel to BC and Alberta. We have access to great oncologists, but we can't provide everything. This fund provides money directly to patients and their families that can be used for the many out-of-pocket expenses such as daycare, rent, or a mortgage that still must be paid, no matter if one is fighting cancer.

Again, from my personal circumstances, support is key when you are facing a battle for life. This fund is a small way that we as Yukoners can help others in need. The fund started in 2013 and, since that time, more than \$200,000 has been raised. To date, 107 families have accessed the fund, each receiving a grant of \$1,000. I encourage all members of this House, if they haven't done so already, to purchase a \$5 pin from one of the many participating businesses and to encourage friends and colleagues to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of Daffodil Month (Cancer Awareness Month)

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Cancer Awareness Month, or Daffodil Month, in honour of all Canadians who have been affected by cancer in some way. This extends beyond people who have dealt, and are dealing, with the disease personally — to families, friends, those who work in cancer research, those who care for people with cancer, and those who volunteer countless hours to raise money for research.

Cancer has impacted the lives of countless people and will continue to do so without prejudice, without cause or reason, and without remorse. April is Daffodil Month and, every April, millions of volunteers work tirelessly to raise funds to support cancer research and support service for individuals and families faced with cancer and for a number of other reasons aimed at the fight against cancer.

The daffodil has become a symbol of courage and hope. By buying and wearing a daffodil pin throughout April, it's a wonderful way to show solidarity in our support for Canadians living with cancer.

In 2013, the incredible community support we have in Yukon resulted in the establishment of the Yukoners cancer care fund with tremendous backing of the Yukon Hospital Foundation. The fund has been a key support for Yukoners and a path to flow dollars from fundraising directly into local communities. It is a gift from Yukoners to Yukoners who have cancer in their home. That same year, Speaker David Laxton, who has joined us today in the gallery, hosted a launch for our fund called the "Speaker's reception" and the bulk of our funds were raised at that event. I would like to send a personal thank you to him for his contribution to cancer awareness. Any money donated through the fund is used directly to support cancer patients and all donations over \$20 receive a tax receipt. I have personally heard many, many stories on the work done to help local families. Some families or people are willing to share their journey — thank you to the Minister for Mountainview — while others still want privacy.

Today, we start a new annual event, Denim Day. Denim Day has been used across the country to raise funds for breast cancer, children's hospital funds and many other causes. Thanks to Karen Forward, president of the Yukon Hospital Foundation, this wonderful idea is going to be an annual event for the Yukoners cancer care fund. The premise, as was mentioned, is for offices, groups or people who want to

support the cause and who also love pins. To buy a pin for \$5 and with the support of your supervisor, wear the pin and that gives you a pass to wear denim to work that day. Denim Day is today, April 26.

At this time, I would also like to send kudos out to the Yukon River Quest paddling group, "Stix Together", who have taken their cancer journey further by raising money for our fund. They are even taking a booth at the trade show this year to raise awareness. Well done, team.

All these actions build awareness of the fund and the help it directly gives to Yukon families who have cancer in their homes. Thank you to everyone who has participated this year. Watch for next year's pin. It will be different and it will be the start of your collection. We hope to get the whole territory involved. I know there are pins in Haines Junction and Mayo for sure.

I would like to take this time to thank everyone for supporting cancer funds and what we can give, big or small, does help. A special thank you to Cathy Archbould, who donated her time and photo studio for this campaign. Yukoners are just the best.

I would like to thank everyone and to get you to help me welcome a few guests in the gallery related to this who have come to share this day with me: Ms. Karen Forward, the president of the Yukon Hospital Foundation; the chair of the Yukon Hospital Foundation, Philip Fitzgerald; my beautiful sister-in-law, Judy Kelly, who is a volunteer extraordinaire; and my nephew, Michael Kelly. Thank you.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus to pay tribute to the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Month and the Yukon cancer care fund's Denim Day campaign.

As we've heard today, all of us here have been touched by cancer. Whether it's a family member, a friend, or a co-worker — including past members of this Assembly — we all know someone. More and more these days, we know about the progress being made due to research. The good news is that we do know more people who are able to call themselves cancer-free.

It is because of ongoing research and science that survivor rates go up. Through Daffodil Month and the fundraising efforts of that campaign, funding for many of those research projects that can take place across Canada continue. The purchase of daffodils at our local stores or the purchase of a pin that we wear on our lapel also go to help individuals and families trying to cope with a cancer diagnosis and all that it entails.

It is great to have the addition of Denim Day — as mentioned, a fundraiser for the Yukoners cancer care fund, a fund that those facing cancer treatments can apply to. This money can help take a small bit of stress off an individual or family.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to extend a big thank you to all those volunteers — those selling daffodils and selling pins,

which help our friends and neighbours trying to live a life with cancer.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Government House Leader for her indulgence in letting me intervene here in the regularly scheduled tribute program.

From 2006 to 2009, Mr. Speaker, I worked in Whitehorse as the Yukon regional manager for the Canadian Cancer Society. That society was built upon the hard work of volunteers. We're joined here today by four of those volunteers, and I just ask members in the House to help me welcome them.

Not only are they spearheading the daffodil campaign every year but, as members of the Order of the Eastern Star, each month they get together to clip stamps and fold cancer bandages and visit the Whitehorse General Hospital as well. I would just ask members to help me welcome Mary Mickey, Faye Jamieson, Barb Zaccarelli and Muriel Frizzell. Thank you so much for being here.

Applause

In recognition of Administrative Professionals Day

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise today to acknowledge Administrative Professionals Day. This day is an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the hard work, professionalism and skill of everyone working in the administrative field. Historically, the importance of administrative professionals was recognized during the Second World War. Skilled personnel were crucial to meet the vast administrative requirements of the war effort. An association was formed to support professional development and to help attract people to the administrative field. In 1952, National Secretaries Day was created in the US and it has since been renamed to Administrative Professionals Day and has become internationally recognized. The change in name reflects the expansion in the responsibilities of our administrative staff.

As someone who has worked in the public service for many years, and for many years in the private sector, I know how critical administrative professionals are to ensure the smooth running of our day-to-day lives. Administrative professionals are the people who have their fingers on the pulse of the organization. They operate at the centre of business, industry and government. They know the importance of the little things and that an attention to detail is crucial for the efficient running of any operation. A good administrative professional is worth their weight in gold, Mr. Speaker, and when you find someone good, you work very hard to keep them.

Over the past six months, my Cabinet colleagues and I have had the pleasure of working with many of the administrative professionals, both in the Cabinet office and across the Yukon government civil service. It is thanks to their hard work, professionalism and responsiveness that we have been able to familiarize ourselves with our respective portfolios and prepare for the hard work ahead.

Administrative professionals are on the front line of program and service delivery for the Yukon government.

They are the people on the other side of the counter or at the end of the phone or e-mail when you make an inquiry or need to access information. The Public Service Commission, working in collaboration with our human resources colleagues in all departments, has implemented a centralized process for anyone interested in working as an administrative professional for the Yukon government. This process is constantly being adapted to make it easier for candidates to apply for an administrative position. Anyone interested in working in the administrative field can submit their application through the Yukon government's online job board.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone to take the opportunity on Administrative Professionals Day to recognize the administrative professionals in your office, at your school or at your place of business. Thank them for helping us to keep the wheels on and for keeping us on track in our jobs and in our daily lives.

Before I sit, I would actually like to recognize some of the hard-working individuals I have had the pleasure of working with recently: Kelsey Smeeton, Nona Whitehouse, Sabrina-Jean Fred and Amy LeBlanc.

In addition to that, we also have some executive assistants who are also important to the administrative efforts: Kluane Adamek, Jessie Stephen, Brandon Kassbaum, Susan Simpson, Shannon Clohosey, Kim Stavert, Emily Farrell, Kathleen Smith, Michele Shaw, and at the tail end, Monica Nordling. Of course there are also hard-working administrative in our opponents' offices in the New Democratic caucus and in the Yukon Party caucus, and they too are doing the work of the civil service and helping keep this operation running.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise today in recognition of Administrative Professionals Day. I pay tribute to the important role that administrative professionals play in the workplace.

I want to use this opportunity to thank all of the employees who have worked in our offices, whether in an administrative role or not. The jobs that they did were not easy but every single one of them stepped up every day to get the job done.

With that, I would like to read a letter that was sent to all our former employees in December, put together on behalf of the six of us: "We want to express our deepest appreciation for the help and support that you have offered over the past five years. We are very grateful to you and your families, as without your unconditional support working in our offices over the past five years we would not have accomplished so many things. For this you should be proud. Running a government is not simple. It can be very challenging but it can also be very rewarding. Having such a great team made it just that much easier. We know how many of you went the extra mile. They can put a lot of stress in your lives and for this effort we are very thankful. We were very fortunate for having a chance to work with staff of your calibre. Not only were you all professionals but you all brought a unique set of skills,

knowledge and insight to the table. Thank you very much for bringing this work day in and day out and sharing it with us. We credit you for our successes in government as well as your own professional growth, so we thank you for that.”

In recognition of Every Student, Every Day initiative

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Every Student, Every Day, a student attendance initiative. This initiative is a partnership between the Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society and the Yukon government.

Every Student, Every Day provides funding to local projects to encourage regular student attendance and active engagement in school. Up to \$25,000 is contributed each year by the Yukon government to match funds raised. This year, a total of \$50,000 will be awarded to support 15 projects across Yukon.

One project receiving money from Every Student, Every Day is the makerspace project at Johnson Elementary School in Watson Lake.

Another project is academic and land-based camps offered through the Individual Learning Centre. These camps help students earn credits, learn healthy habits and develop work skills.

The Teen Parent Centre, the Teslin School and the Elijah Smith Elementary School will also receive funding for projects that engage families in the school.

Communities help improve attendance, and this is critical for students to feel part of the school and to learn as a group. With exciting projects that engage different learning styles and interests, students can have more success at learning, as well as develop stronger connections with the school community. Regular attendance and engagement foster better grades and develop important work habits that benefit students throughout their lives. Every Student, Every Day funds programs that improve attendance.

Since 2012, Every Student, Every Day and the Government of Yukon have worked in partnership to provide almost \$235,000 which has supported 50 locally generated attendance initiatives. I am proud of our partnership with the society and the community partnerships with our schools that bring benefits for our youth. This initiative is an incredible example of a company giving back to our community. I would like to thank Victoria Gold for continuing to support this initiative. This company has shown great commitment to Yukon and is setting an excellent example for others investing in the territory.

I would also like to note that I am bringing this tribute today on behalf of each of the other parties here in the House. They join us in this tribute. Thank you. Merci beaucoup. Shaw nithän.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce Diane McLeod-McKay of the ATIPP office and to welcome her to the Legislative Assembly.

Applause

Mr. Gallina: Mr. Speaker, I would like members to join me in welcoming David Laxton, former Speaker of this House and former MLA for Porter Creek Centre. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling of returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling the 2016 annual report of the Ombudsman, which is tabled pursuant to section 31 of the *Ombudsman Act*.

The Chair also has for tabling the 2016 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*.

Finally, the Chair also has for tabling the 2016 annual report of the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, which is tabled pursuant to section 43 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*. I would note for the record that Diane McLeod-McKay is the Commissioner for all of those departments and, as indicated by the Minister of Highways and Public Works, she is present in the gallery today.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 4: *Act to Amend the Supreme Court Act (2017)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Supreme Court Act (2017)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Minister of Justice that Bill No. 4, entitled *Act to Amend the Supreme Court Act (2017)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 4 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports the efforts of the Vuntut Gwitchin people and the Gwich'in people of the Northwest Territories and Alaska in lobbying the United States Congress for the protection of the sacred calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd so vital to the health of this herd and well-being of northern communities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to hold a Yukon Forum four times annually.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to fulfill its election commitment and immediately appoint a non-partisan commission on electoral reform to engage and collaborate with Yukoners to:

(1) propose the best system to replace the first-past-the-post voting system, including consideration of proportional representation;

(2) consider fixed election dates;

(3) consider legislative amendments so that voters have the final say when an MLA crosses the floor; and

(4) consider banning corporate, union and Outside contributions to Yukon political parties.

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

THAT this House commends the generosity of RyanWood Exploration and the northern exploration and sport development fund for contributing \$70,000 to local athletes on their journey to the Olympics to compete in cross-country skiing.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue its discussions with the federal government and the State of Alaska to lobby the United States Congress to restore funding to the Shakwak Highway project in support of this vital northern transportation link.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gallina: While I am standing, I would like to take this moment to recognize Connor Whitehouse, a constituent of mine in Whistle Bend. I apologize for not recognizing you, Connor — welcome.

Applause

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House commends Rick Hansen for his efforts over three decades to remove barriers and improve the lives of people with disabilities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the efforts of the Government of Canada to restore the confidence in the Yukon's environmental and socio-economic assessment process through amendments contained in Bill C-17, now under consideration by the Parliament of Canada.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Federal gas tax fund

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I am happy to share that Larry Bagnell, Member of Parliament for Yukon, on behalf of the federal Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Hon. Amarjeet Sohi, City of Whitehorse Mayo Dan Curtis and me, the Minister of Community Services, announced funding of \$2.8 million under the federal gas tax fund for three waste-water projects in Whitehorse.

We are excited to share with you today the three projects that will benefit from this funding. The Marwell lift station project will receive \$2.4 million. The Marwell lift station processes the majority of the city's waste water and will be upgraded to improve its efficiency. The Burns Road storm sewer project will receive \$100,000. This will fund upgrades to the storm sewers on Burns Road. The Hidden Valley storm pond project will receive \$330,000. This will fund a new outfall pipe and trench for the Hidden Valley storm pond, helping to manage storm water in these neighbourhoods.

Once complete, these projects will provide reliable sewage-water management services for residents, contributing to maintaining healthy communities and protecting property. We are proud to support these projects that will help ensure waste-water systems across the city are prepared to meet the needs of the communities they serve. The funding from the gas tax fund provides local solutions to local problems. It is an important resource for First Nations and municipalities here in the Yukon as we work together to build sustainable local infrastructure.

Through the gas tax fund, the Government of Canada will provide more than \$180 million for the Yukon in infrastructure funding over 12 years. That's for public transit, green infrastructure, social infrastructure, transportation that supports trade and Canada's rural and northern communities. The Government of Yukon strongly supports this predictable funding that gives communities a meaningful role in building a better Yukon. The federal gas tax fund is a great example of a federal tax that is collected by Ottawa and returned to Yukoners. Yukon communities are then able to direct federal dollars to their particular infrastructure priorities, contributing to a wide and varied range of projects.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes that modern public infrastructure is key to: supporting the unique needs of northern communities; investing in green infrastructure projects for the environment; and supports local economic opportunities — all of which go hand in hand with improving

family income, job opportunities and quality of life for those living and working in the north. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for the statement that he has delivered here today. Of course, the Yukon Party supports these types of infrastructure investments. Not only do they improve the infrastructure and the long-lasting life of those important projects, but they also provide much needed jobs. I'm hoping in the minister's response here today he can let us know if these three projects will be tendered by the Government of Yukon or if they'll be tendered by the City of Whitehorse. I look forward to hopefully getting that response today or in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to tendering projects, again, as I mentioned, they are very important for local contractors. Our short construction season makes it extremely important to get these tenders from the pages of the press release to the tender management system and out into the contracting community.

I just want to reference a couple of joint announcements that were made prior to the election — last summer, in fact. On June 22, 22 projects were announced for funding under the Government of Canada's new clean water and waste-water fund by, again, Minister Sohi, and the previous Minister of Community Services, Mr. Currie Dixon. As of May 1 of this year, 13 of those projects are to get underway. I'm hoping that the minister can provide in his response an update on that close to \$29-million worth of work that was to get underway by May 1st or previous.

Mr. Speaker, also on July 26 of last year, there was another joint announcement by the Government of Canada and the Yukon government — again, under the previous government — that 17 infrastructure projects in the Yukon were to get joint government funding.

Taking a look through that list, there are four projects totalling close to \$37 million that have not started yet. They include projects in Carcross — the Nares River bridge replacement — the Burwash water treatment plant replacement, the Nisutlin Bay bridge rehabilitation, as well as the Teslin Airport connector road. I believe that these are four of the projects of those 17 that have not started yet or have not hit the tender management system. Again, we will be looking for updates from the minister either in his response here today, but a good news announcement. I know the contractors are anxious for those tenders to be let and look forward to that. Again, congratulations to the minister for making this joint announcement today with Mr. Bagnell on behalf of Minister Sohi, as well as Whitehorse Mayor Curtis.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus, of course we support the idea of federal gas tax monies being used for infrastructure projects in the Yukon. It has been part of the discussion and debate in this Legislative Assembly for a number of years.

I would note, Mr. Speaker, as I commented the other day, that the practice of ministerial statements is unusual and has

been unusual in the recent practice in this Legislative Assembly. I note from looking at the very helpful annotated Standing Orders at the federal level that they're usually made on matters of government policies or matters of national interest. I think what we see today is a classic example of what can happen when we use ministerial statements on matters that have already been announced and been in the press, and then it looks like we get into this little sparring match so it's no longer a ministerial statement — it's a debate.

I would suggest Mr. Speaker that if there are ministerial statements to be made, let's think about what they really are. Are we re-announcing? Is it just another press release or do we want to get into a to-and-fro about "my government/your government, my ministers/your ministers" and "we're good guys and you're not". I don't think that's what is intended, but I'll be observing to see how the practice is carried out in the future.

That being said, of course we want to see federal gas tax monies being used in our communities throughout the territory employing local people and ensuring that the money is flowed effectively and efficiently. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks, Mr. Speaker and I thank the members opposite for their response. I will try to provide several comments. First of all, to the Leader of the Third Party, thank you for your comments. I just note that this is not a re-announcement. This is being announced today for the first time and I'm sure that House leaders will be able to have a conversation about choices around ministerial statements, so thank you for your comments.

To the House Leader for the Official Opposition, again, thank you for your support. You listed off quite a few projects there. I will do my best to get the answers specifically for you. I know that just this morning we had a conversation regarding some of the clean water and waste-water projects so I am happy to get you an update. I don't have all 22 at my fingertips at this moment.

I will note that we have had conversations with some of the communities on several of the projects that you listed and we are in good conversation with them. Just last week, we were discussing, for example, the Nares bridge.

With respect to the gas tax funds, what the Department of Community Services typically does is we offer our community partners support, whether they wish for us to be the people who are tendering those projects or not. We try to support them in a capacity way. Typically, with the City of Whitehorse, they will let those projects themselves, but I will get a specific response for you. I will check with the department later today and get a response right away.

I'm happy to acknowledge the benefits the predictable funding from the federal government provides for our communities today. When Yukon communities and First Nation governments have the opportunity to direct where funding is to be spent, all Yukoners' lives are improved. Ensuring predictable funding for communities is a priority for our government and we will continue to work with municipalities, the Association of Yukon Communities and

the federal government to ensure great programs like the gas tax fund are supported.

It is also worth noting that the projects funded by federal gas tax funds create a diverse growing economy, providing good jobs in an environmentally responsible way. Thank you for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Government contracting

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, today the first question I have is for the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Mr. Speaker, the construction season is upon us and we are reminded of a promise that the Yukon Liberals made in the fall to Yukoners if they were elected. They promised to tender construction projects for the summer season no later than March every year. March has come and gone and with it, a broken Liberal promise. Local contractors were looking forward to this. Contractors were ready to get to work and the government took a little too much time to get here into the Legislature to move forward.

Can the minister tell Yukon contractors why it wasn't a priority to get these contracts out on time like the government promised it would?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member opposite for his question. I can go further, Mr. Speaker. I can tell the member opposite that I actually have told contractors that it is our intention to get the planned and coordinated tendering of the Yukon government's seasonally appropriate contracts out in March 2018. Contractors in this territory were not expecting a 118-day miracle, Mr. Speaker. They knew exactly what they were getting when they voted for this government. They were going to get a respectful government that listened to them, a government that did the right thing when it came to contracts — that abandoned the fast and the loose and started to go to the measured and coordinated. So we're going to do that, Mr. Speaker. This government is going to do it properly. We're going to do it in March 2018.

The contractors that I have spoken to — and I have spoken to hundreds of them — are more than happy to hear our plans and our approach going forward. So that's where we stand, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, those contractors have bills to pay this year.

Mr. Speaker, this government took a record amount of time to get back to the Legislature, beating the previous record by 50 days. Earlier this week, we learned that they didn't spend this extended time off figuring out how the carbon tax will impact the economy, and now we find out they didn't spend the time meeting their own promise to tender the summer contracts by the end of March as they promised.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell us how many other Liberal promises will come with an asterisk?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have to take the member opposite's question as a compliment. They obviously have

enormous confidence in this team of people that I am surrounded by to work miracles. After years of neglect, after years of being unable to tender government projects in a methodical or planned fashion, they want this government to do it in 118 days. I'm tickled, Mr. Speaker.

The contractors in this community, the retailers and all the people who deal with procurement understand that this government is working very hard on this file. They weren't expecting changes within 118 days, and they are more than happy with our plans to do it better in March 2018. Until that time, there are many, many, many government contracts going out the door. All the members opposite have to do is look at the contract registry to see that.

Mr. Hassard: Every time there is a new government put in place, tenders still come out. Contractors of the Yukon continue to work. The minister needs to understand that he is the minister. He is the one responsible for these decisions and for living up to his promises, so instead of spending his time here coming up with excuses, maybe he should spend his time getting these tenders out so Yukoners can get to work.

Can the minister tell us by which day all of the seasonally dependent contracts will be tendered?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, this new Liberal government has inherited a number of issues from our predecessors. This is not an excuse; this is just reality.

We're dealing with those things in a methodical, thoughtful manner. We are not the team with the fast and the loose; we're measured and considered, and we're going to continue handling the procurement file in exactly that fashion.

I have a team of people in the department who are working very hard on this file. They have assured me that there will be no problem getting seasonally appropriate contracts let in March 2018, and I have every confidence that we're going to do that. I know the opposition does too. They are probably very happy about that.

For the member opposite, more than \$70 million has been let in government contracts since we took office. That's a lot of money, and it's keeping Yukoners at work and pushing our aims of making peoples' lives in this territory better.

Question re: Clean water and waste-water fund

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are 26 days into April and have not seen many significant tenders being released for contractors to even consider bidding on — the previous government had approved a number of major projects such as the new water reservoir in Watson Lake — and yet this new government hasn't tendered any contracts for them. In fact, according to the agreement that the previous government signed with Canada, work was to begin on the Watson Lake reservoir by April 1 — another deadline missed by this Liberal government.

Can the minister give us an update on when the Watson Lake projects will be tendered?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did receive a letter from the member opposite late last week. I thought I did reply. I will check on that to make sure.

I mentioned earlier today during the ministerial statement that we had been discussing some of the clean water and waste-water funds, and I'm happy to announce that the project that she is asking about received approval today and will go forward.

I thank her for her question. We are working diligently. In looking at all the clean water and waste-water projects, we are looking to ensure that infrastructure in the territory is delivering on regulatory needs and is making sure that our communities are healthy and safe.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a reminder to the Minister of Community Services that I wrote on more than one occasion and, yes, I did get a response to acknowledge that the project was being signed off on.

My question, however, was when this project was going to be tendered.

The projects that the previous government approved under the clean water and waste-water fund are critical to our communities. The project in Watson Lake isn't just an important piece of infrastructure — it means important jobs. In some cases, the start dates listed for these projects have come and gone. Can the minister explain what the delay has been in getting these projects to tender, since they were approved over a year ago?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her question. I'm afraid I'm unable to answer at this moment at what point the project will be tendered, but I'm happy to look into it for her.

Mr. Speaker, these projects were not approved in a budget. They may have been given some work for design and planning. I think, as all of us know here, that when it comes to infrastructure projects, it takes time to do it properly. We don't want to be rushing infrastructure projects and ending up with problems. There are several of those, which we're now working on, because we have encountered problems.

There is a responsibility to act in a diligent and calculated fashion to make sure that the work we're doing is effective and well-spent. I appreciate that the past government had chosen several projects to go forward. They had done so by approving some design work. We will be approving those through a Management Board process and through a budget.

I appreciate her question; I'll try to get a response specifically for her.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the projects listed under the clean water and waste-water funding, they span the territory and each have start dates no later than 2017. Due to this government's decision to delay getting to work by six months, we know that many of these projects have already missed their deadlines. Can the minister confirm whether federal funding for these projects is now in jeopardy as a result of the government delays?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise, very happy to respond to the question from the member opposite. Actually none of those projects are in jeopardy — none.

We worked with our federal counterparts. I sat in a meeting with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and with First Nation chiefs to have a meeting with

Minister Sohi, the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities for Canada. We discussed the issues of tendering here in the north. He was very supportive. In fact, he gave us a one-year extension on delivering on the clean water and waste-water fund. None of the projects are in jeopardy. I thank the member opposite for her question and we are happy to be delivering to ensure that we have sustainable communities.

I will note that if there is a Management Board submission from the past that I have missed, please by all means bring it to my attention. I would be happy to note where the decision was made that these projects were funded. That would be terrific.

Question re: Early childhood strategy

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, we can all agree that children are our greatest asset. They are our future. It is also well known that the resources we put into our children from prenatal care onward has huge impacts over the life of the child and into adulthood. Safe, affordable, quality childcare is an important resource that many Yukon families seek both in Whitehorse and throughout Yukon. Although the Speech from the Throne makes mention of childcare, there is no indication what priority this government places on this important matter. This concerns me.

During the campaign, this government did commit to development of an early childhood strategy. Can the Premier tell this House what timeline he has set for his minister to develop an early childhood strategy?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. Quality, accessible, affordable childcare is an important feature in early childhood development here in Yukon. The work that we are doing with the childcare community is to ensure that we provide quality care for all children who are in our services and with families in the communities.

In 2016 and 2017, I can note that childcare programs received over \$4.3 million in direct operating grants to assist with their operational costs. In addition, over \$71,000 was set for start-up and emergency funds. Our vision for the Yukon includes improved coordination of early childhood programs to maximize the benefits to children. To this end, we are working in consultation with the federal Government of Canada to ensure funding of a national framework on early learning and childcare, which has committed \$500 million for the fiscal year 2017-18 for provinces and territories, will be acquired or accessed in the Yukon to assist for future early learning and childcare initiatives.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we agree on the importance of early childhood education and childcare. The fact of the matter is that early childhood educators and daycare workers in Yukon communities work hard to provide the best for Yukon children. Research shows the many benefits of investing in quality, early childhood education. For the individual, we are talking about better health and well-being throughout the person's life. The economic impacts of these investments benefit not only the families, but all of our community. Yet in Yukon, we have a fragmented system of

early childhood learning and care services that negatively impacts children, families and staff.

Yes, we have direct operating grants; yes, we have emergency funds — but what we do need is cooperation and consultation with parents, caregivers, professional staff and funders to improve the current system.

Again, my question is: What concrete steps are being taken by this government now to work with parents, educators and First Nation governments to improve access to quality daycare and quality childhood education?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the member opposite that we will do everything that we can to identify and address the needs of families and childcare facilities in the Yukon. This year our department, the Department of Health and Social Services, is taking the measures to address that, and I would be happy to share that information with the member opposite in terms of our strategic plan. At this moment in time, I don't have that in front of me, and I would like to just say that here — that I will get you the information that you're asking for and I will do that in a timely fashion.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for her commitment on providing information on that broad strategic aspect. Perhaps we can go to a more specific aspect of the responsibilities of the Department of Health and Social Services with respect to childcare.

That department is responsible for ensuring the health and safety of children in childcare centres. That's why those facilities are licensed by government. In 2008, nearly a decade ago, the government was informed that over one-third of childcare centres and family day homes had unacceptable levels of radon, yet shockingly, this year's Auditor General's report states — and I quote: "We found, however, that the Department had not taken any action to directly address this issue." How is this acceptable, Mr. Speaker? Why does the department not simply require radon testing as part of the licensing process and require remediation when needed? Mr. Speaker, what immediate steps is this government taking to ensure that Yukon children don't spend another day, let alone a decade, in buildings with unacceptable levels of radon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to this new question on radon, I acknowledge that we have had some historical challenges, as was identified by the Auditor General's report. We are taking measures. Historically, I understand that there was a process set in motion by the previous government. This government is working with all of the childcare centres. We are mitigating and we are putting in place adaptation measures to address the radon levels in our facilities.

In terms of regulating the private sector — private homes, private owners — we can and we are notifying the private homeowners. Custody and control of Health and Social Services radon testing processes — this includes our facilities — our continuing care homes, our Young Offenders Facility and all of our group homes. We do have an internal working

group that works on addressing the challenges of radon and childcare programs and how it will be handled moving forward. Over this past winter we sent out many letters to licensed facilities and childcare centres and day homes to raise awareness about the importance of radon testing and mitigation measures —

Speaker: Thank you.

Question re: School calendar

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is for the Minister of Education. The *Education Act* includes a section on school operation in order to guide administration each and every year through the process of planning the school calendar. The act states that the minister shall specify on or before March 31 for each school year the opening day, number and days of school operation, length of the day and number of minutes of classroom instruction in that day.

It appears the school calendar for Whitehorse schools was only released yesterday, 26 days past the deadline, and it looks like the school calendar for rural schools has not been released. Can the minister explain why there was a delay in releasing school calendars?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the honourable member for her question. It is certainly a matter that I was concerned about as well.

I asked the department to coincide with the rollout of the new curriculum to develop four years of school calendars — for the next four years, beginning in 2017 and beyond. As a result of that request and the requirements of the *Education Act* that school councils are given the opportunity to review and approve school calendars — and they work on their own schedule, unfortunately — there was a delay as a result of that.

My understanding is that the school calendar for Whitehorse was issued last Friday. I stand corrected if my friend knows something else, but I have indicated that this is unacceptable. The school calendar has now been issued. I understand that the rural one has also been issued this week — and it certainly won't be happening again.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parents and teachers alike have to plan life around school work, extracurricular activities, appointments and vacations. They also must plan personal time. It would be beneficial to have the next school year planned by the legislated time allotted.

Although the minister missed this year's legislated timeline, can the minister commit to getting the school calendar for the schools in our communities out immediately? Further, can she commit to getting the calendars out before the deadline each year going forward?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the honourable member. I indicated in my first answer — but I'm happy to reiterate so it's clear. The school calendars for the next four years — let's put aside 2017-18 for a second, and so for the next three years after that — 2018-19 and beyond — will be issued by the middle of May of this year.

So I agree with you 100 percent that families need school calendars to plan, schools need them, administrators need them and students need them. They will be issued far prior to September 2017 so that families can provide planning options for their own schedules into a number of schools.

The other reason it's so important for us to make sure that school calendars are out is that, in addition to March breaks and alternatives like that, the community schools have slightly different calendars and have an opportunity to choose different days for activities for their schools, including hunting activities and those kinds of things, so it's absolutely critical they have them.

As I said, Whitehorse and the rural schools will have them — or do have them already — and they will have them for the next three years. We'll then do one each year by the deadline of March so there will always be four years out for each and every school to plan.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the topic of the Whitehorse school calendar for next year, the last day for this school year ending is June 20. Next year it's scheduled for June 8. Can the minister tell us how this drastic change has happened and assure Yukoners school hours are still being met?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm happy to clarify this point. The hours are absolutely being met. They're mandated by the legislation. The minutes, in fact, and hours of the school requirements are set out in the *Education Act* and the regulations.

Part of the consultation when we went to school councils was that almost — well, all but one school, if I recall correctly; I don't have the numbers in front of me — were far more interested in an earlier date in June, so beginning earlier in August and ending earlier in June. The information that I've been provided and that we've looked at very closely indicates that school attendance in the month of June in the City of Whitehorse is very low, unfortunately. I feel that's a concern and we'll be trying to address it. But with the advent of summer, I would say, in June here in the territory, it seems like that affects the attendance. School councils were consulted. They're the ones who chose the earlier date. Administration concedes as well that they can do all of their hours and the act is being met with respect to required minutes and hours in that schedule.

Question re: School calendar

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, we've heard reports that the Minister of Education is planning to increase the number of professional development days in the school year by two because of the new curriculum.

With the release of the school calendar, can the minister confirm whether there has been a change in the number of classroom days?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the honourable member for his question.

Let me just say it this way: The required days required in the act are being met this year. They are being met in addition

to the two extra instructional days for teachers as a result of the curriculum change and that's what they're for.

Consultation has been done with each of the school councils in the City of Whitehorse and they've agreed to provide two of their days — because school councils have four days each — for instructional/non-instructional days for teacher training and teacher consultation. As a result, they have provided those two days as the extra two days, so there is no effect whatsoever by providing more training for teachers to adjust to the new curriculum on the overall school days.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The old school calendar has classes ending June 20 and the new calendar shows classes ending June 8. Now, we heard that the plan was to reduce the number of classroom days, I believe. I would ask the minister to just confirm what I think she said, which is that because of a reduction in days allotted for school councils, there will be no overall reduction in classroom days?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, that's right. There is no overall reduction in the hours that are required. The school calendar adjusts from year to year — sometimes 173 days, sometimes 174 days.

Sometimes, it depends on the school and how many minutes are allotted per school to adjust per minutes for the school day. So no, there is no reduction in the minutes that are required for teachers to be in a classroom and for students to receive that instruction.

Mr. Cathers: What I just heard the minister say about the number of minutes in the classroom — I would point out that in fact longer school days do make it harder to keep the attention of children. I believe there are a number of studies that would demonstrate that. If the minister has studies that contradict that, I would be interested in seeing that information.

My next question is: Because the act currently specifies students must be provided with 950 hours of instruction in a school year and 15 hours of professional development and another 15 hours for non-instructional purposes specified by the school council, can the minister tell the House whether she's planning changes to the *Education Act* in order to accommodate their new plan regarding the number of professional development time for teachers?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. No, contemplating changes to the act are not required, because the current school calendars and the ones going forward will comply with the legislation. As the member opposite is well aware, there is intense detail in the *Education Act* about how those minutes are required to be spent. These calendars and the ones going forward are all in compliance with those requirements.

I also appreciate his comment that longer school days are difficult for students — so is going late into June, as we have been told by the administrators and school councils across the territory. But I guess I should be clear that if we're talking about extended minutes in days, we're talking about less than three in most cases — two three-minute changes and one one-minute change. As a result, the effect is minimal. I appreciate the question and I can confirm that all the school calendars

going forward will be in compliance with the current *Education Act*.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 6

Clerk: Motion No. 6, standing in the name of Mr. Hassard.

Speaker: It is moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to live up to its election promise to tender seasonally dependent contracts by no later than March 31 of each year and to immediately place the contracts for the summer of 2017 on the tender management system.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly a pleasure to rise and speak to Motion No. 6. Mr. Speaker, as you just read the motion in the Legislature, I won't do it again.

I just want to start by saying that I do understand that, as a new government, the government needs time to transition as any new government would. That's very reasonable and we've never said that the government shouldn't take some time to get ready.

However, we're almost six months away from the November 7 election and the fact is that I believe that is more than a reasonable amount of time to take to get ready to govern. Just for context, in the federal election of 2015, it took the new government 49 days from their election to get back into the House to face Question Period. Here in Yukon, we see that this new government in fact took 168 days from election day until we had our first Question Period here on Monday. That brings me to the motion.

During the election campaign, this government made a very bold and, in my opinion, a very good promise and that was to tender all seasonably dependent contracts before the end of March. I think it was a good promise and certainly one that our caucus supports; kudos to the government for putting this in their platform. As well, I believe the contracting community thought this was a good promise. Anyone who has ever worked in the industry knows that certainty is key. By certainty, I mean certainty in costs, certainty in timing and certainty in knowing when you can start planning for work and when you can start getting to work.

Since the election, this is one of the promises that I personally have heard a lot about. The contracting community has had a lot of questions for me as a legislator regarding this promise. They were wondering if I had any insight into the timing. This is why we as the Official Opposition have raised this issue. It is not because we are here to try to make life difficult for the government, but because we are here to ask

questions on behalf of Yukoners. These are very real issues, and we hear about them every day.

I hope that in the government's responses to this motion today that we don't see a lot of time wasted pointing fingers and blaming the previous government as we have seen in the past couple of days. I don't think this does anything to further the debate, and I don't think it is what the contracting community is looking for. The responsible thing to do is take ownership of promises and deadlines that were made by the government. These promises were made during the election period, and if the government thought they wouldn't be able to meet them at the time, then they probably shouldn't have put them in their platform.

However, there was no asterisk on this promise. It was very clear that the government would tender contracts no later than March every year — not every year except this year. Instead of coming up with excuses, I believe the government should be focusing their time on getting these contracts out to meet this deadline. I think that is the responsible thing to do — identify a problem and then fix it.

Over the last six months, we have heard a lot about this issue — and rightfully so. We are six months into the mandate and we have seen very little in terms of contracts being tendered. Getting these contracts out to tender is vitally important to the Yukon's economy. For example, according to the Bureau of Statistics, the construction industry made up 8.5 percent of Yukon's GDP. This compares to: accommodation and food services at three percent; administrative waste management and remediation services at 1.4 percent; transportation and warehousing at 3.3 percent; professional, scientific and technical services at 3.5 percent — just to give you an idea of how important this is.

Mr. Speaker, certainly these industries aren't entirely dependent upon government contracts, but they, along with other industries, do receive a lot of work thanks to government contracts. Combined, these industries accounted for \$473.6 million of the Yukon's GDP, so it's a very significant number, Mr. Speaker. These contributions to the economy are undeniable and these sectors of the economy would like certainty, which is why it is so important for the government to get moving on these contracts.

We heard the Minister of Highways and Public Works in Question Period speak about how many tenders there were on the tender management system, and we should look at it. Well, Mr. Speaker, I look at that tender management system on quite a regular basis and, as of April 20, which was the day that this 34th legislative Sitting began, there were 23 listings on the tender management system and, of those 23, five were added on April 19. So there weren't that many jobs on the tender management system.

For construction projects up here in the north, it's very important for companies to know what the projects for the summer are in advance so that they can move on them quickly. Most often, companies want to be in a position where they're either beginning construction now or starting to get equipment in place. Mr. Speaker, companies that need to move heavy equipment to job sites need to do so before road

bans are put in place, or else we just have more delays in the projects getting underway. This is just a simple fact of doing business up here in the north. That is just one more reason why living up to this promise is so important.

A big question I'm hoping to have answered today is: When does the government plan on moving forward with seasonally dependent contracts? Not only are these contracts important to contractors, but they're equally important to construction workers here in the Yukon. Many Yukoners and their families depend upon this important industry, and these are hard-working Yukoners. When government can help them in the industry they work in, I believe it's a good thing.

These employees survive on the wages they earn over the course of the short season. This is how they support their families, make their mortgage payments or pay their rent. This is how they afford to buy their vehicles and send their children to university. This is how they buy their groceries and heat their homes — the list goes on and on.

The benefits of these industries are huge and felt across the entire territory. Shortening the season by any length of time can be detrimental to Yukon families and, unfortunately, because there has been such a long delay in getting these tenders out, it seems that this year's construction season will be shortened by a lot.

Mr. Speaker, jobs in the south are not as bountiful as they have been in the past, so thinking that employees can take part of the summer off and do a little extra fishing and then head off to the oil patch for the winter is not quite as easy as it used to be. This is a life that I have lived — as has my son — so I have a fairly good idea of what I'm talking about here.

For the contractors, this is not only about them making money; it's about looking after their employees. We heard wonderful tributes today about our employees and the importance of having good employees and keeping those employees. If the businesses are not able to keep those good employees working, the contractors can't afford to have people sitting around drinking coffee in the shop, waiting for the government to get the jobs out.

It's not just to get these important projects built but to get Yukoners working. Mr. Speaker, tendering projects takes time. Contractors need time to figure out their prices. The departments need time to go through those tenders and award them. It's now the end of April and so, in my opinion, in a best-case scenario, if we see projects coming out now, we're not going to see them awarded until mid-June and that's a long way into our short construction season. This is very concerning to me and to members of the party with me as well. I encourage the government — it is vitally important to get these tenders out immediately.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the government has in their possession many projects that the previous government has done their homework on. The monies were in place and ready to go. So we have trouble understanding what the holdup could be. As we heard in Question Period, we talked about the clean water and waste-water fund through the Government of Canada and many of those projects were approved and ready for tendering already. We heard from the Minister of

Community Services that none of these projects were in jeopardy. They had extensions on the timeline for them for another year, but that doesn't help the fact that none of these projects have yet started, Mr. Speaker.

Another interesting thing that the Minister of Community Services mentioned today in Question Period was that some of the projects haven't been started because of problems that were found with the projects. It would be very interesting if the Minister of Community Services could provide details to this House on what projects seem to be delayed because of problems and what those problems may have been.

Mr. Speaker, some of the projects — just to give you an idea: we had \$3 million for the City of Dawson for the Dawson twin raw water line; outfall upgrade and screening plant; \$3.75 million for other waste-water upgrades for Dawson City; over \$6 million for downtown water and waste-water upgrades for the City of Whitehorse; almost \$7 million for water and waste-water upgrades in Faro; in the neighbourhood of \$7.5 million for Watson Lake; \$5 million for Carmacks; \$3 million for Haines Junction; \$8 million in Mayo; sewage lagoons in Ross River and Old Crow worth nearly \$5.5 million; and water treatment in Marsh Lake and Tagish in excess of \$1 million.

Mr. Speaker, the previous government was very happy to work with Minister Sohi from the federal government to secure this funding. Both the minister and his staff were very helpful and excited to help roll out infrastructure money into the territory very quickly. In fact, we are proud to have been the first jurisdiction in the country to fully sign on to the federal government's phase 1 infrastructure projects. For a small jurisdiction, this is a huge accomplishment, but we also knew it was important to do because the construction industry is so critical to the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, it creates and supports many jobs across the entire territory. As the government would know, these federal funds are time-limited. As we heard from the Minister of Community Services today, we have commitment that they will extend that for a year, but we still need to move quickly on these projects. We recognized the short building season in the territory, moved quickly to secure the funding and identify projects, and the goal was to get the tenders out early so we wouldn't miss any of this important funding.

Mr. Speaker, these projects that I've mentioned add up to over \$34 million, which is a lot of money here in the Yukon. It is also very important money for this sector of the economy. This money is meant to support important infrastructure in our communities — infrastructure that the Yukon needs and jobs that Yukoners need. I should be clear that this is only one pot of funding. There are, of course, other projects from other pots of funding that the government will hopefully be tendering soon. These projects that I have mentioned stretch from one end of the Yukon to the other, offering jobs for citizens from virtually every community in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, I will just leave you with this. I am curious as to why the government is dragging its heels on getting these jobs tendered. Obviously they have broken their promise

for this year, but we are willing to look past this. This shouldn't be about political fighting between parties and, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, I thought this was a very good promise made by the government and I commend them for that. As such, I would be first in line to applaud the government if they can get these tenders out so Yukoners can get to work.

I hope that this motion helps the government move on this quickly, and I would like to thank all members for taking the time to listen to me today.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the kind words of the Official Opposition leader this afternoon and the collaborative tone he adopted at the tail-end of his remarks this afternoon. It's good to see and I thank him for that.

I am very happy to address the motion brought forward by the opposition leader this afternoon. Through his motion, the member opposite is trying to say something to make a point. The member opposite is suggesting we aren't living up to the promises we made during their oft-delayed election cycle of 2016. Since then, we've been in power for 143 days. The days are changing — it's 168 days if you go by the day the election was called; it's 143 days if you go by where we are today from the swearing-in — but we won't quibble with that. I think we're going to stick with 143 days to today. That's the day from the swearing-in and here we are. While the swearing-in seems a lifetime ago, 143 days is not very long, Mr. Speaker. It's a relatively short time in our lives and the life of this government.

The opposition leader has asked us to fix something that the Yukon Party was unable to fix in — depending on your measuring stick and we're talking all these days — five years or 15 years.

He's also asking us to race off — to simply issue the contracts willy-nilly, to get them out and to simply toss contracts on the procurement management system without thought or consideration. Well, I would like to be totally clear on this point, Mr. Speaker, crystal clear: those days are gone — gone, Mr. Speaker.

This is probably not well understood by the Official Opposition or not fully accepted by them. They're still railing, still grappling with their new role in this House. I understand this. We're all adapting. Change has happened. Making decisions off the cuff — well, we've seen how that works out. It does not work out well. It hasn't worked out well in this territory for many years. We're in a new world, a new day, and this is it.

We've seen in the past what happens when you announce school projects before the proper permitting is in place — sort of meet yourself, get out in front of the electorate, hard hats on, shovels, in front of signs, "Look at us, we're doing great stuff" — except they had no permits. Then they rush the school, and the school goes ahead and then we wind up cancelling that same school because it's too expensive suddenly. The contracts have been delayed so long that the cost has gone up and now it's \$47 million, or whatever it was, and it's too expensive so they cancel that, throwing \$6 million

of Yukon money that could be used to build sewage treatment plants or help constituents in real ways — health care, mental health and childcare, which we've been talking about all day today. That money's gone — bang — and no longer there — \$6 million, so we're going to do that. We're going to redesign and make it cheaper. It's a good thing. Out they go, racing away — all things off the table. It comes back and they redo it smaller, and it comes in more expensive — more expensive. So to save money they spend more — lots and lots more. This is what happens when you make off-the-cuff decisions. The public has grown tired of such an approach. Haste makes waste — it's an old axiom, one we should heed.

Shall we move to the dismantling of F.H. Collins School, Mr. Speaker? It was supposed to be finished last summer. It was supposed to cost \$2.5 million to tear the old school down and it was supposed to be finished, as I said, last summer. It's not finished yet. I have inherited one of these projects. Here it is.

It's now going to cost an estimated \$6.9 million at least, Mr. Speaker. This is what happens when we rush things, when we don't plan, when we're not considered in planning and executing our contracts. We end up with an enormous waste of money that could be used for childcare, health care, the community of Mayo, or the community of Teslin.

Shall we talk about the other projects, Mr. Speaker? Sarah Steele, the main admin building that we're surrounding right here, the college or any of the other projects that have experienced substantial cost overruns in recent memory?

Of course things can go wrong. We all know that. It keeps us up at night. I'm telling you, it keeps me up at night. I take this very seriously. I want to make sure these contracts get done properly and that things don't go off the rails. Have I thought about everything? Have we considered everything? Is there something I'm missing? Have we done the proper due diligence to make these things go off? My family can tell you that there have been a lot of sleepless nights as I get accustomed to my new role, but that's the job and I'm enjoying it — make no mistake — but we want to make sure we're doing it right.

Sometimes it doesn't go right, and these things happen. I can understand that. The citizens of Whitehorse and of the territory, of Mayo and of Old Crow, can understand that — that sometimes things are unexpected. What we're talking about is a pattern, a bigger problem than the occasional overrun or delay. We're talking about a litany — many, many, many — that my colleague in Community Services, that myself and that my colleague in Education have inherited.

Mr. Speaker, we will deal with these problems. This is the job. I actually enjoy dealing with them. I wish I didn't have to, but I will, and I'll do it with a smile on my face — fix these puzzles that we're confronted with — and get it done.

The last government approached tendering of major construction projects fast and loose, Mr. Speaker. Apparently things on their side haven't changed. It's the way they did business for a long time, and I understand that. You get accustomed to some things, but this group is going to do things differently. We're the government now and we've

inherited a host of issues, as I alluded to, and we're going to deal with them in good time.

The good people on the opposition benches are suggesting that there are no contracts out. This is wrong, Mr. Speaker — simply wrong. So far, since taking office, this government has issued \$72.9-million worth of contracts. There are currently 30 contracts out for the Yukon government departments. The good member opposite looked on April 20 and there were 23. Now there are 30; tomorrow there may be 30-whatever — there will be more.

Next year it will be different. Next year, at the end of March, major construction projects will be tendered. All of these contracts are worth millions — although of the 30 that are on the contract registry right now, the total value won't be known until they close — then we will know what the value of those contracts are. It is not an insignificant amount of work. Much of the work this year is on bridges. Bridge work is expensive. There is a construction contract on a bridge on the Robert Campbell Highway. There are culvert and BST treatments that are standard on the Alaska Highway. There is a call for bridge work on Clear Creek. There is work out on the Yukon River bridge rehabilitation.

It is not all bridge work. Along with the aforementioned work on the Alaska Highway, this year's work on the north Alaska Highway — Shakwak — has closed and been awarded. There is more coming.

The Official Opposition is wrong, and the contractors in the territory — the many, many people who I have spoken to — were not expecting to have all contracts let in 118 days. They were not expecting a 118-day miracle. They were not expecting a 143-day miracle. They were expecting something solid next year and we are committed to that. The Yukon government is committed to supporting communities for businesses and First Nation development corporations. We understand that government procurement is an important driver of the Yukon's economy, and we want to realize economic benefits for Yukoners through the government's purchasing power.

We have heard concerns from the vendor community that we need to improve our procurement practices. I have heard those personally. I have been to the procurement workshop. I have been to the reverse trade show. I have met with retailers, contractors and consultants. On this file, I have met with people virtually every week that I have been office, and I have heard all sorts of stories and complaints. We have heard about inconsistent documents with unclear instructions. We have heard about requests for references for past project experience that, by definition, may exclude local businesses. We have heard about tenders coming out at times that do not suit the work being requested. We know this — I know this because I have been listening. I have been listening for months — 143 days. I have been listening as we all have on these benches.

As I said, I attended the reverse trade show before I was minister. I was a newly minted MLA, and I walked around the Westmark talking to civil servants in Community Services, in Health and Social Services and Highways and Public Works. I was getting the lay of the land, doing the research, finding out

how this works — what is going on, what are your hopes, what do you want to accomplish? I heard how these civil servants wanted to fix the system.

As I mentioned, I also spoke to contractors several times. I have been to their annual meeting with hundreds of them. I have spoken to them and had coffee with them. They have come to my office. They have discussed what they expect and what they know. I had a couple of them in the office of the Economic Development minister just two weeks ago.

I asked them point-blank: Did you expect that these seasonal contracts would be out this year? They said, "No. We did not think that was going to happen." Of course, the member of the Official Opposition — if any of the members of the Official Opposition have names of people who are disappointed with this, I would be more than happy to talk to them. I'm sure that offer is always available. I've met with a lot of people. I'm more than happy to meet with more. If they want to provide names, just send them my way.

But I've heard the contractors' concerns and the retailers and most people — photographers, videographers — all these people we've spoken to. The tech community, the new IT sector — all these people — I've heard their concerns. I've heard what they want. I've heard their take on the problems and their suggested fixes. Do you know what they want? I can tell you. They want more thought put into the procurement process. They want more time to plan. They want a little more consideration about how they do business — about their seasons. They want their RFPs written tighter and better. They want more consistency in the application of policies across this government. They want us to stand by the terms of the contracts that they're getting. They don't want a contract to stipulate one thing and then for the government to say, "Yeah, okay, you can use something else", when everybody else has bid on the one thing, which is often much more expensive or a different process than the one that they were asked to address in the RFP. That type of inconsistency — that type of fast and loose behaviour is something that we want to avoid, if at all possible, and they appreciate that.

So we're listening, Mr. Speaker. This government was elected on a promise to the Yukon people. They wanted to be heard and we're listening. We're going to follow through on these things. We're going to improve them. As I said earlier this week, I have to take the opposition's motion as a compliment. I repeated it again today in Question Period. They expect this crew — this talented group of individuals who I'm so lucky to be working with — to work a 118-day miracle to get the tenders out by March 31 of this year — getting all those contracts out the door by last March 31. Of course, that's an aggressive timetable. It's ridiculously aggressive — almost recklessly aggressive, Mr. Speaker — fast and loose.

In some cases, they didn't know there was a problem with procurement. On April 7, 2016, the Member for Copperbelt North, the then-Minister of Highways and Public Works, stated regarding procurement, "We're doing a good job. Yukon contractors are doing a great job of competing when it comes to bidding on contracts". He's correct there.

“We will continue to work to advance the procurement process so that it does offer opportunities for local companies”. It was working great. My predecessor made that statement, despite being told repeatedly by the Contractors Association, chambers of commerce and many other NGOs and businesses that there were serious problems regarding government procurement.

Under this new Liberal government, these businesses and organizations will be heard. Fast and loose was yesterday’s approach. So as I have said, over the last few months, I have been familiarizing myself with the lay of the land and, as mentioned, we’ve had these conversations with chambers of commerce, consultants, retailers, landlords, medical supply companies, photographers, videographers — the list is very long. I will speak to whoever wants to come by, because information drives understanding and good decisions. It leads to better decisions. We’re listening to all Yukoners, Mr. Speaker, not just a select few people who come in the door. We’re listening to as many people as we possibly can.

I have also been talking to my department. I have spoken to representatives of other departments. This is a vexing issue — there’s no doubt — but rushing things is not the answer. Staff across Yukon government are working right now on process changes that need to be addressed so that government can tender work earlier. As you know, procurement is a responsibility of many staff across government. You guys have all been there; you’ve seen it in action. Highways and Public Works is collaborating with its partners in one government, this government, to ensure work is appropriately forecast and placed on the tender management system. We don’t want to miss anything; we want to get those tenders up there across government and make sure those tenders are actually up there.

One of the problems is that sometimes departments aren’t as diligent with that system as they could be, and so we’re going to ask them to be a little bit more diligent. That’s what leadership is all about, Mr. Speaker. It is about identifying problems and directing people to take action to fix them. That’s what this government is going to do.

We’re committed to responding to the vendor community’s concerns in improving Yukon government’s procurement processes. The Yukon government is committed to reducing barriers to local businesses and First Nations in their effort to secure government contracts. We are committed publicly to tendering major summer construction projects — seasonally appropriate construction projects — by the end of March next year — clear?

I would like to fix the Leader of the Official Opposition’s motion to more accurately reflect the new direction of the Yukon government from fast and loose to measured and considered.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Copperbelt South, on a point of order.

Mr. Kent: This is with respect to 19(i). The term the member opposite has used — “fast and loose” — a number of times during his speech — I was looking through the Standing Orders and I believe that he is using insulting language in a context likely to create disorder. I believe this type of language has been ruled out of order in the past and I would ask that you would rule on it now, or in future.

Speaker: Member for Copperbelt South, what language are you referring to?

Mr. Kent: Pardon me, Mr. Speaker — the term “fast and loose”. The Minister of Highways and Public Works has used it on a number of occasions here this afternoon.

Speaker: Member for Riverdale South, on the point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, I suggest that it’s a difference between honourable members and that it’s not in fact a breach.

Speaker: Are there any further representations on the point of order raised by the Member for Copperbelt South?

Speaker’s statement

Speaker: I will take this under advisement and return to the House at a later date, if required.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like to fix the opposition leader’s motion to more accurately reflect the new direction of the Yukon government. I would like to propose the following amendment, Mr. Speaker.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I move:

THAT Motion No. 6 be amended by:

- (1) inserting the word “major” before the word “seasonally”;
- (2) deleting the word “by”; and
- (3) deleting all the words after the phrase “no later than” and replacing them with the phrase “March 31, 2018”.

Speaker: There is a motion to amend Motion No. 6.

We’ll take a brief recess for the motion to be reviewed for form and content.

I have had an opportunity to review the proposed amendment and have determined that the amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Public Works:

THAT Motion No. 6 be amended by:

- (1) inserting the word “major” before the word “seasonally”;
- (2) deleting the word “by”; and
- (3) deleting all the words after the phrase “no later than” and replacing them with the phrase “March 31, 2018”.

To confirm — my understanding is that the new motion would read as follows:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to live up to its election promise to tender major seasonally dependent contracts by no later than March 31, 2018.

Minister of Highways and Public Works, you have up to 20 minutes to speak to the amendment.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Now we're on the right track. We're now dealing with facts instead of conjecture, reality instead of fantasy, planning instead of off-the-cuff decisions. The public has asked for this.

I would like to once again thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for having such confidence in the ability of the new government to fix the issues around procurement in less than six months — in 118 days, 143 days, 168 days or whatever yardstick you would like to use. I really do appreciate his confidence in us and I think it's well placed, but it's too much. We can't fix the system that is the product of 14 years of neglect in such a short period of time.

Not only has this system been severely flawed for many years, but it has been neglected by the previous government that was intent on telling everybody that things were fine, to ignore the problems instead of admitting to any mistakes and trying to fix them.

I'm surprised why the opposition would like us to change anything about Yukon government procurement policies when they told us everything was hunky-dory just less than a year ago.

There are problems. We know there are problems. I have heard there are problems from many, many people — many of the people who members opposite have spoken to — and we have a good read on what those problems are. I am very happy to say that this government will indeed fix the problems we inherited from the previous government, and I appreciate the opposition's support in doing so. I actually embrace the suggestions from the opposition on how we should fix the problems they left for us. After all, they should have intimate knowledge of why and how this system that they administered and led for so long is not working for Yukoners. I am more than willing to work collaboratively with the opposition; in fact, I'm really happy the opposition has started to acknowledge the problems in the system.

In his opening remarks this afternoon, the opposition leader called our pledge to fix the procurement system by 2018 "bold" — a good promise. We agree with that. His kudos are appreciated. I thank the member opposite for those remarks.

As I've said, I have spoken to hundreds of contractors over the last several months and they have said they're happy with the approach this government is taking to fix procurement, with the direction we're headed, with the measured and considered approach and the planning that we're promising to bring to this system — tightening it up a little bit, meaning what we say, doing what we said.

Planning is an important thing, Mr. Speaker. When you start scoping things out and looking down the road a little bit — not just to the next year, not just the immediate seven months — looking two years down the road, three years down the road, four years down the road — letting the contractors see what we've got on the horizon. They can start to say, "Holy smokes, they're going to be building a major project in

2020. It would be nice if we could bid on that contract. How do we bid on that contract? What things do we put in place? What people do we need? What resources do we need — trucks or equipment? What training? Our four-person operation can't build the extended care facility; how do we get there?" It would have been nice for this community to have a shot at that. They didn't. They didn't because everything was, "Holy smokes, there's a crisis. Let's fix it." They did and here we are.

We're going to work with the departments together, as one government — we speak all the time — and we're going to take that approach to make sure that we come at these things with the appropriate thought. When things happen in a community, we have to know whether there's housing in place, Mr. Speaker. What sort of sewage infrastructure is in place so that we actually don't hook up something that doesn't have sewage facilities — because when you do that, you end up having underground car parks that are half what they thought they were going to be because we couldn't build them the way we thought. That's heartbreaking when that happens. It's a waste of effort and energy and a diminishment of something that could be absolutely spectacular.

We own our promises, Mr. Speaker. We live up to them. Yukoners are seeing that. They've seen it already just three days into this legislative session — which, by the way, is not where all the work happens. There's lots of work happening outside this House all the time. Colleagues are working until 9:00 p.m. on days we're sitting. They're working that late even when we're not sitting. There is lots of work going on over here and the members opposite know that because they've been in this role. They've been here, where we sit, working, I'm sure, on behalf of their constituents and the greater Yukon, as we are.

In a very short period of time, we have introduced legislation giving rights to the LGBTQ community. We have created a National Aboriginal Day — introduced legislation in this House. My colleague from Community Services introduced that legislation just recently. We have held a Yukon Forum and we are having another one next month — two in a very short period of time. It is remarkable — following through on our promises — respecting Yukoners, respecting all Yukoners, listening to them and allowing them to be heard. We will tender all major seasonal contracts by March 2018.

The member opposite talked about employee wages and how important this work is. There is nobody who knows this better than I. This work is important for Yukoners. It is important for real Yukoners — for all Yukoners to make a living. Let's look at that for a minute. Let's go back for a minute to F.H. Collins and the cancellation of the school contract I referenced earlier. Let's talk about concrete and what real effect that had on Yukoners, Yukon jobs and Yukon companies. When the previous government cancelled that contract — off the cuff made that decision — a company that had prepared and had brought a team of people together to do that work was suddenly out of work.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Speaker (Mr. Hutton): Member for Watson Lake, on a point of order.

Ms. McLeod: I believe the member is not speaking to the amendment that he is to be speaking to now.

Deputy Speaker: I thank the Member for Watson Lake for that.

Deputy Speaker's ruling

Deputy Speaker: I would consider this at this time as a dispute between members.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Concrete — we are talking concrete — hard stuff. Yes, here we are. We had a company that was up here trying to do work — it had recruited a group of people. It is important that we understand that this is what we are trying to do. This is why we want to make sure these contracts are tabled by March of 2018. It is important to Yukoners that we do this. This is one of the perils — the pitfalls — you can fall into if you don't plan, if you don't consider these things and if you don't move it forward. The concrete company suddenly had no work. They had planned on it. They had it. The contract was there and suddenly it wasn't — poof. They had a team of people. This is in the days not too long ago when Alberta was booming and they had a bunch of people who could have gone —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 19(b), the Minister of Highways and Public Works is not speaking to the amendment. The previous Speaker's ruling ruled that language of this type that is so far away from the motion is out of order.

Deputy Speaker's ruling

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member for Lake Laberge. I fully expect the member's remarks will shortly return to relevance. It has certainly been the practice in this House in the past to allow as much flexibility as possible, so I don't want to limit freedom of speech in this House.

On that note, there is no point of order.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The contract is gone, and so what that did was it left the company scrambling to retain its workers. It started doing smaller contracts, which worked like a domino effect. It started to put pressure on smaller contractors, and to steal the work from them. It had a devastating effect on this economy. I know that because I speak to contractors. I know what they want and what they expect from a government. What they expect from a government — the relevant part — is that they want contracts tendered — seasonally relevant contracts tendered — in good time for them to plan and make sure they

have their workers. They want those contracts honoured once they are let.

This government is going to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're going to make sure that contracts are let by March 18, that they're well-planned, that they give contractors a lot of time to look ahead to get the people they need to work these important public works, that they can put people to work in the territory, driving our economy and making lives better for Yukoners — for all of us. We're going to try to make sure that those contracts are tendered in such a way that locals have an ability to bid on them, that the money stays in the local economy, and that this territory benefits from the economic spending of this government.

That's an important part too, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We all know — again back to F.H. — about some of the unease of the community with the way that contract was handled, and it's one of the reasons why we're here today.

That is what I have to say on this matter — that this government respects contractors, respects the good suggestions of the Leader of the Official Opposition on this very important matter. He has said that he supports this promise, that it's a good promise, and I agree with him — and we're going to stand by it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Thank you.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In speaking to the amendment that was put forward by the Minister of Highways and Public Works — it's definitely an interesting tactic but, unfortunately, it totally guts the intent of the motion.

The motion, as amended, that the minister has put forward is also a good motion. I have no qualms with all of those things — making sure that next year all tenders are out early — that's great. That's part of what we're asking for, but Mr. Deputy Speaker, the original motion was about tender contracts for this year, not about 2018.

The platform commitment did not specify that they would promise to have those jobs out by next year. So that was where this motion came from. It appears to me that this isn't an amendment to a motion. This is more like an amendment to the platform of the Liberal government. It's very interesting that they felt that it was fine to promise to contractors and promise to those employees throughout the Yukon that they would have jobs out this year and now they've changed their mind — “Oh, but next year. Don't worry, next year.”

Well, I ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the Minister of Highways and Public Works committed to feeding those families — helping pay those contractors' bills this year because the jobs will come out so late? I didn't ask for miracles. I didn't expect this government to be miracle workers. I asked a very legitimate question: Will we see seasonally dependent contracts coming out soon — these contracts that should have already been tendered? People should already be working on these projects. For the Minister of Highways and Public Works to stand here and lay blame on the previous government — I believe I was about 30 seconds into my original motion when I asked: Could we please not go

there? That does not help the contracting community. This was a motion about getting jobs out now — not next year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, obviously we will not be supporting this amendment. Thank you.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With this motion — or the amendment to the motion, pardon me — moved by the Minister of Highways and Public Works, what is really notable here is in fact the minister is trying to effectively amend the Liberal Party's election commitment. The Liberal Party, in an election news release on October 11, 2016, made very specific commitments to Yukon businesses and people who are employed in the contracting community. In the section that they had entitled "Reduce Barriers to Procurement and Contracting for Yukoners", the commitment that was made — pardon me, the headline for that section was "Commit to Transparent Capital Planning". The Liberal Party committed to Yukoners — and I quote: "Tender projects for seasonally dependent Yukon Government-funded construction projects no later than March each year."

Contrary to what the minister said, they didn't place any caveats on it for major projects. They didn't say that they would do it by 2018. There was in fact in that list one recommendation that they did say they would not immediately implement: that was to accept the recommendations and "...implement the recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Panel Report in an accelerated manner, completing its implementation by 2018".

I did, in fact, remind the member who proposed the amendment that the Procurement Advisory Panel was commissioned by the Yukon Party when in government, recognizing that there was a need for improvements to the contracting and procurement process. So they've committed to accept work that was done, in fact, under the Yukon Party watch.

Again, on the Procurement Advisory Panel recommendation report, they committed to implementing it by 2018. They promised Yukon contractors that they would tender projects for seasonally dependent Yukon government-funded construction projects no later than March each year — and they didn't say after 2018.

Now we're left to wonder — now the minister is trying to amend their platform and hope people won't notice the change. He says now it will be March 31, 2018. Maybe next year he will say it has moved to 2019, and apparently that's okay, but I would remind the member that, during his time as editor of the *Yukon News*, he would literally be the first to criticize a party for promising Yukoners that they tender projects every year by March 31 and not telling them that wasn't going to happen until well into their mandate.

They did not say in their platform, "Oh, we didn't mean the first year." They said every year. The minister and any member voting in favour of this are in fact voting to change retroactively what they promised Yukoners.

I would in conclusion just note — as my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition did — that there are contractors who are depending on this. This is something that

the member, in his rhetoric, in his criticism of the previous government, is missing —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Speaker: Member for Riverdale South, on a point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: My understanding is that the use of the word "rhetoric" is inappropriate and I'm asking for you to rule on a point of order that the member opposite retract that word and strike it from the record and that he refrain from using it.

Deputy Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The word "rhetoric" has been used many times in this House without being ruled out of order, including by the Premier himself.

Deputy Speaker's ruling

Deputy Speaker: This word "rhetoric" has been used in the House in the past in context and I will allow it in this case.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What I think that the minister is missing in making this very political response on his part — and more than a little condescending, I should say, in his tone — is that this is not ultimately about the members in this Assembly.

As my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition was referring to, there are contractors who depend on income from seasonally dependent contracts to feed their families, to put food on their table, and there are people who are out there right now who took the Liberal government at its word when it promised to have seasonally dependent tenders out by March 31 each and every year during their mandate. They took it at its word and they are worrying now about how to feed their families and how to pay their mortgages.

As my colleague was very sincerely noting in his remarks, this is not something that is just a political issue or football. The member should not lose sight of the fact that, by choosing not to keep their word to Yukoners, there are people right now who are wondering how they are going to pay their mortgages and put food on the table — so I will be voting against this amendment.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 12 yeas, six nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the amendment carried.

Amendment to Motion No. 6 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion, as amended?

Ms. McLeod: I would like to just take a moment to thank the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin for bringing this motion forward for us to discuss today. The issue of contracting is very important to me and to my constituents in the Watson Lake area, and I am quite dismayed to find now that it's obviously not very important to your new government.

The area surrounding Watson Lake is a beautiful place. Highway tourists are greeted with a friendly sign, reading "Welcome to Watson Lake, Gateway to the Yukon". With Watson Lake being their first stop on their trip to the territory, and Watson Lake is our gateway, it's our first impression and its citizens are our welcoming committee.

It's home to the Watson Lake Sign Post Forest, designated as an official Yukon historic site, which visitors flock to with a sign of their homeland in tow to add to the tower of handmade signs, licence plates, city limits signs, directional and establishment markers. The fact is, sadly, Watson Lake infrastructure does not meet the standards of what you would think the gateway to the Yukon would have.

The infrastructure is aging and our town needs the help of our territorial and federal governments to improve. When the Yukon government and the Government of Canada signed the infrastructure agreement in June of last year — that agreement that identified Yukon-wide projects for funding under the clean water and waste-water fund — Watson Lake was approved for three much-needed improvements.

The announcement of the improvements to Watson Lake's aging infrastructure resonated well with citizens. They looked forward to these upgrades taking place, but they have yet to see when this will happen — and now it sounds like March 2018 to improve drinking water.

I'll touch on each of these projects and highlight the original start dates and funding allocations. The Watson Lake reservoir has been in need of upgrades for some time. The acceptance of this project by the federal government under this agreement described the project as being water reservoir upgrades and the construction of a new reservoir. The project was set to begin on April 1 of this year and was allocated funds of \$3.6 million.

The second project placed under this agreement for Watson Lake was upgrades to the waste-water force main and gravity trunk. Total funds allocated to these upgrades were \$900,000 and work was set to begin on May 1 of this year.

Also originally slated to begin May 1 were upgrades to the Watson Lake wet well and lift station — this large project with \$3 million allocated in funding for its completion.

Mr. Speaker, I have not seen any indication that these projects are set to begin any time soon. As we have discussed earlier, I inquired with the Minister of Community Services to find out the status of the Watson Lake projects because they did not appear on the tender management system. I received a reply stating that the service agreements for the reservoir upgrades and wet well and lift station were on the minister's desk for signing.

These projects should have been out for tender by now. They should already have been awarded and the contractor should be ready to get to work. The citizens of Watson Lake would like to see the work being tendered in the area. We depend on those jobs. Not only does early tendering allow a contractor to prepare, budget and get started to make the most efficient use possible in this short construction season, but most local residents can see upcoming projects and apply for seasonable employment with companies setting up to do the work. Our young workers who have a chance to be part of local projects will be forced to look for other jobs in the summer when they could have been planning to get an early start with contractors on these large projects and have work to cover the season.

I agree wholeheartedly that contractors working on government contracts should be supported by government. This starts with allowing them the best chance to be successful right from the beginning. Early tendering allows contractors to know whether they are successful in securing a tender and to know this very early on in the season. In turn, they can prepare for the project at hand and plan for others that they acquire throughout the season simultaneously.

It is not a secret that persons given more time to prepare can do better on a task than one with a task sprung on them with no notice. I think I have been hearing this resonating from the other side of the House. The same goes for the contracting community. Yukon businesses rely on government tenders. Bidding on these tenders is a lengthy and competitive process, and preparing to begin a project involves much preparation. It is costly for businesses to undertake this kind of tendering. To tender early is to allow these companies the time they deserve to do the best job they can. Taxpayers deserve to know that contractors will do their due diligence if they were allowed an adequate amount of time from

government to prepare and organize, mobilize equipment and assemble their crews.

This is not an issue isolated to my riding of Watson Lake. Communities across Yukon are in similar situations. Much of the infrastructure across the Yukon is aging and in need of upgrades or replacement. There are other communities of tradespeople or casual workers who would benefit from knowing when a project is slated to begin in their area. Having these projects tendered and off the plates of department employees would likely be a benefit to them as well. Then they can shift their focus to ensuring that jobs run smoothly and perhaps identifying new projects or securing new funding. The construction season should be designed by weather and natural processes. It should not be based on when government is able to get their stuff together and get the projects out the door. Contractors should not be worrying about the tender process when they can be mid-project and spend their time assuring quality work and addressing any problems that may arise during construction.

When jobs are rushed, so are employees. This increases the chance of human error and the likelihood of deficiencies. Government frowns upon deficiencies. Any government frowns upon deficiencies. There is a good chance that many can be avoided by giving the contractor an adequate amount of time to do the job. I hope this government makes changes to their process for future years and ensures contractors are given time, support and the respect that they deserve.

I look forward to hearing when work is scheduled to begin in Watson Lake and urge the government to get the tenders posted as soon as possible to give the contractors and residents a chance to plan. The construction season is upon us — and I mean 2017, not 2018.

Ms. Van Bibber: It's a pleasure to rise in the House to address the motion before us. My constituents elected me to be their voice and I will strive to represent them to the best of my ability. With that, I represent a number of contractors in my riding, all of whom have been waiting patiently to see the new government move forward in posting tenders for construction. At the very least, they were looking for an indication that there would be work for them this summer. To post seasonally dependent contracts no later than March each year is one of the few promises the Liberal government made to the contracting industry, and I must agree with my colleagues that it is a good one, as has been mentioned.

When asked why they haven't lived up to this promise, the government continues to tell us, "Next year; next year". Next year doesn't help my constituents now. Next year doesn't offer certainty for contractors trying to prepare and plan. Next year doesn't give the indication there will be jobs for hard-working Yukoners who rely only on summer construction to pay their bills and put food on the table.

As we all know, the construction season is short. Contractors need time to bid and enough notice to ensure they have the equipment, the resources and the crews to put in place before the season begins. There are a number of projects across the territory that were approved for funding last year

and were scheduled to begin this construction season — again, as was mentioned by the opposition leader, the projects under the clean water and waste-water fund. These infrastructure projects may not be glamorous, but they are the infrastructure that our communities need. Where are these projects now and why haven't they been tendered? Mr. Speaker, these projects were ready to go to tender and Yukon contractors are ready to get to work.

As my colleague from Pelly-Nisutlin has mentioned, this is not just about contracting companies. This is equally about jobs for construction workers and hard-working Yukoners and their families. Equipment operators, truck drivers, and excavating and paving crews and labourers — these are the people who rely just as heavily on knowing whether and when tenders will be posted. This is simply to plan their summers accordingly so they can stick close to home or stay in the territory to work. This is about job certainty. If there are no tenders, there are no jobs and no job certainty. No job certainty means they will have to look outside the territory to ensure they can keep working.

Members on this side of the House have heard the concerns from industry and from our constituents. We will continue to bring it up because it matters to Yukoners and we are to be their voice and to represent them to the best of our ability. As such, it is paramount that we provide those in the construction industry with the certainty they need to plan ahead and to get to work.

As their self-imposed deadline has already passed, there is still an opportunity to show the industry that all members of this House are on their side. It would certainly be appreciated if the government took their concerns into consideration and offered Yukoners some insight as to when they will be able to get to work. I thank you for taking the time to listen, Mr. Speaker, and I hope this motion's debate may help the government move forward, live up to their promise and resolve this issue.

Mr. Istchenko: It is a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to this motion.

There are concerns with contractors in the contracting industry for sure. In my comments today I would like to take the time to acknowledge our local contractors and give them thanks for the hard work and the long hours they put into meet deadlines, standards and to produce quality of work we have all seen across the Yukon here.

It's not an easy feat to adhere to a schedule laid out by a government and any number of disruptions can occur throughout the contracting period. Our local contractors do good work. Through the construction season, workers are seen on the job in town, throughout the Yukon communities and on our highways. They complete necessary upgrades and enhancements, take down old buildings past their prime and erect new ones. They work long, hard hours.

Although they are paid to do their jobs, they deserve recognition for this investment that they have in their lines of work. They work in all weather conditions to build our territory and for this I would like to thank them.

The Yukon Party government released its response to the Procurement Advisory Panel in August 2016. Our previous government was committed to working with the private sector as a partner for advancing the Yukon economy and made great achievements in modernizing the procurement process.

Our government was in the process of exploring options to approve a fall capital budget or multi-year capital planning to improve project forecasting and scheduling for Yukon businesses and to allow tenders to be issued well ahead of a short summer construction season. Our government knew the importance of this work and was well on the way to completing the task at hand. It is important that I mention this tidbit of information, as glancing through the Liberal Party platform, one might have taken note of their promise on procurement and given credit where credit wasn't due.

Other party actions our government had committed to include: developing policy to support local vendors in collaboration with the vendor community; creating a program for comprehensive project and performance evaluations to improve future procurements; reviewing the bid challenge process to identify opportunities for interim improvements; as well as developing policy to replace it with a more modern, trade-compliant mechanism. This response was created to fix problems that have been identified over years of procurement.

Our government worked with businesses and stakeholders to find solutions to identified problems. We were well on our way. Taking those same ideas and rebranding them as a Liberal promise do not make that a platform commitment. It is simply building on the good work of the previous government. This government has been working for six months on ways to adopt the good work of the previous government and call it their own.

I for one am not going to call them on this. We want them to carry on in these actions or all of the hard work between government and the private sector and the Procurement Advisory Panel will have been for nothing. The business community is happy with the response. I encourage the government to dive into the recommendations by the panel and work to fill the gaps in procurement. To start with early tendering is a wonderful promise to the Yukon contractors; however, it seems that a promise made is a promise broken. I would encourage the government to slow down on their promises and ensure they are doable before making them, because people are watching and waiting to see if they can live up to their big words.

I will now turn to the promise the Liberal Party made to Yukon contractors if they were to be elected in the fall. They promised to tender construction projects for the summer season no later than March of every year. This promise would give contractors time — time to plan their construction season before the summer got busy for them, and time to conduct a thorough investigation into the tasks at hand from the start of the bidding process through to the end.

Now we know we have unpredictable spring weather in our territory. It may take time for contractors to be able to start a job after spring breakup. This promise gave contractors more time to focus on planning and bidding in the summer

rather than doing that work in the summer construction months. In turn, more time could be dedicated to the actual job. When speaking to contractors, they were happy to be given a little certainty and foresight into their season. Unfortunately, this promise was not followed through this year. It is the end of April. The sun is shining and we are seeing temperatures in the mid-teens. We are getting into the prime construction season and contractors have yet to see the major projects tendered by this government. We have yet to see whether the projects committed to by the current government's predecessors will be followed through. The uncertainty is building.

The Liberals made a platform commitment to — and I quote: "... developing an inventory of 'shovel-ready' projects that will be tendered well ahead of each construction season." We have not seen this inventory. We cannot be sure that this inventory has been developed or is even in the works because there is nothing to see in the tender forecast. If they are looking for a place to start, perhaps they could look at the projects lined up by the previous government. We have yet to see any commitment from this government on the go-ahead of these projects. We are waiting for the budget. I trust that the government is working to get tenders out of the door for 2017. I cannot imagine that the Minister of Highways and Public Works is not aware of the importance to Yukon contractors that this work gets out. I do, however, hope that the government will attempt to hold to their promise in future years — I am encouraged by what I am hearing — and allow contractors the certainty of knowing that they will see tenders by the end of March. This will not only make projects shovel-ready by construction season; they will be shovel-worthy.

We ask the government to start working on the contracts for this construction season as soon as possible to offer contractors certainty and the best start possible to their ensuring a successful season. Contractors are bound by a set of obligations to the government. The Liberal promise to tender projects by March was a way to offer a reciprocal obligation. Quite simply, it is in the government's best interests to get these projects rolling as fast as possible in a new construction year. Yukon has a fairly short and unpredictable season. As I already stated, it is best to avoid a situation where a contractor is faced with adversity because they are trying to make a deadline. When they spend the beginning of the prime weather for the construction in the Yukon waiting for a tender to be released — when they must now hurry to assemble a crew, take on a new venture mid-summer — they could be partially through the construction of the project.

With road construction and maintenance starting as early as possible in the season, companies are able to take full advantage of our territory's short construction season. I've done this. Like the Leader of the Official Opposition, we've been in this construction before and we know how important it is. Anyone who has worked in the private sector and in the construction trade would know that. The more time they are given to budget and prepare for work, the more successful they will be.

Projects that are tendered early will have gone through a rigorous assessment process and are less likely to have deficiencies later in the project. You combine that with projects being completed on schedule and it seems to be a win for all. We have seen the reactionary nature of this government. Taking contractors to court should not happen. Contractors should be supported and given the time and proper resources needed to complete the projects.

The infrastructure agreement reached between the Government of Yukon and the federal government in June of last year identified 22 projects to be funded under the clean water and waste-water fund, with a combined figure of over \$68 million between the two governments going into community infrastructure. Of these projects, I believe four have been started. This seems like a great place for this government to start in their tendering.

The majority of work has been done for them. Being from Kluane, I'm pretty interested in knowing the status of the projects out in Kluane. The Haines Junction waste-water lagoon upgrades identified under the infrastructure agreement had originally been given a start date of April 1, 2017.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Minister of Justice, on a point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker — I'm not sure that the honourable member is now speaking, or has been for the last number of minutes, to the amendment and the motion, as amended, that is on the floor at the moment. I'm asking for your ruling on that.

Speaker: My understanding is that — and I can be corrected, if I'm not correct — an amended motion has been passed, which is arguably not a lot different from the first motion — but in any event, that's for the House to determine — but that the Member for Kluane is speaking to the main amended motion. He's not speaking to the amendment.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: That's correct. I think talking about the other contracts that he has mentioned, and a number of things he has talked about, are not to the motion that's on the floor. That was my point of order.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I have no issue with the Member for Kluane continuing.

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I'm just about done.

Again, I have yet to see any sign of movement on these upgrades but would be happy to receive a status report from the minister. There are more projects ready to go. Our communities are ready for this work to start. Our residents have been asking — and I've heard it in my riding, Mr. Speaker — when the work is going to be started. They'll be happy to hear that everything will be by March 2018, when I update them. They are much-needed upgrades from the Highways and Public Works minister.

Silence, Mr. Speaker — it's time to break the silence and start working on the promises made to Yukoners. In the name and respect of the contracting community and for all Yukoners, it's time to get some tenders out the door and get our contractors back to work.

Mr. Kent: I am pleased to speak to this motion as amended today, and I thank the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, for bringing it forward, and I thank all members in the House who have spoken to it thus far.

Mr. Speaker, what I would also like to do to start out is to thank the public service employees who work in the Department of Highways and Public Works. As most people know in here, I was the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works, and I certainly appreciated the professionalism that they provided to me. I'm sure that the Member for Kluane, especially those in the Property Management branch — all of the work that they put in to the tenders over the years when we were in government and I'm sure that ministers before of all stripes would do the same.

Also, as the critic for Community Services, I would like to thank the staff in the Community Services' infrastructure branch as well. I know they're responsible for delivering on and off a lot of these projects throughout the territory and, in many cases, in partnership with our communities and they do a very good job. I hear from mayors on a continual basis about the great job that the staff in Community Services are doing in working with their various communities, so I think it's important to recognize and thank the professional public service who are involved in procurement.

Earlier today, we heard a ministerial statement about new infrastructure money that was announced in partnership with Canada and the City of Whitehorse. In my response to the minister, I highlighted some of the projects that were announced last year and there are some gaps in delivering on them. I know he committed, of course, to getting back to the House at that time. Having only four minutes to respond, I wasn't able to get into specifics of the projects. I note that he mentioned — I believe during Question Period — that there were problems with some of them. Hopefully we can explore that a little bit further this afternoon as well — which projects were experiencing problems. Obviously there have been a number that have missed the deadline that was set out in the original news release and backgrounder, and perhaps we'll get a chance to explore that a little bit further this afternoon as well — on the specific projects that have missed the deadline. I know my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, has spoken to a few of them.

Mr. Speaker, hopefully — if I have a little bit of time, I want to touch on the recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Panel that was published in August 2016. As members know, I was the minister in November 2015 when we struck this panel and at that time, I thanked the individuals who participated. There were some from outside of the Yukon — I believe two from Ontario, one from British Columbia — as well as representatives from the Yukon. The consulting

engineers were represented and a member from a local legal firm was on there, as well as the Contractors Association.

I have to say that during the rigours of an election campaign, sometimes you miss all the announcements that the other parties are making, but I didn't miss the announcement that was made by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — at the time, the Liberal candidate for Porter Creek South — saying that the Liberal government was prepared to accept all of the recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Panel and, I think, fast-track — I'm not sure of the exact language and I apologize for that — the implementation. To me that really signalled that this was a good piece of work — the work that we had initiated and completed, and the report that was put out. When I spoke about the report in the last Sitting of this Legislature, the spring of 2016, I said that obviously this was an unedited report. It was free of any political interference. There was no red pen taken to it by me or any staff upstairs. I think that's why it stood the test of time and stood the test of parties on both sides of this House.

I appreciate that announcement made by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources when he was the candidate at the time. I'm looking forward to hearing the plan for implementation. I believe 2018 was the commitment that they made at the time to implement all of the recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Panel so perhaps, when we get into departmental debate, the Minister of Highways and Public Works will be able to provide some responses to that or the Minister of Economic Development.

I'm also interested from a procurement perspective in the recent signing of the Canada free trade act. I appreciate the work done by my colleagues previously when we were in government, as well as the Minister of Economic Development and the Premier for taking that important document across the finish line.

The one piece that interests me in that is the — again, I apologize if the terminology is wrong — wildcard projects where there will be exemptions. It will be interesting to hear from the minister what those projects are and how they will be chosen as far as which ones will receive exemptions, but again, that will be for a day forward when we're in Economic Development debate and get a chance to chat with the minister further about the final free trade agreement and what that is going to look like for Yukon contractors.

As I mentioned, we did have a number of projects under the clean water and waste-water fund announced last year, June 22. The Government of Canada was providing \$51.4 million — that's an approximate amount — for combined project costs of \$68.5 million if you include the Yukon territorial contribution. As I noted today, there are a number that are past deadline, and hopefully the Minister of Community Services, if he will be participating in this debate or when we're up in Community Services sometime during this Sitting, can provide a little bit more detail. I know he committed to do so today during his ministerial statement of response.

I just want to get on the record some of these projects because these communities will be looking forward to hearing more about them, I'm sure. Projects in the City of Dawson — there are the Dawson twin raw water line, outfall upgrade and screening plant decommission. The federal funding amount was \$3 million for that. Water and waste-water upgrades in Dawson City for \$3.75 million federal funding, and City of Whitehorse — Whitehorse downtown upgrades, just over \$6 million. Pardon me, Mr. Speaker, on the two Dawson City ones, the first one was scheduled to start on April 1 of this year, the second on June 1 of this year, and the City of Whitehorse ones on July 1.

Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation — Little Salmon Carmacks water plant and truck bay upgrades — \$825,000 federal commitment. It was supposed to start on January 1 of this year.

Two projects for the Town of Faro — Faro water and waste-water line upgrades of \$3.75 million, and the Faro pump house rehabilitation and reservoir upgrades — were supposed to start next week on May 1 — and April 1 of this year for the second one.

The Member for Watson Lake mentioned the three projects for her community — the Watson Lake force main and gravity trunk, the reservoir and the Watson Lake wet well and lift station — over \$7 million in federal funding. Those projects were supposed to start to start May 1, April 1 and again on May 1 — for the three in that order.

Two projects for the Village of Carmacks — phase 3 waste-water system — \$2.6 million — and the Carmacks lagoon and sludge beds at close to \$2.6 million — both projects were slated to start on June 1 of this year.

For the Village of Haines Junction, a \$3-million project for lagoon upgrades — April 1 start in the press release that was put out. All of these dates are in the press release that was put out last year.

Village of Mayo — three projects — Mayo lift station, waste-water force main and Mayo valve replacements — almost \$3 million combined for all three. Again, there was a May 1 start date for all three of those projects. There was a fourth one for the Village of Mayo as well — Mayo water and waste-water line upgrades — \$5.25 million in federal funding with a May 1 start date as identified last June.

For Marsh Lake, the water treatment plant replacement — \$1.125 million and an April 1 start date. Ross River sewage lagoon is just north of \$2 million — start date of July 1 of this year.

Out at the beautiful community of Tagish, the Tagish pipe fire hall to water treatment plant is a waterline construction job — \$187,500 and a start date of July 1 of this year.

In Old Crow, there is lagoon rehabilitation for \$3.375 million in federal funding and a July 1 start date.

There are a couple of other territory-wide projects — waste-water system upgrades of approximately half a million dollars. I am assuming they are at various locations. They were to start last year on September 1 — an update on that as well.

The City of Whitehorse public transit improvements of \$890,000 — I believe that was to purchase buses. I could stand corrected on that as well, but there is a start date of June 1 of this year.

Those are the clean water and waste-water fund projects. I was pleased to hear during Question Period today that ministers opposite were able to secure an extension of a year, I believe he mentioned at the time, from the federal government when they were in Ottawa recently. That is good news for the contractors, but again we need to get to a point where we can get the contractors to work. These projects were working their way through the design phase when the election was called. It would be great to get an update from the minister, whether it is today or when we get into Community Services debate on the status. Perhaps he could provide the information by way of letter or legislative return.

If he gets it sooner, it would help to inform debate on the floor of this House, but again the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and the Member for Kluane both have extensive contracting experience in their previous life. As minister, I relied on them an awful lot for advice when it came to procurement and contracting. In the spirit of cooperation and collaboration — I know it doesn't always happen in this House — perhaps this is one of those things where we can get together. We want to help. I mean all of us have contractors who live in our riding.

In Copperbelt South there is an incredible number of small- and medium-sized contractors and people who work for contractors who live in the riding, especially the newer part of the riding — Whitehorse Copper and Meadow Lakes golf course area, who I got to meet and talk with on the doorstep. Many of them are friends and some are family. An important part of what we do as a government is to get these tenders out. I think if we can work together to do that, that's all the better and I believe the intent of the original motion that was put forward by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin was that people were excited about the Liberal commitment to accept the recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Panel to get those tenders out prior to March of each year.

The second part of the motion spoke to projects that are this year's. Obviously we've seen the government come forward with a different solution as far as that promise goes — where they'll go to March 2018 — but what are we going to do for those contracts that are supposed to go out this year? We have a very short construction window in this territory. Getting tenders out and getting them back through the system can often be cumbersome. I'm interested in hearing from members opposite on what some of their solutions will be. We were working on some. We of course, had we been successful in last fall's election — whoever was fortunate enough to be the Highways and Public Works minister had we been successful — the job for them on day one would be picking up where we left off. I'm pleased to hear that the government is working on it, but it would be great to hear a few more details with respect to the particular recommendations that are in the Procurement Advisory Panel that we put forward.

It's funny — I was talking to one of the presidents of a contracting NGO here in town and he said he had met with some of the folks across the way and there may be a re-branding of this document, but he was quite adamant that you make sure that you don't throw the baby out with the bathwater and that there are some good recommendations in here. This was obviously recognized during the campaign by the members of the Liberal Party when they put their platform together. I don't really care whose signature is inside the front cover, if it's a picture of fireweed on the front or a picture of the Minister of Highways and Public Works — whatever it takes to get these advisory panel recommendations moving. We look forward to hearing some further details about that when we get into departmental debate on the budget.

While I'm certainly disappointed that the amendment was made — because I do feel that it took out the intent of the original motion, even the motion, as amended, as mentioned by the Leader of the Official Opposition, is something. It's something for the contractors — and for us as well — to hold the government to account. It will certainly be interesting the first time the Highways and Public Works minister has to stand on his feet and defend a project that has come in overbudget or is delayed. We'll be looking back to his remarks on this day in the Legislature to hold him to account.

I can assure him that it's going to happen. It will happen. There will be a project that is budgeted at a certain amount that will come in. He may have to retender. There may be some language problems in a tender document that cause the project to need to be retendered. He has set some expectations for himself and we'll be interested to hold him to account over the next four or five years or however long this mandate is.

I wish him well. As former Highways and Public Works minister, I know it's a difficult job balancing the needs of the department with what the Yukon communities are expecting from the minister and from the department, as well as your colleagues. You're going to be lobbied by each and every one of the people across the way and, if you haven't already been, you're going to be lobbied by each and every one of us on this side of the House as well. It's a tough job; it's a tough gig. While I wish him well, I'll certainly be holding him accountable for the statements that he has made here today and the criticisms — sometimes unfair criticisms — I found him levelling here today at the previous government and previous ministers. We certainly worked hard; we did our best; we tried to make sure contracts were tendered on time and that budgets were adhered to. It's just not always going to happen. We'll see. I wish him well, but we'll see what happens.

Thank goodness for Hansard, Mr. Speaker, because we'll be able to go back and re-read the minister's words here from this afternoon and hold him to account on the first project that doesn't go exactly the way he had hoped it would.

With that, I thank members for listening to me this afternoon and I wish members across the way, and the Minister of Highways and Public Works across the way, luck in delivering on an improved procurement process. It's an

extremely important thing and there are a lot of Yukoners watching.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it's a fascinating time in this Legislative Assembly right now. It's something else to hear mistakes of the past brought up and then defended. It's a circular conversation where some of us had a front-row seat for a little while.

We know there's going to be a learning curve with any new government, and we appreciate that. We respect that.

It's important to know that, unfortunately, you weren't left the best situation, and it would be disingenuous to pretend it was anything other than that. From our perspective, from the Yukon NDP, we understand that and we wish you luck in how you're going to decipher that.

The March 31 deadline for this year is probably, really honestly, not feasible and we appreciate that, because you've had to go through and pick through the creative accounting that was put forward before to understand what actual money exists, and that has probably been an eye-opener of a very large scale. It's important to say here that our expectations for 2018 will be very different, because it's not about the mistakes of the past that you have to unravel; it's about how we decide to move forward in the future. Right now we're dealing with the past but, by 2018, it's going to rest firmly at the feet of this government on how we proceed in the construction season.

There are important things that are happening right now that are your responsibility and they do need to be addressed when contractors are coming to the Third Party, to the Yukon NDP, to say, "Look, we need mediation or we need arbitration. We need to be able to go to the procurement office and say, 'Look, before this contract gets pulled that is 99 percent complete and the only thing that is not in place is the timeline, wouldn't it make more fiscal sense for us to finish it even if it were late?'" That's something that we have to think about. Right now, in the procurement process, there is no mediation so there is no ability to say, "Well, how come you were late?" — and these are the reasons. "Why didn't this happen?" — and these were the reasons.

Arbitration is scary for some people because it's binding, and it's a binding recommendation from an outside party that says this is how we will proceed forward. But there needs to be solutions and it can't just be, "This is what we're saying today, and that's the case." If we've already paid for most of the contract and most of the work is done, conversation needs to happen and there needs to be a place for that, and that is in the procurement process and that needs to be either through mediation or we can talk about why it didn't work. If that doesn't work, then it needs to be arbitration, because if we continue on the way that we're going, then the only conversations that are going to happen will be in front of the court. That is not acceptable because, when we all said that we would do things differently, that is the challenge — not to repeat the mistakes of the past, but to have conversations and to hear, because a lot of times I think that there are valid

reasons — maybe not always, but at least if you can hear them, then the conversation can happen.

I have been fascinated with the fair wage schedule because, for me, it's a big deal. As a ticketed journey person, the fair wage schedule for me is a big thing. It means that I was guaranteed a certain wage while working on jobs. Part of the problem is that the only way the Yukon government oversees whether or not people are being paid the fair wage schedule on government jobs is if they go through the business incentive program, and that is not good enough. If you have a contractor who can come from Outside and can underbid the locals — because they are going to put out advertisements. They will put out advertisements for plumbers and they will be paying \$10 less an hour, and do you know what a plumber in the Yukon can't do? They cannot work for \$10 less an hour because that's just not feasible here.

If we say the only way we will have oversight over projects is if they go through the business incentive program, then that is not good enough. A government job is a government job. Local contractors who pay the fair wage schedule — to be perfectly honest, local contractors pay substantially more than what the fair wage schedule is — should not be penalized for being smaller. Right now, the current situation is that contractors in the Yukon are being penalized because they're smaller.

There's a plethora of things we can talk about when it comes to contracting. There are so many different things that I think you guys are going to have the opportunity to start picking apart. The most important one that I want you to know is that I know we can figure it out — right? I know we can. I know that with different leadership and different styles, this will not always be the same system.

Focusing on the mistakes of the past isn't going to fix the future. Some of those problems are happening right now, and it's not the previous government; it's your government. It's under your watch.

My hope is that we can have those conversations. When I say "we", I don't necessarily mean me, because I'm not the contractor and this isn't my issue right now, but those conversations need to happen because, if a conversation can save the government and save the taxpayer — and that's us and everybody who lives in the territory — the tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars, they can save us from going to court. Conversations don't happen in court; they don't. We all know that's not how it works. I hope we can look at mediation, putting something in place sooner than later, because 2018 is going to be too long.

The important part, on the other side of that coin, is that mediation is when we work together, and arbitration is when someone else has to make that decision, but that is also important. As elected people, we all have different experiences.

In your case, you're going to rely on your officials, which is important, but sometimes it needs to be taken one step further away. It needs to be someone who fundamentally understands what the issue is and, to be perfectly honest, that's definitely not me — but I would challenge that it's

probably not you, either. Arbitration is important for that reason.

Fair wage schedule — for every project in 2018, we need to make sure that people applying on those jobs are getting paid what they deserve. I've had conversations in this House before where I've pointed out to the Yukon government — and I hope it changes — that there were four apprentices in the entire Yukon government. Think about that. That's phenomenal.

That is something I would like to see changed. One of the conversations that you're going to have to have internally — but you're also going to need to have with people like the Contractors Association — is about scaling projects in a way that local contractors have the capacity to not only bid for them, but to successfully bid for them.

With those agreements we've just signed that have opened up our borders, it's great to say that local contractors can bid on projects in BC, but that is not the reality. The problem is that big companies from Outside will bid on local projects and they will do it at a loss because then they're in. This is critical. You need to have the conversation on how we can break it into pieces.

I have also had meetings with the Contractors Association, and one of the biggest things they talked about — hopefully that document comes soon, because they are going to talk about value added. What's the value of having a local contractor? What's the value of having local journey people on that job?

You can't even measure it because that's who pays into income tax in the territory. That is whose kids go to daycare and school and that's who buys groceries at the grocery store, because right now, whether we mean to or not, we've created — very similar to the mining industry — a fly-in/fly-out contracting business, where people will come up and work for multiple weeks. They'll stay in staff housing and they'll leave. Then we have to figure out — does a licence plate make a contractor local? Does an office space make a contractor local? I don't have the answer to that, but that is something that we have to consider because right now income tax is not being paid in the territory for a lot of people who are working on jobs, and that is a concern for me.

I'm sure you realize that I think contracting needs a major shakeup. I don't think it's going to be easy, but I also know that if I have been approached by the people I have been approached by, people want to talk about it. They have solutions, they have ideas or they have steps forward where they think we can make a difference, but we need to make sure it's local contractors, to the best of our ability, without contravening trade agreements. How can we do that? Do we make them into smaller pieces? Do we allow them to partner together so they meet those requirements? How do we write out those contracts in a way that, when going out for the construction season, they don't eliminate them from that ability — that they are not so finely designed that the company has already been decided and they are never going to be from here?

Right now, talking about the mistakes of the past isn't — it's something, it's true, and there is a certain amount of joy in being able to say, "Look how this turned out." It's a bit interesting, but the problem is that I don't want to be here in three years to say, "We talked about it in 2017, but it still hasn't worked." I hope that we have those conversations — and when I say "we", I really mean you over there — minister, Premier, and other ministers — because those conversations are critical.

The point I would like to leave is that we need to be able to have dispute resolution with existing contractors who are working on existing jobs, so that the only place the conversations happen is in court. Whether it's through mediation, whether it's through arbitration — those are critical. The other part is that the oversight of government jobs should not only be about whether or not the contractor has applied to the business incentive program. We, as elected people, have more responsibility to the territory than to say, "They didn't need the help, so we're not going to pay attention." Every journeyperson and every apprentice on that job deserves to be paid like the person next to them or on the next construction site. That is your responsibility.

I'm going to leave you with that. I hope we don't revisit this conversation because I can also mine what I have said from Hansard, so don't worry — it can come back on all sides.

I know that the intention is there. In 2018, I hope that when I stand up I'm not going to say, "Well, you committed to having this out early on." Good luck with this year and I hope we get to see some of those projects go, and I know that's the intention so I'm hopeful. I really don't want to read about court cases. I don't want to read about how that is where it's going. That is my hope.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank my colleagues for a change and I look forward to future conversations.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to the motion as amended, we will be supporting it. I think that overall it is still better to have this motion passed than not, but, as I noted in the amendment, it is a change from the commitment made in the Liberal platform.

I just want to end briefly in speaking to the motion and also note that I would like to thank the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for his kind words yesterday during his remarks on the throne speech. I note that I have enjoyed working with him as well as the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Tourism and Culture in their roles prior to being in this Assembly. I hope to continue some of that collegiality even though the House is naturally at times an adversarial area. The Premier, of course — we have always been on opposite sides of the floor, but I have enjoyed working with you and do truly wish you well in your government. We will, of course, give you a hard time from time to time, but part of that is aimed, in fact, identifying areas where we think that the bar should be raised and pressing you in this Assembly to do what we think should occur.

There are a couple of points I want to note in speaking to this area. I'm not going to spend too much time revisiting the commitment that was made by the Liberal Party and is being effectively amended at this point, but really what I want to note to members is that I think it's important that every member of Cabinet especially understand deeply how important their jobs are. I'm not saying "important" in the manner of the glory or the fact that it's nice to have department people show up for a briefing and call you "Minister" or to have people invite you to events and give you an opportunity to speak. What I'm really speaking to is the fact that you need to understand that, in government, if you don't make a decision — if you delay a decision because you want additional information — well, sometimes that is exactly what you need to do. You also need to recognize that because of the important areas covered by the Yukon government, because the Yukon economy is more dependent than it should be on government, a delay on your part, even if well-intentioned, can have negative impacts on the public and hurt people who you genuinely didn't intend to hurt. That includes if you delay contracts going out the door.

It is notable — and I understand that they're a new government — but the fact that fewer contracts are out the door by the start of the fiscal year than the previous year is something in fact that the Minister of Highways and Public Works, rather than pointing fingers at the previous government, should recognize, and that clearly there were choices made under his watch that affected the timing of those projects. They may have been well-intentioned, but ultimately the fact that there were fewer contracts out the door than in previous years is having a negative effect right now on Yukon families. Without being overly partisan on this, what I do really want to emphasize in speaking to this motion is the importance of government meeting the new commitment and recognizing that when you're in government, one of the worst things that you have to deal with as a minister is who you don't always have the luxury of taking as long as you would like to make a decision, because failure to make a decision is in itself a decision. A delay on your part — again, sometimes that is absolutely required, but there are other times where you need to simply recognize that the consequences to someone else of you taking longer in making the decision has an impact.

So based on the best available information at the time, you do need to recognize the need to move forward even if your picture of the situation isn't perfect and understand that the consequences of you delaying that decision are actually worse.

Again, I hope that the government does follow through on meeting this new commitment on contracting. I would also note — I believe it was the Member for Takhini-Kopper King made reference to delays occurring under this government's watch. I also want to note to the Premier and to all of his colleagues that the delay in hiring and filling deputy positions is having a bigger impact than I think they likely realize. I don't think that delay was made with bad intentions, but the longer there are people acting temporarily in roles, it does —

as the president of the Yukon Employees' Union rightly noted — delay some of the strategic decision. It delays some of the personnel decisions, and I would just note that I am not at this point going to be overly critical of that.

I do think a mistake was made in extending some of the acting appointments until the end of June. In the roles that I am aware of — deputy ministers — all of the people who are there are capable people. Whether the Premier chooses to appoint them or appoint someone new, I would just encourage him to recognize that while there is a delay in giving someone the Cabinet stamp of approval as deputy minister, it does have an impact on everything from ADM hiring to manager hiring. Six months is a long time in the world of government. Again, some sincere advice on that would be to simply move as quickly as you can and to recognize in the future — that the longer there is somebody in an acting role — having somebody there for a month or two doesn't make a big impact, but when it starts getting into a quarter of a year or half a year, it does slow down the operations of that department and it does lead to delays in what reaches ministers' desks as well. Ultimately, it has the effect of slowing down government from a policy perspective, from a legislative perspective and from a programming perspective, and it just creates consequential problems.

With that, I think that was all I wanted to mention. I will wrap up my remarks. Again, I just note very sincerely to every member of government — especially those in Cabinet — that your jobs are maybe not as much fun as you hoped they would be, but you need to recognize that people are depending on you. If you make mistakes, it is easy for others to criticize them, as we will criticize your mistakes and as you have criticized ours — some in the former capacity as the editor of the *Yukon News*.

When you are looking at it as minister, you need to sometimes step back from the moment and think about the fact that even if you are not ready to make a decision on a file, sometimes the consequences of that are worse. In cases like contracts, for example, if you don't leave enough flexibility within the overall target number of the budget in what you have set in your Management Board minutes, you can end up delaying a project by literally a month and a half because of a requirement to go back through the Management Board process on a project you have already tendered.

Your officials in Finance can give you some advice on that, but a piece of free advice would be to recognize that rather than setting your limit at the target cost, you're often better to give the minister — presumably in conversation with the Minister of Finance — the ability to come in within the estimate range rather than fixing it at the target cost. I've had that experience myself and the example of six weeks is not one pulled out of the air, but it does impact people who are depending on the job, who then wait a month and a half while they don't have that opportunity.

That's all of the free advice I'm going to hand out today and all of the criticism. I will wrap up my remarks, noting that I do think the motion has been weakened, but urging the government to recognize that when we step out of this

Chamber, you have to keep in mind that there are people who are depending on all of us.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, for the member opposite from Watson Lake — she opened her remarks talking about the sorts of projects around water and waste water as not being glamorous. While I know what she is saying, I stood in this House and described myself as a dishwasher with the Department of Community Services and so I'm not looking for glamour. I'm happy that we're here to try to work on these issues.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Official Opposition House Leader. He made some very complimentary remarks to the Department of Community Services and civil servants in general and I appreciate that. I share his comments and I thank him for making them here.

I'm going to talk about a couple things that we care about here. Maybe before I get there, I appreciate that we have this motion before us. I support that it's amended. I don't quite understand how we could put in place a motion that tells us we have to meet a deadline that has passed. I don't know what that looks like and it is confusing to me, but I think all of us in this House are seeking to try to ensure that we get in place a system that is going to give our construction industry a lot of lead time. That is exactly what we all want and I appreciate that we're all there on the same page. We care about our construction industry. They do deserve our recognition and our support. I think we also care about the projects that we're discussing. Most of them that have been raised today are from under this group called the clean water and waste-water fund, so I will rise to speak briefly about that.

We care about having safe drinking water in our communities and we care that we are managing our waste water in an environmentally responsible way. We need to do this and it's very important. I think that when we talk about timing — and I appreciate the member opposite's latter remarks talking about timing — we have to be cognizant not only of decisions that might be delayed but also about rushing them. It is a fine balance.

I did not hear my colleague from the Minister of Highways and Public Works state that there would never be any contracts that come in overpriced. That's not what I heard at all. I heard that we were going to work to try to design the system so as to minimize the risks of that happening.

It's the ability to identify errors and to address them that we're trying to work on, and the ability to have a system in place that would lead to fewer of those mistakes ahead of time. Again, it feels to me that all of us here in this House agree that there are things that can and should be done around procurement that will improve that situation.

I appreciate that on June 22 last year there was an announcement about clean water and waste-water funds. I committed earlier — I think it was in Question Period — and I commit again to coming back to all members of this House to give them an update on the status of those projects. I don't believe that deadlines that were set then were the deadlines

that we had set. I believe it's our responsibility, as we enter into this, to work diligently on our infrastructure projects.

I'm not able, for the members opposite, to give you an exact update on each and every one of those projects, but I commit to doing that, and I re-commit to doing that. What I will say is that, when we look at the year over time, we will have more infrastructure spending than we have had in past years. I think that's coming — or more capital spending, in any case. That's largely due to infrastructure investments.

I do think we are building on the work that the previous government started. I recognize that when we talk about projects of this nature, you don't want to stop them after you've invested quite a bit, because it's wasteful. We recognize the design work that had gone in place, and the announcements that came on June 22, and we are working with the departments to move forward on those projects.

I will also say that, while there are always changes that arise, there has been no partisan move to try to change the direction of the clean water and waste-water fund, as it was identified. We appreciate the work that came in place. The thing I want to try to address, though, is that, although the amended motion now puts a deadline of March 2018, it in no way means that we are not working diligently to get contracts out as soon as possible. What I'm trying to say to the members opposite is that there have been some delays that were necessary because the election was later than most people anticipated, so there were several things around the budget that we had to deal with as we entered. That in itself will not have delayed anything around the clean water and waste-water fund. I know of only one project and I stand to be corrected — I will get that information and share it, but I know of only one project under the clean water and waste-water fund that saw a delay of the type that was referred to by the Member for Lake Laberge, where we had to push it back. I would note that the project was already dealing with regulatory requirements that weren't yet forthcoming. I don't see that the delay within Management Board would have delayed anything around that project.

I will work with members opposite to try to provide information in a timely manner. I appreciate that we are working together in this House to try to find a procurement system that will work for all of our contractors.

We care about our contractors and we are working for and with them. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this amended motion.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Certainly today we've had an opportunity today to cover a tremendous amount of items and points on this topic and I appreciate the fact that it's the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin who has brought this forward. He has always been a champion on this particular item. He's someone I've gone to in this role and even before taking on this role. I believe he and his brother, who was an MLA in this House, have always been champions for their communities and for local contracting. Certainly I believe that even in the past, the community of Teslin has had some challenges with

the way tenders were being rolled out by the previous government. I don't want to belabour the items of the past.

I would like to say it's certainly a breath of fresh air having the MLA for Takhini-Kopper King back here today and I appreciate her points, but to build some context I think it's important that we talk about some items and what we're really trying to do here. I understand that there has been a delay in a few items and certainly, as the Opposition House Leader had mentioned, there has been some good work done in the past under his guidance.

First, I think I'll just talk about the communities and Teslin and the interim Leader of the Official Opposition. We've had an opportunity to work together already. I have reached out to him and he has reached out to me to try to make sure that money stays in Yukon communities. I will always have that door open for advice from him because I respect his time in the contracting industry and his success.

If you look at what transpired in Teslin and you look at how the First Nation, in conjunction with the municipality, using the model of a federal non-profit, I believe — I could be wrong on some points, but I think that was essentially what was structured — they did that because they were frustrated. They were frustrated with company after company coming in to their community and not having sticky dollars. Sticky dollars essentially are — and we've talked about it a bit in our platform — dollars of real impact. Essentially those are government funds or private sector funds, and when they stay in these very important communities in the Yukon, you get a multiplier effect — so you may have a dollar turn into a multiple of three. That's kind of what we look at in the Yukon. So whether it's Teslin or Champagne or Faro, that's what happens.

So there's nobody really better to put this forward as being a champion for that community, to be fair, and I want to have a straight conversation here to finish off this debate today. We have to talk about how there are some real challenges — real challenges — and not every community has the capacity to form these community corporations or the great relationships that exist in Teslin. As the House Leader said, take an opportunity, sit down with individuals who also know and work through these items. I've done that before.

I certainly in my previous role as executive director of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations — and I share this in a positive manner — we sat down, the interim leader and also the MLA for Kluane and I, about the projects that the member had talked about that were rolling into Haines Junction. We felt that we — the First Nation and also people in that community — wanted to know what are our opportunities? There are millions of dollars coming into this community. How are we going to have an opportunity? So "I have a backhoe" or "I have a dump truck" or "I have a fuel distribution" — how are we going to figure out how to do this? They met and we had good conversations, but the real challenge was that I don't think we ever really got under the system that was in place. I don't think we really got to a place where we saw those sticky dollars.

The Member for Kluane could correct me, but when we go out and see these projects from last year, how many people in Haines Junction have opportunities? Essentially what we're trying to do here is a big move. As the former Minister of Highways and Public Works understands, it's a big ship — trying to move it.

There are certainly some items that are already out to tender. Many items are out to tender, but there are some things that we have to correct and still roll out, but certainly let's talk. There have been some pretty profound statements made today, such as about people not being able to pay their mortgage and people not being able to put food on the table. Once again, I hear you, and I am not going to argue that point, but certainly the way the tenders are going out this year does not differ from what we have seen for 14 years.

Now, you can challenge us on the fact that not every seasonal tender has been delivered, and we do have to get that right — you are right. I agree with that and I will work with my colleague to make sure that we do that. Certainly, most contractors, unless they are new to the community, have been living this for 14 years — over and over. I agree with the House Leader, I do. He is right. There is great work that has been done. Some of my constituents were part of that process. They said the exact same thing to me, which was, "Please make sure you respect the work that has been completed. Use that work and make sure you implement it in an effective and appropriate manner." We are really trying to get to the same point here — we are — every one of us. It is really about making sure that we keep this money in the Yukon and we keep these opportunities here in the Yukon.

As the member Leader of the Official Opposition stated in his opening dialogue — he said he knows what it's like to have to leave. I might have misunderstood, but I think it was more about leaving the territory to go to work and having to come back because of these contracting situations. I would never refer to a family — refer to your son.

Our goal is to make sure he doesn't — I don't want anybody to leave Teslin. I want people working in Teslin. I don't want people leaving to go to Fort McMurray, and I am serious about that. Every one of us is serious about that. I want the people — your kids, your grandchildren, my kids, my grandchildren — I want them all working here. That is why we are trying to get this thing right, and we are trying to do it now. We have drawn a line in the sand and are saying, look, we are going to make some tough decisions. Everybody in this room knows that — whether from their time here or outside of here — this is difficult to do.

The Member for Watson Lake touched upon a few items and she talked about Watson Lake. I have to say, I wish she was here to share this with her — but I love Watson Lake. I had my summer vacation in Watson Lake last year. I do love the Sign Post Forest and I like the waterslide at Lucky Lake with my kids after a bite at A Little Taste of Home — actually breakfast and dinner.

What saddens me is that she talked about the infrastructure deficit in Watson. What I have seen over the last number of years is, that shouldn't be. It's not because you

have a representative or an existing MLA from your riding that your riding should be treated differently. This is 15 years of representation in Watson Lake from a previous, previous premier, and also her representation. We're going to make a commitment here that we're not going to leave Watson Lake by the wayside. We're going to make sure that we deliver on it. I'm excited — she's going to keep my feet to the fire when it comes to economic development, and I'm really looking forward to talking to her. She's going to challenge me on those items.

There has been great work done and, when it comes to the work that my colleague has done, when it has to do with working with stakeholders — that's part of it. You have to get it right with the stakeholders. The stakeholders aren't coming in to meet with us and saying, "I can't believe that all tenders are not out by this point in time." What they're saying is that we have to get it right. We have to get it right, once and for all.

They're excited about what's coming. They're excited about the continued announcements. They're excited about the direction the economy is going in, and they see that this real move toward reconciliation, in turn, provides investor confidence and, in turn, that will lead to opportunities for them.

Like I said, I'm not going to try to stand here and take on the glory for other people's hard work, but I'll give you facts. It's announcement after announcement. I look at companies, like today, that are great local employers — certainly companies that continue to hire Yukoners as much as they can — one of them being Capstone. Today, I think probably everybody in the Legislature has seen that, and I congratulate them. Any time you hear good news like that, it makes us all smile, and that just leads to continued time for Yukoners to work. I think the announcement of today was something like 2020 — another continuation. We had an opportunity to an extension in the first couple of weeks that we were here, but Mr. Light announced that today and that's good news.

I'm encouraged. Part of my mandate letter states that I have an obligation to work with large industrial projects to provide opportunities to Yukoners. I have been encouraged by our conversations with Goldcorp. They still have a regulatory regime to go through, but even as of last week when we met with them, their focus is to make sure that they provide opportunities for Yukoners.

It's not just focusing on the procurement process in government. The Member for Lake Laberge is absolutely correct. We need to change the — he actually said that, but I think he was referring to the fact that there's a big government spend that a lot of us rely on out there, and that the private sector relies on, and we need to have more private sector money here. We have to. We just can't continue to rely on things the way they are.

So Goldcorp is committed to that. There's also JDS. Not to use an abbreviation, but I'm just saying that because I think it's named after the owner, Jeff Stibbard. They are committed on all their projects to making sure.

That's the kind of dialogue — I'm happy we're having that dialogue with Goldcorp and JDS, and BMC is no different. It was also going through the regulatory regime and that's another potential \$350 million or \$400 million spend. Of course, the cap ex — meaning the capital build. The initial build before you go to production in these resource sectors is truly a time when you can see some real sticky dollars in communities. Then their commitments, whether it be with their Kaska partners or their Northern Tutchone partners — we're excited about it. I think Victoria Gold — and the House Leader has watched that process. How far they have moved ahead didn't happen since we've been here. That was done under the guidance of the previous minister.

When I look at this, we have to think about 15 years of this process and that's really what contractors are talking about. It was said over there — I want to finish the day off on a nice tone, but we're talking about legal and court cases. I'm looking outside, and when I got to work today, there certainly weren't a bunch of yellow Caterpillar machines on the front lawn. Yes, we are going to have some sticky times, and if anybody is going to be the target, I am the target to start this off as the House Leader. The one thing I can say that I will take credit for is that probably some of these legal disputes that are going on — some big numbers. I don't know if you had any in the billions, but I have read the paper and I have one looking to be in the billions. The dispute resolution piece that was touched on — and I'm looking for it and that's your area of expertise, and I certainly am not going to speak to that, but I would rather not be in court and I would certainly rather be working things out at a table.

As the House Leader said — you're right. When you mentioned it, you said we did talk about the fast track and, if you noticed, I got up and I said to my colleague, "Please get that done", because you're right, you got me on the record there and I know you will remind me if we don't get that done — and probably over and over again.

This is about going back to this and I thank you for the leeway you have given me, because it's really about — as we said, we have all had some flexibility today — focusing on the motion and it's focusing on the motion as amended. It goes back to — we can't do things. The original motion was to roll them out — not to be aggressive on my comments or to try to be conflictual, but it was roll them out now. We're not rolling them out now. Things have been done in a way and it didn't work. It did not work, so we're going to make a decision to try to fix them. I'm not saying that my friends across the way wouldn't have fixed them. I'm not saying that. If they had the opportunity, they may have fixed them. They did some good work at the eleventh hour and now our responsibility is to fix it.

The motion — if we're looking from a purely legislative standpoint — to focus on the language that's in front of me and then, with the addition of the amendment, what we're really talking about is, first and foremost: Do we rush it? No, we amend it to say "next year".

Please, with all due respect, the reason we amended this motion is because we can't roll things out the way they are. I

have had the chance to know everybody across the way over the years and I know they want what's best, so I don't know how decisions were made previously. I don't know. Maybe it wasn't them but there were decisions that were made. Those decisions, as they were rushed, certainly led to some very, very difficult times. We can dialogue about this, but this is serious. When you're spending big amounts of dollars — I won't get into exact details. When you build the largest capital project in Yukon history with government funds and you roll it out — and you certainly don't identify it when you begin the election process — and then you get elected as the government and then you roll this thing out — massive, massive. Like I said to the contractors — and we've had opportunity after opportunity. I sat with the contractors during the election campaign and also they came and sat with us at the Cabinet offices — chambers, development corporations. We've had good opportunities to meet with multiple people, but certainly when we talk about it —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Okay. We do know that there are different ways to do it. We're taking that time now to get it right. If we don't have it right, and we're sitting here this time next year, then we're open to that discussion, but certainly at this time, give us the leeway to deal with this history of 15 years of contracts that really could have impacted Yukoners in a much, much better way.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Hassard: It has been a very interesting afternoon. Honestly, I didn't anticipate this motion taking up this much of the day, but in a sense I'm very happy that it has. I believe there was some very valuable debate today. There was a lot said on both sides — some of which I agree with and some of which I don't agree with, but that's obviously one of the great things about the democratic process in the democratic country that we live in. I'm happy to have seen that.

There are a few things I would like to clarify or make note of, maybe. The first is that the amended motion — yes, it is still a very important motion. I think that it's vitally important to contractors of the Yukon to have contracts out by — March 18, I believe, was the date that the minister used for next year. That's great. I'm happy to see that. You know, I'm sure that Yukon contractors will be happy to hear that too.

One thing that I have to disagree on with the Minister of Highways and Public Works was that the number of days — 143 or 168 — is really irrelevant. The fact of the matter is that, personally, I believe it was time enough to see more of these contracts coming out on the tender management system. I don't believe that the term "fast and loose" is appropriate at all. I believe that the department officials — both in Highways and Public Works, as well as Community Services — are more than competent enough to have done the homework they needed to do to ensure that these projects were properly vetted so that they could be put out on the timelines that they were initially slated for.

I'm not saying that every project had to be, because obviously a new government has their own priorities. They're going to take a bit of time and decide — oh well, maybe we don't feel that — you know, Teslin had a lot of money in the last couple of years, so we're going to hold that one and make sure we have enough so that we can put more money into Marsh Lake or Tagish. That's entirely the government's prerogative, and I don't begrudge anyone that.

I think the statement that the Minister of Highways and Public Works made that contractors weren't expecting to see seasonally dependent contracts get out on time this season — I thought that was a very odd remark. I have spoken to a lot of contractors, as I continually do, and I certainly haven't found one yet who said, "Gee, we're not surprised at all; we weren't expecting any work this spring." That concerns me to a certain degree.

Another remark the Minister of Highways and Public Works made was that no one knows better than he the importance of those seasonal jobs' wages. I think that's quite a statement for a fellow who is getting a paycheck every two weeks, 12 months of the year, currently. I think that would be a better statement for someone who is actually living that life currently, than someone who is here getting a very good wage, I believe, and gets to stay warm 12 months of the year. We don't have to go and work outside under a D9 that doesn't have an electric motor on it.

Another comment I think that the Minister of Highways and Public Works made was that he was very proud of the fact that this government, over the past six months, has put out \$72.9 million worth of contracts. I certainly hope that doesn't mean that we'll have a total of \$146 million worth of contracts this year, because that's over \$100 million less than last year and while — I'm getting my finger wagging here — I'm just simply stating that I hope that isn't the case because, whether we — the previous government — can be criticized for not doing our due diligence before tendering those contracts, the fact remains that Yukon contractors and the Yukon in general survives on that approximately \$250-million-per-year worth of contracts. I would be very disturbed, I guess, if this government came along and only did \$150-million worth of contracts. Most of you can probably appreciate that. I just want to be on record recognizing that fact.

The Minister of Community Services made mention of the fact that the original motion had stated that they tendered contracts no later than March 31 of each year, saying that you can't do something that's impossible because that date has come and gone. I can appreciate that, but the rest of the motion talked about immediately getting jobs out on the tender management system, so it's potato/potahto, I guess. It's important that we look at the entire motion and not just a small portion of the motion.

As I said before, I believe the motion still has validity. I am willing to vote in favour of this motion as it is. I obviously wish that it hadn't been amended the way it was, but that's the joy of being on this side of the House and not on that side of the House. We're quickly learning that.

I understand the purpose of the amendment and appreciate that. At the same time, I would just again like to thank everyone for their words today. I think there was a lot of wisdom in a lot of those words. We're not going to ever all agree on everything in here. As I said, that's the great thing about democracy.

Thank you very much for your time and I look forward to voting on this motion.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the motion, as amended?

Some Hon. Member: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 14 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

Motion No. 6, as amended, agreed to

Motion No. 9

Clerk: Motion No. 9, standing in the name of Mr. Kent.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Copperbelt South:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to resume negotiations with the Government of Canada in order to negotiate an exemption for Yukon from the carbon tax.

Mr. Kent: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion that I tabled, I believe, on Monday of this week. Obviously the carbon tax is something that has been on the minds of many Yukoners, going back to last fall's election. For me, it was the issue that came up at most doorsteps, for sure — whether they were on the side of the Yukon Party and us looking for an exemption — and, of course, I heard from those supporting the Liberals and the New Democrats, as well as the Green Party, about them being in favour of a carbon tax.

Some good discussions started well before the election, but came to a head during the election for me in Copperbelt South — and I'm sure for many of my colleagues on this side of the floor and perhaps the other side of the floor as well. I'm not sure of the discussions. I know I spoke about it with the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes when he perhaps mistakenly stopped by my house. It was great to see him anyway. It was a nice opportunity to catch up with him at our house in New Constabulary out in his beautiful riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. We're very close neighbours and I appreciate the opportunity to work with him in this House as neighbouring ridings, as neighbouring MLAs, and work with him on other things that are important to people who live in his riding as well as my riding.

That said, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take my time here today — and perhaps if we end up debating this motion again at a future time — to talk about a few things. Obviously, this tax has dominated Question Period, not only today but for the first two days. Over those first few days, we heard some assertions from the Premier during Question Period about our stance on the carbon tax and what position we took as government, as well as during the last election. Given the fact that I have a little bit more time during private members' debate, I'll take the opportunity to correct the record and correct some of the assertions that the Premier made with respect to our position, and especially when it comes to what happened in Vancouver with the Vancouver declaration and following through to the early fall meetings of the environment ministers in Montreal.

Obviously the northern premiers had a stance against carbon pricing. As well, the previous Minister of Community Services, who was attending those environment ministers meetings on behalf of the Minister of Environment at the time — the Member for Kluane — had some success in getting some language agreed to there that gave us an optimistic approach that there would be an exemption.

The carbon tax is a tax that many Yukoners are nervous about in spite of the pledges from the Yukon Liberal government that it is going to be revenue neutral. I will certainly get into detail on what my feelings are with that and what the definition of that would be. We heard one of the Liberal candidates during last fall's campaign talk about the carbon tax, I believe, being a redistribution of wealth, which is very concerning to me, especially since it will hit people in rural Yukon and in the Whitehorse periphery an awful lot harder than it will people within the core of Whitehorse or at least with access to transit that many people in my riding and other ridings around the territory don't have.

I believe that the carbon tax will be very hard on our mining sector. I believe that the carbon tax will be very hard on our tourism sector — as well as potentially the government coffers — when it comes to projects that are being delivered. Highway construction projects, for instance, are very fuel-reliant for those heavy construction machines. I believe they have fuel protection within the tender documents that they have, so when this carbon tax is implemented in 2018, what is that going to do to the cost of doing business for the

government? What is that going to do to the amount of bang for the buck that the Yukon government will be able to do? Perhaps they won't be able to deliver as many projects as they had hoped to over the course of a year, given the fact that they will be paying an additional levy on the fuel that supports the construction of those projects.

I and others on this side of the House asked questions during Question Period about how this will affect the tourism industry. Our visitor industry is very dependent on either people flying or driving to the territory. One of our main competitors — I am not sure which member across the way — I am assuming it was the Premier who spoke during Question Period — that this tax will be levied in neighbouring jurisdictions, but it won't be levied in one of our closest neighbours — the State of Alaska — which we compete with on a regular basis for tourist dollars, for visitors. That is something that I hope to explore during this debate on the carbon tax and us seeking an exemption with members opposite when they have an opportunity to respond.

The industry that I am most familiar with, given my background as the previous minister as well as some of the careers I had in private life before coming back into politics — and I guess being Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about 16 years ago or so under the previous Liberal government at the time — kind of gives me some unique insights into that industry and what it takes to be successful.

We were very fortunate to have weathered this last storm in the mining industry, and we weathered it well. Not everybody, obviously, had success during the downturn in the markets, but we worked hard and we worked hard with the industry partners to make sure that the Yukon remained relevant, that the Yukon remained in conversations in places like: Toronto; Denver; Beaver Creek, Colorado; Vancouver; New York; and the other major capital markets. That was a lot of hard work that we put in, and I applaud the minister for some of the recent announcements that have been made for the mining industry.

Bringing the majors in is great. At the last PDAC that I attended as minister, which would have been in 2016, we met with representatives — had lunch I think it was — with representatives of one of the major companies that is now active here on the exploration side. We were just having a casual conversation and they asked me what some of the fears I had about the industry in the Yukon, or what were some of the gaps. It was either bookend at the time for me. It was that the prospectors were in trouble. They were having trouble optioning their projects. They're the guys who go out there and do the initial work and bang on the rocks. Obviously some of the class 1 notification stuff was top of mind for them at the time and remains that way. I'm sure the minister has heard that from representatives of the prospecting industry.

I ran into one of them this morning. I think perhaps he was coming out of a meeting with the minister, and he stopped down to say hello. He's a good friend, so we had a good conversation about the class 1 and how that was playing out for them, but that's for another day. I'm sure we'll get into those discussions at a future time.

The other thing that I mentioned at that luncheon to the representative of Agnico Eagle — that's who we were meeting with at the time and who have now taken a further stake in some of Shawn Ryan's property south of Dawson City — was the lack of majors that we had here at the time. We were fortunate that within a couple months of that PDAC to have Goldcorp come to town, so to speak, and purchase Kaminak and their flagship property, the Coffee Creek property. I think that, hopefully, started a trend, and we've seen that build over the past while. There are great headlines in tonight's paper. I think the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources referenced that with Capstone and Minto mine extending the mine life. I didn't get a chance to read the article, but I understand it could be perhaps as long as 2022, maybe longer.

But again, how will the carbon tax affect this industry, which is very fuel-dependent, and very intensive when it comes to the machinery that it operates on mine sites for those that are off-grid? What is this going to mean for diesel generation or liquefied natural gas, if that's what they choose to use to generate? What will the carbon tax mean for them? I'll be interested to hear from members opposite how it will be revenue neutral for them or what their plans are to have it revenue neutral for them.

I will say it is our most important mining industry because it's always constant, they're always there. They're always on the creeks. When I was minister with the Liberals 15 years ago and gold was about \$250 or \$260 an ounce, the placer miners were still on the creeks and ever-optimistic, and nobody could have been happier for them to see the price of gold rebound as it did throughout the decade to some of the historic highs in 2011-12 and where it is right now. It's great — but again, a very fuel-intensive industry. Most of those projects and most of those mines are off the grid, so they're using fuel to generate their power. They're using fuel to power their equipment.

I wouldn't want to speak for them, but I would say it's obviously one of the top two — perhaps the top expense that they have on an annual basis, depending on where they are and who they are. So again, this tax that the Liberals have signed onto is certainly going to affect them and their ability.

I heard from individual placer miners during the campaign, as well as the Klondike Placer Miners' Association and others, that they are very concerned about a carbon tax and what it might mean for this industry.

Hopefully as other members get a chance to speak and, as I mentioned, we get a chance to hear what initial plans the government has to ensure that it is revenue neutral for them, it's not just the direct cost — the costs at the pump is I guess what we were referring to yesterday — but what are some of the hidden costs? What is the freight company going to do on their food and the parts? What costs are going to go up for them there? What can they expect to see there?

What can they expect to see from the expediting companies? This is hard rock and placer. What type of freight rates and increases will they see there? Again, it's not only those direct costs but's the hidden costs. Of course we heard

that the federal government — and I have the numbers in my more formal remarks that I will get into — but the federal government will be charging GST on top of carbon tax, so I'm hopeful that perhaps the Minister of Finance can reach out to his colleagues in Ottawa and, if it's going to be revenue neutral and if they are not going to keep any of the revenue, then charging GST on top of the carbon tax certainly doesn't fit the bill when it comes to that commitment by the federal government.

It will be interesting to see how that money — or if we are able to ensure that those dollars are also returned to the Yukon and returned to the people who pay them. I think that's the most important part. I don't envy members opposite in coming up with this rebate plan that they have.

It is going to be tough, because the people who live in downtown Whitehorse are certainly going to be affected differently from the people who live in Copperbelt South or Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes or Pelly-Nisutlin — obviously — in Kluane, Laberge — members opposite. Each and every one of our constituents are going to be affected in a different manner. It is going to be tough for them to make sure that it is revenue neutral. This is also a tax on families.

For me, that is what I heard on the doorsteps and that was one of the biggest fears for the people who supported us in trying to seek an exemption to the tax, just given where we are. Obviously home heating fuel and gasoline for many of us, it is not discretionary. It is not something that we can afford to live without.

It is funny because, when I left Riverdale — I lived in Riverdale for over 40 years pretty much, and was able to walk or bike to work that way. After I dropped my son off at daycare, I would see the Speaker walking from his Riverdale home to our office, which is great. Those are opportunities that are afforded to you when you have those options — whether you want to walk, bike or drive to work. But for me, living at Marsh Lake, and for many of my constituents in Copperbelt South, that option does not exist on most days. It is a concern.

I had the means to invest in a smaller car and am doing my bit for the environment and the pocketbook, and it has helped. But there are many people who live in these rural areas who don't have the means to do something like that, to purchase a new vehicle. They're stuck with what they have and they can't afford that, so this tax on families is quite concerning. I don't want members to take that lightly — and I know they don't. I know members opposite probably heard the same things from people at the doorsteps.

When there is the non-discretionary aspect of this carbon tax — and like I said, it's going to be tough for the government to make sure that individual families get each dollar back, but that's a commitment that they made to revenue neutrality and we'll certainly hold them to account on that and get a sense for where they are. The kitchen table is as important as the board table for the bigger mining companies. These are decisions that people will have to make, especially people with families. What are the choices they are going to have to make if this adds significantly to their household

costs? Will it mean that their daughter can't take violin lessons, that their son can't take dance, or that family members can't get involved in sports? Yukoners' families have budgets to adhere to and it's something that certainly is concerning to them when they make their decisions.

For instance, I was on the Superior Propane website — of course, it's an Alberta company as well. We all know that the Alberta NDP government has implemented a carbon tax in that province. On the Superior Propane website, they mention that they will show full visibility on your bill — and I quote: "As always, Superior will give you full visibility of the government fees associated with the delivery of your propane. We will display the carbon price as a separate line item so that you can see how this initiative impacts you."

I apologize — I am not sure what the rate per tonne is in Alberta that they instituted in their first year, but the price of carbon has been set at 3.08 cents per litre for the year 2017 and will increase to 4.62 cents per litre in 2018. My understanding of the escalator that the federal government is talking about is starting out at \$10 per tonne, escalating \$10 per year to \$50 per tonne by the end of that five-year term. It will cost the average household — this is what Superior Propane says — I know the Leader of the Third Party wants to speak, and she will get her opportunity to speak. I just ask again for her indulgence in letting me speak to my motion, rather than talk off-mic, as she has done for the past five years and continues to do here today.

Mr. Speaker, it will cost the average household about \$60 to \$80 of their annual propane bill in 2017. I am not sure of the math. I will look forward to hearing from the Premier on some of the intricacies of this. Does that mean that \$50 per tonne is going to be a \$400-increase in their annual propane bill by the time this is fully implemented? It will be interesting to hear what members opposite have to say about that.

In this evening's *Whitehorse Star* article about the carbon tax and some of the back and forth that we've had in here, the Premier I think mentioned, in response in Question Period yesterday — or perhaps the day before — the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin talked about the \$10 per tonne, but I think Yukoners will want to know what that means at the pump. I guess overall the Yukon Department of Finance, it says in this article, estimates that the carbon tax will create roughly \$5 million in revenue in the Yukon during its first year. Again, making sure that we can get that revenue back into the hands of Yukoners and how they do it will certainly be the challenge for the Premier and his colleagues over there, and that will be one of the things to define his time in government, I believe, when voters go to the polls the next time around.

Speaker: Order, please. Thank you, Member for Copperbelt South.

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

Debate on Motion No. 9 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled April 26, 2017:

34-2-9

Yukon Ombudsman 2016 Annual Report — Speaking up for fairness (Speaker Clarke)

34-2-10

Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner 2016 Annual Report — Privacy is a public interest (Speaker Clarke)

34-2-11

Yukon Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner 2016 Annual Report — Education Protects Whistleblowers (Speaker Clarke)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 5

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, April 27, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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| Sergeant-at-Arms | Doris McLean |
| Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms | Karina Watson |
| Hansard Administrator | Deana Lemke |

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 27, 2017 — 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 Day of Mourning

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite you to join me in an exercise. Honourable members, I would invite you as well. Visitors in the gallery, I hope you will also participate.

I would like you to turn and look at someone you know nearby. If you don't know anyone here today, think of a friend or a co-worker you have. Think of something unique you know about them. Maybe it's just their name; maybe it's their favourite hobby, the way they take their coffee, or the name of a beloved pet. Think of them in the community playing hockey, volunteering, at the market, biking, or driving to work.

Picture them in their workplace. It's where they spend a lot of time. Imagine them chatting with co-workers, consulting with their boss, enjoying a break, sharing jokes and stories. It is a community within a community for them. They feel valued and important there. Finally, turn your mind to them at home, where they are incredibly loved, irreplaceable — they are cherished. It is a safe place in the warm embrace of their friends and loved ones.

Now imagine them gone forever — stolen from their homes, ripped from their workplace — a community robbed of their contributions. This is what a death in a workplace looks like. It is not a statistic. It is not a number on a sign. It is a cold reality — a sharp shock that ripples across homes, workplaces and into the community at large.

Come tomorrow, there are many people for whom this exercise does not require any imagination. To them, it is all too real. They are the people who have lost someone to a workplace accident, and tomorrow is the National Day of Mourning.

A workplace borrows its people from a family — from a home. It is the responsibility of that workplace to return its people — its workers — to their families in good health and alive every day.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we know that it doesn't always work out that way. Some people never make it home from a workplace they enter. Others do make it home, but will have been contaminated by that workplace. Their suffering will be drawn out over many years and will end with their life cut too short. That's not okay and it cannot continue.

I think it's clear by now that I have risen to pay tribute to the Day of Mourning. I wish I didn't have to. I wish we didn't need a day of mourning, but the truth is that we do. We need it to remember and honour those who have passed too early because of their commitment to a workplace.

The Day of Mourning is about more than that though; it's about learning from the past losses, even as we work to prevent more. It's about the future and how we can shape it together. The spirits of those we've lost remind us to renew our commitment to health and safety in the workplace. That responsibility isn't some heavy burden that each of us carries on our shoulders in isolation though. It's a blanket draped across all of us. Together with our arms, our living breath, we carry the blanket and fight to keep everyone safe, healthy and alive within it. It's our shared responsibility to make sure that each of us — all of us — get home safe from work every day.

Please, I would ask you to turn to that person near to you again or recall the person you were thinking about earlier. They're still there. Let's agree to work together to keep it that way. Make this promise: You and I will keep each other safe. That is our pledge to one another. It's the pledge of the Day of Mourning.

The Day of Mourning ceremony will be held tomorrow at its new location near the workers memorial in Shipyards Park. It begins at 12:30 p.m. I would encourage everyone to attend. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to acknowledge the Yukon Federation of Labour President Justin Lemphers, Vice-President Lee Tanguay and Treasurer Sue Christianson. Thank you so much for coming here today.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to April 28, the Day of Mourning and to recognize and remember all those who went to work and did not make it home to their families or were severely injured on the job.

The effects of workplace injuries or fatalities are far-reaching. By coming together each year to honour the lives lost or changed by workplace injury, we not only pay tribute to those people but to their families and loved ones. At this time, we're able to come together to exemplify our commitment to the issues of health and safety in the workplace and beyond.

The Day of Mourning reminds us of just how important it is to enforce and to follow all health and safety regulations set out in the workplace. To be committed to safety not only ensures that you are working to protect, not only your own well-being, but the well-being of your co-workers, your friends, family and everyone around you.

April 28, as the National Day of Mourning, has roots that go back to 1914, when the first workers' compensation act was passed in Canada. The date was originally passed as a motion in 1984 at a Canadian Labour Congress convention and legislated in 1991 in Parliament as Bill C-223, the *Workers Mourning Day Act*. Since then, April 28 has been recognized by organizations around the world to remember

workers killed, injured, disabled or afflicted with illness due to workplace hazards.

According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, the most recent statistics show us that, in 2015, 852 workplace deaths were recorded in Canada. Over 232,000 claims were made and accepted for lost time due to injury or disease, and these are only the people whose injuries are reported and accepted.

I sincerely believe that if we continue to draw attention to workplace health and safety and the importance to adhering to safety regulations, and being aware on the job, these numbers can fall. The fact is that there are so many situations in which fatalities and injuries could have been avoided if safety regulations were followed and taken seriously.

I commend those who work safely and diligently to promote vigilance in the workplace and I encourage everyone to be aware of your surroundings, your actions and to mind the regulations that are in place to keep you and those around you safe.

One of the best ways to honour those who have been killed or injured in the workplace is to prevent another fatality or injury from happening. Be safe, and help to ensure you and your co-workers return safe to your families and loved ones each and every day and work together to protect one another from harm.

Ms. White: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to treat April 28 as the National Day of Mourning for workers injured or killed on the job. I hate these tributes. I hate that every year I stand up and I try to do it again, and I hate that I can't make it through. The words — they ring hollow. At this point in time, I feel like I say everything more than once. Having lost three people I cared deeply about to workplace accidents, I've claimed the Day of Mourning as my own. This isn't a day like any other that we mark in this House. We aren't celebrating. We aren't offering our congratulations. Today we remember. We mourn a loss — our collective losses.

April is the month of transition from winter to spring, from darkness to light, the migration of swans, the smells of spring and the first crocus — the month most often associated with renewals. For many, April is a joyful time. But April is a hard month for thousands of Canadians who live with the loss of a loved one taken long before their time in an instant that they couldn't even begin to imagine or understand, because it is in April that we remember the everyday people who headed to work and never returned home.

The fact that this gathering happens — even at all — fills me with rage. How is it that in this day and age — that in this time of technology and advancements in knowledge — good people still continue to lose their lives every year and, in Canada, almost every day at work? I'm frustrated that despite our best efforts, our continued pledges to do better, accidents still happen — worse yet, that many of them were preventable tragedies. The tragic truth is that every year I attend the ceremony, more and more people are attending. Now not only do I see the familiar faces of people who are mourning past

losses, but now I see the faces of people who are living through recent tragedies. I'm grateful that for the first time tomorrow, we won't be gathering in the lobby around a tired fountain, but we'll be gathering at the permanent memorial — a place that family and friends can visit at any time, a place for quiet reflection next to the river. It's a physical reminder for the community to nurture a culture of safety, a reminder to be responsible for one another. It's a symbol that shows how deeply we value safety and how much we miss those we lost.

But the Day of Mourning needs to be more than just a chance to gather to commemorate our losses and more than a day for sorrow because we need to do better. We need more than promises to keep each other safe. We owe it to each other, but we especially owe it to those who get left behind.

In recognition of National Volunteer Week

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

On behalf of the government, I want to recognize National Volunteer Week, which runs from April 23 to 29 this year. Across the country, 13.3 million Canadians contribute 2.1 billion hours, the equivalent of 1.1 billion full-time jobs. Last night, the City of Whitehorse held its 2016 Volunteer of the Year reception. The City of Whitehorse values the importance of volunteers and their contributions to our community. It celebrates and publicly acknowledges outstanding volunteers by providing an opportunity for citizens to recognize and appreciate volunteers who have made significant impacts to their organizations. The city annually invites organizations to nominate an individual as a candidate for this honour. The nominee should be someone who has made a significant contribution to the organization or to the community as a whole. The winner of the 2016 award is the president of the Porter Creek Community Association, Mr. Jeff Marynowski. Jeff is in the gallery today and I want to publicly congratulate him on receiving this award. I also want to personally thank him for all of the work he has done over the course of many years on behalf of the residents of Porter Creek.

Just before I finish, at the last AGM for the Porter Creek Community Association — and I might be off and I apologize to Jeff if I am — I think it has been almost a decade that he has been the president and on something like 10 subcommittees, whether it is working on crime prevention, trails, garden projects, recreation projects — the list goes on and on.

These are people who build community and certainly make our community a better place.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute and extend our sincere gratitude to Yukon's diverse and motivated community of volunteers across the territory. Through countless hours of volunteer service, they are able to positively affect the communities they live in and provide

services across the Yukon. This year, April 23 to 29 marks National Volunteer Week.

This week, we celebrate the local volunteers who donate their time, their minds, their muscle and their effort to enrich the lives of Yukon at a local level and to provide important services to Yukon communities. Without volunteers, Yukon communities would not be as safe, dynamic and culturally rich as they are today. Thank you to the many volunteers who spend hours helping vulnerable people navigate our communities to help ensure that children eat solid and wholesome meals at school, who help people learn new skills or talk to someone and simply be a kind ear at a time of need.

I would like to acknowledge the many NGOs and service organizations across the territory — the people who volunteer time to sit on boards and committees of the Yukon government to help inform and advise the course of the territory and the many parents who donate time on top of other commitments to ensure their children, teachers and schools have the support they need to carry out sporting events, fundraisers and everything else that requires helping hands at school.

We would like to as well thank everyone who dedicates companionship to seniors in Yukon communities and asks for nothing more in return than a smile and a story, and to the many community members who bring a wealth of skills and passion to annual events, festivals and celebrations and bring Yukon together throughout the year, without whose efforts these events would not be possible.

Volunteer work makes a difference in all of our lives, whether we realize it or not. Here in the Yukon, we rely on volunteer work in several areas. Volunteer emergency personnel provide hours on call and in training to keep Yukon communities safe. In fact, EMS services and fire departments would not be possible in most Yukon communities without the dedicated services of our fellow Yukoners who are volunteering their time.

These volunteers are also people who are usually busy with full-time jobs and other commitments, but they give their time to deliver vital services to their fellow citizens. They keep our communities safe by providing ambulance, fire, and search and rescue services across the Yukon. They contribute to the overall well-being and security of Yukoners. Firefighters keep our homes and communities safe, and EMS volunteers, along with paramedics and Yukon EMS, literally save lives and respond to other health emergencies, and they are there when we need them the most.

I would like to acknowledge that there are hundreds of people who volunteer for EMS and fire across the territory, including within Yukon communities and within the Whitehorse periphery, including my riding of Lake Laberge. These services, in fact, are there because of these volunteers.

I would like to especially mention the two fire departments in my riding — Hootalinqua and Ibex — which have already responded to two fires within the last week, including a large one last night that could have spread throughout the community, had the Hootalinqua Fire Department not responded as quickly as they did.

I would like to acknowledge as well Search and Rescue and note that many other areas that are not the critical emergency services but are also very important to the lives and well-being of our community include volunteers who contribute time and energy to sport and recreation — from coaching hockey to volunteering to ensuring major events such as softball and fastball tournaments can be held. Whether volunteers are helping to save lives, save homes or create sport and recreational opportunities, they demonstrate enthusiasm and an admirable willingness to help their fellow Yukoners.

Sport and recreation volunteers contribute to our health and our well-being as well as help seniors stay active and compete in major events like the Canada 55+ Games and, of course, provide recreational opportunities to everyone from seniors to young children. Volunteers support Team Yukon during events like the Arctic Winter Games, Canada Winter Games, and North American Indigenous Games. Without the dedicated support of these volunteers, Team Yukon would not be as successful as it has been and is today.

Volunteers also make it possible for the Yukon to host one-of-a-kind events like the Klondike Trail of '98 Road Relay, the Yukon River Trail Marathon and the Yukon Quest.

Volunteers in rural communities work tirelessly to provide recreational opportunities and help to build and foster healthy communities. There are so many aspects of volunteerism in our community; I've named but a few. Together it is all of these volunteers who are part of the fibre that weaves together the amazing fabric of the Yukon.

Again, personally and on behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Yukon volunteers who provide all of these benefits to their fellow Yukoners.

I would also like to note that, at the Commissioner's Levee this year, the Honourable Commissioner Doug Phillips handed out Governor General's Awards to a long list of volunteers from the Yukon as well as his own awards. While I want to congratulate all of those volunteers — I had the opportunity to attend the levee and congratulate many of them in person — I would also like to specifically acknowledge two constituents of mine who received Governor General's Awards. Mike Blumenschein received a volunteer award for his years of contribution to developing the Yukon agriculture sector, and Bob Atkinson, the fire chief of Ibex Valley, received an award for his decades of service as a volunteer firefighter. If I'm not mistaken, it has been 15 years as Ibex Valley fire chief and over 20 years of volunteering as a volunteer firefighter. Thank you again to all of our volunteers across the territory who help make Yukon the place it is today.

Ms. Hanson: I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party to pay tribute to volunteers throughout Yukon. Volunteers are indeed the lifeblood of our communities, and the impact to their time and work is felt by everyone. Volunteers build communities. They coach our kids, they protect our communities from fire and emergencies, they search for the lost, they entertain us, and they feed the hungry.

Government may offer up the framework of the territory but it's the thousands of volunteers who fill in the gaps. I'm pretty confident that every member here has volunteered at a community event within the last month. We listened yesterday as members spoke of the volunteers who brought us to this Legislature and thanked them. Quite frankly, we wouldn't be here without those volunteers.

For many years I have had a simple line drawing on the walls of my office sent to me by a friend who was volunteering with CUSO in Nigeria. That simple line drawing says: "What we can't do alone, we can do together." To me that captures the essence of why volunteers and volunteering is so important to all of our communities.

I just want to thank all of those people in Yukon, young and old, who volunteer a little or a lot. Thank you for making this a better place for all Yukon.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to introduce a couple of guests who are here today and encourage us to welcome them. First of all, Mr. Ben Asquith — he is the CEO of Da Daghay, the Ta'an Kwäch'än development corporation. Recently Ben helped to organize and put on wildfire training called "Beat the Heat". He and the other First Nations are doing great work there. We showed up on Friday and met some of the crews and it was terrific, and I would like to welcome him.

Also I would like to welcome Ms. Bev Buckway. She is of course the past Mayor of the City of Whitehorse and right now is the executive director for the Association of Yukon Communities. I am very pleased to get to work alongside her.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming Connor Whitehouse to the gallery, as well as Jonas Smith, the executive director of the Klondike Placer Miners' Association.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: I quite often drive home to Teslin at night, but on the nights that I do stay here in Whitehorse, I stay next door to a fellow who has joined us here today, Mr. Ranjit Sarin. Thank you for being here.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to welcome to the gallery someone I'm very proud to call my friend, Laura Cabott. It's fitting that she's here because she is a volunteer extraordinaire and has dedicated the majority of her career to giving voice to residential school survivors. Please welcome her.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I rise today to recognize a friend and former colleague,

Mr. Andrew Robulack. Among his many talents, he writes, he's a tech guru and he's also one of our dedicated civil servants. I would like to welcome him.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask everybody in the Legislative Assembly to help me in welcoming to the gallery the president of the Liberal Party, Mr. Devin Bailey, but also — and more importantly — two amazing Dawson constituents, Devin's mother, Diana Brooks, and her partner, Pat.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 200: *Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now introduced and read a first time.

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

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, be now introduced and read a first time.

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

Bill No. 3: *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2017* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 3, entitled *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2017*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 3, entitled *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2017*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 3 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
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 government to release the costs to date and projected completed costs for the demolition of the old F.H. Collins high school.

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: North American Free Trade Agreement**

Mr. Kent: Yesterday, Canadians heard that the Trump administration was considering pulling out of NAFTA. Later, we learned that there was talk after interventions by our Prime Minister and the Mexican President of quick action to renegotiate the agreement. We understand that earlier this week, the Prime Minister held a conference call with all premiers to outline Canada's proposed response on this as well as the softwood lumber dispute and to seek their input.

I have a question for the Premier as to what input he provided to the Prime Minister about this important issue and can he also explain to Yukoners what he sees as key issues for Yukon related to NAFTA and the potential US exit or renegotiation of that agreement, as this is Canada's most important trade agreement?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I did not attend that phone conversation. We were here in the Legislative Assembly. Our department is working on preparing for the COF agreements that we're going to be talking about in Washington coming up in June. We will prepare a briefing for the opposition on all topics related to NAFTA and other agreements that we are going to talk about with our counterparts on a federal basis.

Really important to Yukon, I will say specifically, are conversations about Shawkwak funding — definitely something that we want to put a lot of emphasis on. We all know that there is only \$6 million left in that fund and depending upon the amount of paving that we do on that road, the costs can be up to \$15 million. So this is another further pressure on our budgetary considerations into the future and we want to make sure that's first and foremost on our minds when we meet with the federal counterparts in Washington in a few months.

Mr. Kent: I thank the Premier for that answer. I appreciate the response.

What we've also learned is that in response to what we're seeing as a growing trade war between Canada and the United States, the federal government has announced they are considering pursuing a new free trade agreement with China. This will build on the *Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement*, or FIPA, that Prime Minister Harper signed in 2014. Yukon has experienced considerable economic benefits from Chinese investment, yet some Yukoners have expressed concerns about the FIPA.

Can the Premier please explain to the House his government's position when it comes to the Canada-China FIPA?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I really do appreciate the question from the member opposite. China is having a bigger and bigger important role as far as the fiscal matters in Yukon. We all know there are contributions for the mining industry, whether with Selwyn Chihong or other previous mining initiatives. But we want to take a look, not only just in the mining industry, but we want to actually diversify the economy as well in connections with our country partnerships with China when it comes to tourism.

As the members opposite would know, 2018 is going to be, in China, the year of Canada-China tourism. This emerging market of about 250 million millennials from China is one of the most sought-after markets in the entire world. We have only scratched the surface when it comes to attracting the tourism potential from that market. Just yesterday, I sat down with Madam Liu, from the Consulate-General of China. We had a fantastic conversation about all things involving Canada-China relations and how we specifically in Yukon — we want to make it past the number seven mark. Currently we're seventh as far as destinations for Chinese individuals coming into Canada for tourism endeavours and we want to work in partnership with our counterparts in China to make sure that we get a few rungs up that ladder, especially when it comes to aurora borealis viewing in the Yukon to stimulate winter and cusp-season tourism initiatives.

Mr. Kent: Watching the happenings in Ottawa, I have been very encouraged that, when it comes to the trade file, there is bipartisan cooperation between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party and we extend the offer to the Premier any expertise or experience we have on this side of the House with respect to Yukon's role to assist, whether it's for the United States, China or other trade agreements.

My final supplementary is for the Minister of Economic Development, wondering if he has spoken with his federal counterpart to explain what Yukon's interests are with regard to a potential Canada-China free trade agreement and what role the Yukon will play as these negotiations begin.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I know this question was for the Minister of Economic Development, but I just want to thank the member opposite for his commitment to work with us. I know the Member for Kluane has extensive knowledge when it comes to the Shawkwak file, as does the House Leader for the Official Opposition.

On that, we had some great conversations just yesterday with business interests from China. They want to take a look at our airports. They want to take a look at Whitehorse and they want to see it as a place to actually do more cargo transports from China into Canada. It turns out that our airport here is closer to some of the Chinese cities and also has better weather than Abbotsford or some areas down in BC.

Absolutely I really appreciate from the opposition their willingness to work with this government when it comes to international relations, and we will definitely take you up on your offer.

Question re: China-Yukon trade relations

Mr. Istchenko: As we know, it has been widely reported that exploratory free trade talks are underway this week as Canadians and Chinese officials visit one another's countries to discuss what a potential agreement might look like.

Mr. Speaker, when the Harper government negotiated the free trade agreement with Europe, they allowed and encouraged an unprecedented role for provinces and territories to have a seat at the table during those negotiations.

Has the Yukon government been formally offered a seat at the table for these free trade negotiations with China? If they haven't, has the Minister of Economic Development spoken to his federal counterpart to request a seat at the table to ensure that Yukon's interests are represented?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that probably the most successful meetings that we've had to date were during Yukon Days. That is when the Premier and I had an opportunity — we were invited to the embassy in Ottawa. The new ambassador was not in place, so it was the chargé d'affaires and so we met with him. We certainly had discussions at that point in time, just about the opportunities that are here in the Yukon.

As for the country-to-country negotiations, what I've had the opportunity to do is to keep in touch with the minister in charge of that. Certainly some topics I can share when we talk about softwood lumber. We're in a unique position here in the Yukon with an exemption, but certainly some of the other internal negotiations — it would be best to let these negotiations country-to-country lead before we have larger discussions here in the Legislature.

Mr. Istchenko: We know that these issues are evolving quickly, but there are serious implications for the Yukon relating to trade with China. Yukoners know that we're often an afterthought for the federal government, so we expect, of course, our territorial government to stand up for us and represent our interests — so that mining, tourism and the ICT sector are all significantly impacted by trade and investment agreements and will likely be the key aspects of this potential agreement with China.

When the federal minister calls the Minister of Economic Development back to ask what the Yukon's position is on these matters with respect to the trade deal with China, what will he tell him?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, we will tell him what we will tell every country. Yukon is open for business and we are looking forward to making sure that we increase the partnership on an international basis. Yesterday's conversation that we had with Madam Liu Fei was an eye-opener for me as far as all of the different initiatives that they want to push. We were embracing this new approach and we have made commitments every time — whether it is when the Minister of Economic Development or I, as Premier, or the Minister of Highways and Public Works heads down to Vancouver, we can visit with the office and talk more about some pretty exciting things going on right now. For example, there are some partnerships right now with China and

Air North. There are some exciting programs right now with getting some pilots trained up.

But there are some limitations right now that we need to discuss here in the Yukon. We are behind as far as the business nominee program. There are language requirements here that do not exist anywhere else in Canada. It is an antiquated approach and we need to change that. By changing the regulations and the rules that we currently have in place, we are going to make Yukon much more competitive right across Canada and also more competitive on the international stage.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the Premier for his answer. It is good to see the interest. The Yukon has had a mixed experience with foreign investment from Chinese state-owned enterprises. While foreign direct investment from SOEs offers a significant source of needed investment for our natural resources industry, investment also carries a risk. Will the Minister of Economic Development be advocating for the Yukon to be more open for investment from Chinese state-owned enterprises, or will he be advocating for less access to Chinese investment in our mining industry?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Kluane knows, absolutely it is a sensitive walk. We have had some scenarios before — part of my role as Minister of Economic Development is to take into consideration and defend the rights of Yukoners when it comes to these things. Certainly I don't want to see a scenario where there is an investment and then it leads to challenges for local corporations because of their relationships, lack of payment or things such as that.

I think there are some key areas that we can look at, and the risk portfolio associated with them is less. When I look at things such as tourism, as the Premier has talked to, I think it is a great place for us to start.

When it comes to resource development, we still live in a country where the market is in the private sector and there are going to be relationships that are built. Certainly, there is going to be foreign investment that comes in and there is a place for government and then there is a place where government has to stand back and let private business grow as it should. There are some interesting infrastructure projects that we will have discussions about in this Legislative Assembly and that will potentially have massive impact — good projects. Certainly the people who are coming to the table at the early stage are foreign investors. We are going to have to have those challenging discussions. I am looking forward to actually hearing some wisdom from across the floor — from their experience — to help me try to make those good decisions.

We are open to foreign investment, but we have to make sure that we respect the markets — the free markets — and that we make sure we don't inhibit the ability for this economy to grow, but certainly I don't want to see any Yukoners disrespected because of their business relationships.

Question re: Minimum wage

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, right now Yukon has the lowest minimum wage in the north at a whopping \$11.32 an hour. This is an easy question for the Premier. Does he believe someone earning \$11.32 an hour can survive in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'll talk first about the \$11.32 and maybe we'll tackle more of the member opposite's question in a moment. The Yukon has a program in place under minimum wage where we increase it each year by inflation. So this year we went from — I think it was — \$11.06 or \$11.07, and it has gone up as of April 1 to \$11.32. That keeps us in the fifth position across the country in the 13 jurisdictions. We also have a piece of policy where, if that ever drops down to the sixth position, we would then have a review here in the Legislature on minimum wage.

Currently that's not our intention. We are happy that the wage went up to \$11.32 this year. I will wait for the supplementaries to tackle the other parts of the member opposite's question.

Ms. White: In the last five years in Yukon, minimum wage has gone up by a dollar. The Nunavut minimum wage is at \$13 per hour; the Northwest Territories is at \$12.50. By next year Alberta, where they have substantially lower costs of living, it will be at \$15 an hour. It was not quite a year ago that the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition published a living wage report. A living wage is the amount someone working full-time needs to make to be just above the poverty line.

Through detailed research, the report showed that \$19.12 was a living wage for two parents, each working full-time, supporting two children in Whitehorse. This number is even higher in the communities. This leaves us with a gap of almost \$8 between the existing minimum wage and a living wage that removes someone just above the poverty line.

Does the minister responsible believe it is fair that people working full-time jobs in Yukon are living in poverty?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm not sure I'm going to be able to answer the question as it's posed by the member opposite directly. I don't wish for anyone to be living in poverty. I think that here, as members of this Legislature, we should work to assist all Yukoners to be able to have vibrant and sustainable lives. I don't know that I can give a direct answer the way the question is posed.

On the other hand, when I look cross-jurisdictionally to try to see where our minimum wage is against others, it is true that Nunavut has the highest minimum wage right now. Alberta, which is about to become the highest minimum wage, is currently in the third position across the country. On the other hand, we are in the top tier. We're just below Ontario. I don't know Ontario's rules but, by next year, I anticipate us moving ahead of Ontario.

So yes, there are costs to living here and we appreciate the concerns that are being raised. We're committed to a diverse growing economy that provides good jobs for Yukoners, and this government is committed to ensuring that there's a balanced approach for evaluating the minimum wage in the Yukon and that it takes into account the interest of both employers and their employees.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll make sure that I pass on those statistics for people in line at the Food Bank. People who work full-time jobs should not have to use the Food Bank to put food on their table but, with a minimum wage of \$11.32 an hour, many working Yukoners have no choice but to get assistance to meet their most basic needs.

This is hardly fair and I hope that the Premier and his ministers understand this.

There is good news, however, and that is they have the power to act. The minister doesn't like that people are living in poverty. He has the ability to change that. The minimum wage is more than a dollar higher in the other territories and comparing us to Nova Scotia doesn't make any sense. It will be \$15 an hour in Alberta no later than next year. It's time for action in Yukon.

Will this government follow the lead of the Alberta government and implement a \$15 an hour minimum wage?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: To answer the question directly, no, we are not intending to introduce a \$15 minimum wage and I'm trying to give a straight answer to a straight question.

To the earlier part of the question as to whether we care as ministers or individuals — absolutely, we care. I myself have volunteered on the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition for the past decade now — or maybe nine years, sorry — so I do care about this issue. I do think that we want to live in a society that provides for our citizens to have dignity and the ability to have a decent living. Although the members opposite feel that this number should be higher, it has just gone up and I would like to acknowledge that. I would like to acknowledge that it is not the lowest in the country and that we will continue to work on the issue for all of our citizens through many facets, not just through minimum wage.

Question re: Off-road vehicle use

Ms. White: The Premier will be familiar with this question because I've asked it every spring for the last four years.

In November 2013 the government passed amendments to the *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act* to allow the government to protect environmentally sensitive areas in shoulder seasons from ATV use. Citizens groups and government consultation have identified several endangered and sensitive areas, but so far no changes or protections have been implemented by government. With every passing year of inaction, we are allowing more damage to be done to Yukon's wilderness. This is not something we can repair overnight, if we can repair it at all.

Will the minister move immediately to protect identified sensitive areas during shoulder seasons from ATV use?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to thank the member opposite for her question. It's certainly not that easy to just put something in place and I will explain why.

First and foremost, this has been a hot topic. I know that for the previous minister, and certainly in this role that I'm in, it has always been a hot topic. It's a contentious topic, but the right things have to be done. First and foremost, we have had multiple meetings at the start of the mandate with the

concerned groups on this topic. They have done a tremendous amount of preparation and they have done good work on coming up with different strategies.

Part of our challenge is that we feel that we have to have a broader discussion to do this right. The reason we need to have a broader discussion is because there are different elements to this conversation — absolutely correct, there has been some enormous damage done. It continues to be done in the hinterland.

What we've done is that the Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources just last week met with the Council of Yukon First Nations land committee, because we feel that, if we're going to do this right, there has to be a broad approach.

We need to make sure that we're not usurping chapter 22 rights that are in place — First Nation rights — but at the same time, bringing everybody to the table to come up with a solution.

Ms. White: I can appreciate the minister is new to his job, but this issue is not new and it cannot continue to be put on the backburner. For the last four years, I have raised concerns about the increasing footprint of ATVs that permanently damage environmentally sensitive areas.

The fact is that the vast majority of ATV users are responsible and they care deeply about protecting our wilderness, but a few irresponsible users can cause lasting damages to our environment. The longer we wait — the longer we continue to wait, the worse the damage will be.

Mr. Speaker, will Yukoners have to wait for another spring to go by — another fall, another freeze-up — before protection is put in place for these environmentally sensitive areas that have already been identified?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Once again, we are taking a path where we have all the players at the table so that we can actually work through this to come up with an appropriate solution. You are correct. You are correct — it's a tough one. Nobody wants to come, hit the table, and dig, dig, dig into this, and certainly come up with a solution in the policy points.

There are a lot of things that are in place. Number one — there is no registration, first of all, so you're in a position where you would have certain sectors or areas that were closed off. Part of that would mean that you would want to impose some sort of restriction but yet you don't know who the people are who are driving through those areas are because they don't have even a plate on their vehicle.

Number two — if you sit down with a group that has probably worked the most on this, the first thing they're going to say is that if you have a particular area — not just a high-altitude area, but specific areas — we're then putting pressure on other specific areas.

I can tell you that if anybody's feet are to the fire, they are mine, because it just happens to be that every single person — except for one, I think, on the actual board that oversees this — is my constituent and has certainly talked to me over and over again about it.

On this topic, what we feel we want to do is get it right, and that is to work with the Council of Yukon First Nations

and their lands committee, we're going to work with EMR and we have to work with the outfitters — there are a series of groups — to come up with a solution.

Ms. White: I like that the minister has just opened the door to a conversation about the registration of ORVs because that is one I've also been having for the last number of years.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the department has laid the groundwork — and there is a pun intended there — to protect areas identified as being environmentally sensitive. They have worked really long and hard at this. They moved forward with the last five years of pressure from this side about protecting these areas. The department is aware and has studied the impacts of ATV use on these areas.

This government has also committed to developing a comprehensive ATV management plan for the whole territory, and in 2011 during the election campaign, they answered "yes" to TOYA's question about protection for sensitive areas in the Yukon and then again in 2016.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister take immediate action, because there can be interim protection — it doesn't have to be permanent — to protect environmentally sensitive areas this spring until the ATV management plan is in place for the entire Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, there is not a plan to make a rash decision and to put some pieces in place at this exact time. You need all the blocks in place to build the right program. First of all, we're in a situation where, once again, you and I have just discussed this.

We don't have a way to track the people who are actually going into these areas, so is there going to be a broader discussion about this in the Legislative Assembly? I'll leave that to the minister in charge, but certainly, if it does come forward, I'm sure we'll have a spirited conversation about it and maybe that's the right track to be talking about it. But, over and above that, let's get it right. This is about a conversation with a series of groups. We have not shied away from it. I've had discussions — the Minister of Environment sat with me on this. We've had great discussions with both groups, but it's a broader discussion. Do we take it seriously? Yes. Have I had the individuals who have championed this cause over and over again sit in my office and make a commitment to them that we're going to move on this? Absolutely. That's what we plan to do, but we're going to get it right and we're going to do it with all parties.

Question re: Canadian Free Trade Agreement

Mr. Hassard: Earlier this year, provinces and territories agreed to a new free trade agreement, which would replace the former *Agreement on Internal Trade*. This new agreement differs in scope from the former AIT by adopting what is referred to as a "negative list". This approach requires the federal government and the provinces to lift all trade barriers across all sectors unless specifically identified as an exemption.

Mr. Speaker, this agreement will come into force in July of this year, so is the Yukon government taking any action or making changes in accordance with this new agreement?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, it would be inappropriate to start answering these questions without thanking the members opposite. I said it in the media when we had the opportunity to sign this agreement. There was a tremendous amount of work done by the previous government. Essentially the agreement was signed off — the draft, or in spirit — during COF last year by the previous Premier here but there are members who aren't in the House today — Minister of Economic Development — who I have thanked — and actually the interim leader who was in that role as well.

The *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* — just to give an outline here — will benefit the economy by making it easier and more profitable for Yukon businesses to expand outside the territory. Through the agreement, Canadian governments will coordinate reducing red tape and opening new markets. Certainly, as we sign the agreement, we're taking a look at the exemptions that exist now and, yes, you're right that we have to apply this to how we look at tendering. Those are some of our challenges as we look at how we keep money in the Yukon appropriately and being respectful to the other jurisdictions in staying within the guidelines of the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*. Absolutely we're undertaking those analyses. This agreement guarantees Yukon businesses access to markets, investment opportunities and government tenders across Canada. I'm encouraged by that. I had a meeting the other day — I didn't know the extent of how much we're competing Outside, but certainly some of our construction companies are quite happy about this.

Mr. Hassard: I would like to thank the minister for that and, since he brought up procurement, I'll just keep going on that topic. As we know, the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* does relate to procurement. It provides better access to government procurement opportunities and reduces trade barriers so that companies can do business in other provinces and territories more easily.

Does this minister see opening up Yukon government procurement to greater competition from outside the territory as a positive development or a negative one?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Well certainly, Mr. Speaker, it's a sensitive subject. It's probably a sensitive conversation right now.

We have seen, over and over again, the largest contracts that this government has ever put out in history go to companies that are from outside the Yukon. We saw that with the rush planning on the Whistle Bend facility. The companies that came and talked to me in the private sector — and the word on the street as we watched what happened with Faro, a lot of — I know the Member for Lake Laberge talked yesterday about how procurement affects the feeding of families. I'll tell you, there are a lot of families who could have been fed over the last number of years with those contracts.

My focus is to make sure that as many Yukoners as possible are working — as many Yukon companies as possible are gaining opportunities within these exemptions, but appropriately. We're going to play by the rules. Partially, the other government created the framework for this. We had

the opportunity to come in near the end of it to look at a couple of different areas that needed some smoothing out, but this was a document — we talk about collaboration; this was certainly a forced relationship between both groups, you could say as well. I'm going to commend them for the work on it. Our focus is Yukon economy and Yukon companies.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One important trade issue that was not included in the CFTA was liquor. This means that breweries here in the territory, like Yukon Brewing, which sell their products in Alberta, for example, face unfair tax policies resulting from the Alberta NDP government's protectionism. Prior to October of 2015, breweries from outside of BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan were charged 20 cents per litre. Today they pay \$1.25.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, this makes it hard for a brewery from the Yukon to compete in Alberta. Has the minister called his counterpart in Alberta to raise this issue on behalf of Yukon's growing brewery industry? What action is he taking to resolve this issue?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you for that question. I think the previous government did some strong work on making sure that sector in the Yukon was supported. I know that was some of the work by the interim leader.

What has happened is that, during the discussions during the CFTA, it was an opportunity — I know you sat at that particular table. Within that caucus of economic development ministers from across the country, it was a focus. It's not just our jurisdiction that is not comfortable about this. It was highlighted nationally by media that this one particular area did not get solved.

I haven't called the minister from Alberta, but I have sat with him and chatted with him. The commitment that has been made is that we have a crossover now. The previous chair, Mr. Duguid from Ontario, has now stepped down. The new chair is Mr. Melanson. He's the Minister responsible for Trade Policy from New Brunswick. He is now calling the next meeting and it's the first topic there.

There are a lot of jurisdictions that are not happy, but I will reiterate — as I did when questioned about this by the media — that part of my work — and I have not done this, so I have to do it — is that we have a couple of different brewers and distillers here. Part of it is that I need to get some direction from them on how they want me to handle this question.

I know they have had challenges with these trade agreements previously, so I want to make sure that whatever I'm doing, I'm doing it with their direction, so I know how to best impact that part of the economy.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Prior to proceeding to Orders of the Day, the Chair will provide the House with a ruling on a point of order and a statement on a matter of procedure. Both the ruling and

the statement are in response to events that occurred yesterday during debate on Motion No. 6.

First to the point of order: During debate the Minister of Highways and Public Works proposed to "... fix the Leader of the Official Opposition's motion to more accurately reflect the new direction of the Yukon government from fast and loose to measured and considered."

The Official Opposition House Leader then rose on a point of order and said — and I quote: "I believe that he is using insulting language in a context likely to create disorder. I believe this type of language has been ruled out of order in the past and I would ask that you would rule on it now, or in future."

The Official Opposition House Leader is correct in that this phrase been ruled out of order in the past. For example, on March 13, 1996 a member used the expression — "... a government that plays fast and loose with laws". The following day, then-Speaker Devries identified that phrase as unparliamentary.

On November 8, 2010 one member accused another of — quote: "... playing very fast and loose with the facts and the financial position of the Yukon Territory." Speaker Staffen warned members against employing that kind of terminology.

In these cases, both Speaker Devries and Speaker Staffen determined that the phrase "fast and loose" was being used to suggest either that the government was violating the law or that an individual member may be deliberately misleading the House.

Having reviewed yesterday's Blues, the Chair concludes that the phrase was not used in that way yesterday. Consequently there is no point of order. However, the Chair would reiterate that context is key when it comes to unparliamentary language and the phrase "fast and loose" could be ruled out of order in the future.

The Chair thanks the Official Opposition House Leader for his point of order, which provided the Chair with the opportunity to bring this distinction to the attention of the House. The Chair would also like to thank the Government House Leader for her contribution on the point of order.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The Chair will also make a statement about relevance when debating an amendment. Yesterday, during debate on Motion No. 6, the Member for Watson Lake and the Member for Lake Laberge raised points of order regarding the relevance of remarks made by the Minister of Highways and Public Works on the minister's proposed amendment to the motion. The Deputy Speaker dealt with those matters, finding no point of order in either case.

There is no need at this time to revisit the Deputy Speaker's rulings; however, the Chair will, for the information of members, cite Standing Order 35, which says: "When taking part in a debate on an amendment to a motion: (a) the member moving an amendment has the right to speak both to the main question and the amendment in one speech; (b) a member, other than the mover, shall confine debate to the subject of the amendment."

Once an amendment is before the House, the focus of the debate should be on how the amendment does or does not improve the wording of the main motion. Focusing the debate in this way assists the House in making a decision on the merits of the amendment.

The Chair thanks the Member for Watson Lake and the Member for Lake Laberge for their submissions, and the Deputy Speaker for his rulings. The Chair would also like to thank all members for their attention at this time.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 201, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour today to rise and present our government's first budget. On behalf of my Cabinet colleagues and government members, we do so with great humility and gratitude. We do so with humility because we recognize that everything we achieve in government is enabled by the hard work and the resilience of Yukoners. It is an absolute privilege to serve them. Our government is grateful to voters for entrusting us with the profound responsibility of governing this wonderful territory and its diverse and vibrant communities.

We are determined to ensure strong, sound public finances for Yukoners. Sound finances cannot just look good on paper here in the Legislative Assembly. Sound finances enable progress out there in Yukoners' lives and in their communities. Coming into office, we understood that Yukon had a surplus budget, yet there was no surplus. There was in fact a deficit. In fact, this past fiscal year, our government needed to issue a special warrant for the last three months of that fiscal year. It provided additional budgetary authorization for up to \$29.4 million. This amount represented commitments by the last government not accounted for in the previous budget.

Mr. Speaker, today our government presents a 2017-18 budget that is clear and measured. We know that sound finances are not simply a government achievement to be trumpeted. They are a shared investment made possible by the contributions of Yukoners themselves.

Finance ministers often buy new shoes on budget day. In the spirit of government's commitment to authenticity and to hard work, I am here today in the Legislative Assembly in the type of shoes Yukoners wear every day — a pair that has been well-used. The shoes may be different, whether they are dress

shoes or work boots or even running shoes, but it is the act every day of lacing them up and getting out to work that provides the revenue to make public investments possible. Such hard work and commitment entitles Yukoners to budgets that are forthright and forthcoming.

Because we respect Yukoners, our budget is open and transparent. Because we need the ideas of Yukoners, our future budget process will include engagement. Because we believe in Yukoners, we will deliver a series of budgets that address their concerns and speak to their hopes for themselves and for the territory. Because government-to-government relationships with First Nations are Yukon's future, our budget will reflect the needs for collaboration with First Nation governments.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon faces several challenges that demand greater strategic thinking and financial accuracy in our budgeting. One challenge we are facing is that long-term revenue must align with long-term expenditures. In 2015-16, the fiscal plan was put at risk because the previous government based their plans on revenues that were too optimistic. Anticipated tax revenues had to be adjusted downward. In 2015-16, corporate tax revenues were lower than the previous government expected by \$19 million. Personal tax revenues were lower than the previous government expected by \$10 million.

On the expenditure side, as capital projects are greenlit, ongoing costs of operation and maintenance must be accounted for. As Yukon's public capital assets grow, operation and maintenance costs will increase. In the past, long-term plans have not fully accounted for this. This was the case with projects such as the Whistle Bend continuing care facility and the new French language high school.

Another challenge is infrastructure. There was a dual challenge here. Municipalities need new infrastructure because much of what they have is now aging. At the same time, they need to keep pace with the improvements in technology. They need infrastructure that is more efficient and environmentally friendly. We're not just replacing; we're modernizing.

Another challenge relates to demographics. Yukon will have more seniors in the future. In 2016, people who were 66 and older made up 10.3 percent of our population, but by 2030, it will be at 15.5 percent. We need to begin planning for the services we will need. Those seniors will want to live full and engaged lives.

Our challenges originate outside our borders. Mining and tourism are two of the largest economic strengths. These sectors are directly impacted by shifts in the global economy. Trade can be volatile. Technology is changing. Competition is increasing. We need to invest strategically to weather the occasional and inevitable economic turbulence.

Of course, the future is not just about the challenges that face us. Yukon is truly coming into its own. There are new opportunities for jobs and new growth. Our talented people are dreaming of, and acting on, new possibilities. Our budgeting and financial management need to create the right conditions for them to thrive. First Nation governments and

businesses are an emerging source of growth and prosperity. Modern treaties and self-government agreements have opened many economic development opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I've listed challenges; I've outlined sources of opportunities. There is difficult and important work ahead of us, but we know Yukoners are up for the task. People who shy away from doing hard things rarely find themselves living in the Yukon. Our people embrace challenge. They are drawn to opportunity. They have put down roots in the territory where growth and prosperity take real effort.

That effort is richly rewarded by a quality of life that no other place can match. Our government is determined to present a series of budgets over the next several years that will create an environment for Yukon's people and economy to thrive.

Planning that more prosperous future means reconsidering our current path. The reality is that Yukon's current path leads to further fiscal uncertainty. As Yukoners know, the longer you go down a path in the wrong direction, the harder the trip back will be. Better to stop, look around, get your bearings, determine the course — the correct course directions — and take stock of what you need and get headed in the right direction toward a new destination.

We need to make such an assessment ourselves together, as Yukoners. Yukon needs a real conversation about choices. This is why our government is establishing an expert financial advisory panel. The panel will be chaired by a Yukoner and it will include members with backgrounds in business, government and research. It will balance local knowledge with Outside expertise and experiences. It is not a political or a partisan exercise; this is about bringing in a new voice. It will be true dialogue.

The financial advisory panel will inform and provide Yukoners with facts, options and ideas. They will listen to and hear from a broad cross-section of Yukoners. The panel will engage with First Nations and municipal governments. It will hear from business, labour, environmental and social organizations.

Yukoners will have choices to contribute to this discussion. The panel will bring their work in, in June, to provide recommendations in October. That input will inform our government's 2018-19 budget and future budgets. We've allocated \$250,000 to cover the cost of the panel's work, including broad public engagement.

We will put Yukon's finances on a sustainable path together, through open and honest dialogue about our shared future.

Mr. Speaker, to make the right choices, we need accurate information. We need to fully understand the nature of our challenges. We need to be able to quantify measurable progress toward our goals. This is why we are improving the Yukon government's financial planning capacity.

For example, the government has been forecasting tax revenues based on a share of Canadian forecasts. We need Yukon-specific forecasts, Mr. Speaker, so we are making changes. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics and the Business and Economic Research branch have been moved to the

Department of Finance. This will help to create a consistent population and economic forecast so future budget forecasts will be Yukon-specific. They will contain more data, which will make them more accurate and evidence-based.

This will help avoid the need for significant adjustments, as we have seen in recent years. In fact, we are making the *Yukon Economic Outlook* available at the same time we table the budget. This is a first and it will become a standard. More than that, in future budgets, we will show how decisions were influenced by the *Yukon Economic Outlook*.

We will provide the “what” — the budget decisions. We will also give the “why” — the underlying realities that informed them. However, this is just a start. We are fully committed to evidence-based decisions. Evidence defines problems. Evidence shows progress. Evidence helps to understand what plans should be adapted because circumstances have changed.

Like any government, we have made commitments. We have made them in the belief that they’re “what” is needed. However, they must pass the test of evidence. If they do not, we need to adjust and we will own up to that. As Minister of Finance, I will accept that responsibility. To me, this is the ethical and the responsible choice as stewards of public funds. In government, you do what the evidence shows is right for the Yukon. You do not simply do what political expediency tells you is the right thing for your party.

Evidence is also crucial to reconciliation and partnerships with First Nation communities. Our new relationship is built on trust, on goodwill and on mutual understanding. Better information helps build a partnership based on truth. To do all of this, we need more capacity in government for gathering and for analyzing information. We will reorganize the Department of Finance’s lines of business and make an overall investment of \$1.96 million. We will modernize budgeting and reporting systems. We will create a program evaluation unit within the department as a part of this strategic investment.

To sum up, we need to move from a department of budgeting to a true Department of Finance, one that is making full use of the talents of our public servants. This evidence-based approach will be guided by our priorities. As outlined in the Speech from the Throne, these enduring priorities will be our people and their well-being, our healthy, vibrant communities, strong government-to-government relationships fostering reconciliation and cooperation with First Nations, and sustainable economic growth providing good jobs for Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, our budget will help create the conditions for making lives better for Yukoners by working with Yukoners. Our people and their well-being is truly the foundation of Yukon’s prosperity. We all know what our health and wellness means to each of us. It supports all we want to achieve in life. It’s the same for Yukon as a whole. We need everyone at their best to reach Yukon’s true potential. This is why many budget investments focus on health and wellness.

To support progress, we have had productive conversations with the Government of Canada. We reached an agreement on annual increases to the Canada health transfer payments. The increase will be three percent annually or the rate of nominal growth in gross domestic product, whichever is higher.

We’ve also negotiated another \$11.4 million over 10 years in funding to enhance mental health and home care. The agreement came into effect on April 1, 2017.

Mr. Speaker, health and wellness begin by helping young people to get a good start in life. Yukon is strong when our young people have hope and confidence. A healthy childhood and adolescence is the beginning of success in school, work and in life, so we are investing in resources and supports that help children and youth.

This year, our government is investing \$220,000 in additional funding for Yukon youth groups. This will fund drop-in centres, leadership training and after-school programs to help young people build confidence and self-esteem. It will support the Boys and Girls Club, the Heart of Riverdale community centre, Bringing Youth Towards Equality and the Youth of Today Society.

We are also investing \$60,000 in the Singletrack to Success program. This will expand the development of mountain bike trails by youth, so that young people working on the project build a sense of achievement and we will all have a world-class trail network to generate tourism and good health.

Our government is supporting an early childhood strategy to improve developmental outcomes. Additional federal funding will help increase the number of subsidized childcare spaces in rural Yukon. This also helps to improve school readiness.

To encourage physical activity, our government is investing \$2.5 million over two years in the track and field and recreation site at F.H. Collins School.

We also commit to working with Yukoners to reduce the impact of alcohol-related harms. This will include addressing fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, including enhanced supports for rural communities and for children with FASD. We will engage the commitment and expertise of organizations, such as the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of Yukon. This will also align with work being done under the Yukon government’s mental wellness strategy.

In addition, we will be developing and expanding online education and outreach including the Be a Responsible Server program and an age-verification system at our retail outlets.

Promoting health also means discouraging smoking, so we will increase the rate of tax on cigarettes and loose tobacco. It will rise from 21 cents per cigarette or gram to 25 cents on July 1, 2017. It will further rise to 30 cents on April 1, 2018.

Mr. Speaker, this budget enhances access to health care in a number of important ways. The *Canada-Yukon Agreement on French-Language Services* will provide almost \$14 million from 2017-18 through 2019-20. It will provide significant improvements in delivering French language in primary,

emergency and mental health care. For example, the government will study the feasibility of a bilingual primary health care clinic. We will also move forward on a bilingual staffing plan. This will allow our government to designate additional bilingual positions with a strong emphasis on health services.

Nurses provide the skilled, compassionate care that is the backbone of health care delivery. Many of our young people want to choose this vocation. This is now a little bit easier. The Yukon College practical nurse program will now take in a new class every 12 months instead of every 18 months.

We are also enhancing home care by investing \$771,000 to support care for complex patients in their homes as well as those in hospital awaiting a continuing care bed. We will provide funding of \$650,000 toward the purchase of four new ambulances. We will provide \$120,000 to enhance the Emergency Medical Services electronic patient care reporting system.

E-health holds great promise in providing caregivers with quick access to important clinical information on patients. It improves access to care and quality of care. Yet e-health comes with a duty to protect privacy. So our government will invest \$1.6 million to support e-health programs and services, as well as security enhancements.

Addiction can be one of the toughest struggles that a person can face. When Yukoners need help, we do not want them to face this struggle alone. We are investing \$160,000 in capital costs and \$1.49 million in operating costs to support 11 new full-time addictions and mental wellness workers in eight communities outside of Whitehorse. An additional \$1.46 million will support operation and maintenance at the newly opened Sarah Steele addiction treatment facility.

Land-based healing has also been shown to be valuable to many people. The pilot project at Jackson Lake has shown great potential. We are continuing our investment in this facility. Our government is also investing \$150,000 in beginning to plan a Yukon-wide land-based healing program.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the nature of work is changing. New technology impacts every industry. Jobs that exist today may not be among the jobs of tomorrow. At the same time, our children may do jobs we have not yet imagined. We do not know exactly what the future holds, but we know our young people will need to be ready to adapt. We are providing \$422,000 to put greater emphasis in education on skills and experiential learning.

We also know First Nation governments and corporations represent emerging economic drivers. Yukon's future leaders, entrepreneurs and workforce can benefit from exposure to First Nation culture and history. We will enrich education in these ways while maintaining academic standards and raising graduation rates. We also need to close the education gap for youth in Yukon First Nations.

Our government will continue developing a joint education action plan with \$451,000 in funding. There is a proverb that says, "When you fall down seven times, get up eight." When Yukoners experience a setback in work or in career, they get new skills and they find new opportunities.

To help them on this journey, our government is investing almost \$16.8 million in education and training. This will support student aid, literacy programs, skills retraining, and other ways that Yukoners can take positive steps forward. When you invest in Yukoners, there is no telling how far that investment might go.

This is because there is no limit to what our people can achieve.

Mr. Speaker, fostering reconciliation is a morally necessary exercise. We are better able to understand how actions in the past continue to impact First Nations today. We are better able to focus our sights squarely on the future. Reconciliation is an act of choice, one that takes real effort. We do more than imagine a better future — we commit to action. Building shared prosperity can only come through sustained effort. This is what we will do.

On January 13, 2017, Yukon took an important step toward its future. At the Yukon Forum, the declaration *Working Together* was signed. It was signed by all Yukon First Nation chiefs, the Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations and all members of Cabinet.

This intergovernmental declaration is a commitment to work together in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration. It confirms a commitment to a constructive relationship, one that contributes to and promotes good governance for all Yukoners. The declaration sets out the commitments to four Yukon Forum meetings each year. This will be a venue for frank discussions on issues in a respectful manner. We will learn about the positions and interests of others. We will achieve outcomes that will move the territory forward in a sustainable direction.

Senior officials will also meet to develop a joint five-year action plan. The plan will zero in on specific common priorities and lay out clear steps for their implementation. To build on the intergovernmental declaration, our government will transfer \$100,000 annually to help coordinate the Yukon Forum.

We are supporting the resolution of issues relating to transboundary First Nations and Yukon First Nations without final agreements. As part of this commitment to reconciliation, we are adding one additional permanent position to the Aboriginal Relations division. Creating this new senior consultation advisor position will have a cost of \$130,000.

Mr. Speaker, here in the Yukon and across Canada, we need to keep talking to each other about the legacy and pain and injustice experienced by indigenous people. There must be dialogue on the continuing issues faced by indigenous people as a result of that legacy. This is truth we must always confront.

In this budget, to support truth and reconciliation, one-time funding of \$150,000 will support three aboriginal women's organizations. They will complete work on recommendations from the 2016 Yukon Regional Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the second Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summit and contribute to the national inquiry in Yukon.

We will also support a two-year position with \$97,000 per year in funding to coordinate the Yukon government's participation in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The Yukon delegation that attended the national roundtable showed true leadership in advocating for a regional process. Our government is committed to support an inquiry process that reflects the Yukon experience and context. This initiative must lead to real progress in addressing the urgent issues of violence against indigenous women and girls. Reconciliation will be a continuing theme throughout our government's agenda.

For example, legislation to amend the *Employment Standards Act* to include June 21 as a statutory holiday has been prepared and is ready for introduction this spring. This will contribute toward reconciliation. The Government of Yukon will provide \$325,000 to support the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle to deliver traditional sport, development and leadership training in all communities. This will also help to train Team Yukon as they prepare to proudly represent us at the North American Indigenous Games this July.

Yukon's Wildland Fire Management works with First Nations to build capacity through contract fire crews. There are currently 11 First Nation contract crews in the Yukon helping to provide lives, property and community assets. To expand this important work, our government is investing \$149,000 for a 12th crew this summer, for the Kluane First Nation.

A seven-year agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon emergency measures organizations will formalize the delivery of services to White River First Nation, Ross River Dena Council and the Liard First Nation. To achieve this goal, \$1.6 million will be provided over seven years, including \$70,000 in 2017-18.

Mr. Speaker, First Nations have identified housing as a priority. Many communities struggle with overcrowding, overdue repairs and affordability. A good home is a place to rest, study and succeed in education. A good home enables a nutritious diet and contributes to good health. It provides the stability that enhances confidence and supports success in life. This is why our government is providing \$1.5 million for the First Nation housing program. It will support First Nation governments, development corporations and housing providers in making improvements. It will also provide rent supplements on newly constructed units.

Clean, reliable and affordable energy also supports community growth. Yukon communities want to get past the diesel era and enter the renewable era. To help, our government is providing \$1.5 million for the innovative renewable energy initiative. Supporting small, community-driven renewable energy projects is the best way of increasing the supply of sustainable energy in First Nation homes and communities. In doing so, it improves economic prospects and the quality of life, which in turn supports reconciliation.

To further the work of reconciliation, we will seek ways of preparing more public servants for engagement in government-to-government relations with First Nations.

A diverse and growing economy provides the means for Yukoners to build a high quality of life. We know that when Yukon businesses and workers have the right environment, they can compete and win. We know that Yukon's strong and entrepreneurial culture is among our best assets in seizing new opportunities in emerging sectors. To boost competitiveness, our government is taking the first steps to lower taxes. However, as I said earlier, our government is also committed to acting on evidence. In this budget, we deliver our promise to reduce the general corporate tax from 15 percent to 12 percent. In 2017-18, we are also reducing the corporate tax rate for small corporations from three percent to two percent. We will then evaluate the implications of this change before making further decreases. While we committed to a zero tax rate, we must ensure that this move is the best one toward achieving our overall goal of ensuring sound public finances.

Mr. Speaker, a strong economy is one that values everybody's contributions. We will provide one-time funding of \$60,000 to support the Yukon Human Rights Commission in researching equal pay for equal work.

Yukoners have worked hard to build a range of industries in the territory. We all know tourism is one of the most promising of those industries. People want travel experiences that are meaningful, that are authentic. They want to meet interesting people. They want to feel a connection to the natural world. They are fascinated by Yukon First Nation culture that stretches back millennia. They want stories to tell friends and family.

Yukon occupies a special place in people's imaginations and hearts. We offer year-round experiences from hiking under the midnight sun to experiencing winter under the northern lights. Last year, images of royal family members enjoying our outdoors were seen around the world. International media have featured Yukon travel. This is a time to build on our profile.

To reach new audiences, our government is prepared to invest \$500,000 in a digital development tool that will engage a global audience. It's a significant investment, but one that is needed because we are competing online for eyeballs, and Yukon has a wealth of engaging images and stories.

We want the wonder, awe and fun of being here to come across online. To help our businesses hone their pitch, our government is providing \$50,000 to look for ways to share more information online with Yukon tourism operators. We will invest \$200,000 this year as part of a two-year effort to conduct a comprehensive survey of visitors. This will help tourism businesses learn more about their customers so they can make more informed business decisions. We will also invest \$150,000 in a tourism strategy, one focused on measurable results.

To help share our heritage with the world, we are providing \$700,000 to the Yukon Arts Centre to host an arts summit. A \$50,000 investment will be provided to begin developing a broad-based arts and cultural policy to support

growth in this sector. We are also supporting the Carcross/Tagish First Nation's learning centre in creating a community gathering place. Our government will contribute \$145,000 to operational and activity funding related to the cultural component of this new facility.

Mr. Speaker, so much of the prosperity Yukon enjoys today has been supported by the strength of our resource industry. Resource development will be as important in our future as it has been in our past. However, we also know our industry must keep pace with changing technology and changing expectations around mining activities. We are adding \$830,000 in a one-time funding this year to the Yukon mineral exploration program, bringing the total investment to \$1.6 million. It helps prospectors and exploration companies with early-stage work, which usually leverages additional funding from the market.

For every dollar invested by government, over three dollars in private sector investment has been leveraged in the same year. A number of significant mineral discoveries have been made. In addition to the three existing program modules for mineral exploration, this year the government is considering a new module specifically for placer exploration.

It is also worth noting that our government approved an amendment to the Minto Explorations Ltd. mining plan and issued an amended quartz mining licence on December 13, 2016. The amendment means the company can begin work on its new open pit at the Minto mine near Pelly Crossing. The new pit should allow the mine to continue operating through 2017.

The government will continue working with the Yukon Mining Alliance to attract investment dollars into Yukon's socially and environmentally responsible mining sector. One of Yukon's strongest value propositions in mining will be the full engagement of First Nation governments and corporations in advancing projects that reflect community priorities.

To support this advantage, we will continue to support implementation of the Government of Yukon and self-governing Yukon First Nations memorandum of understanding, which was signed at the Mineral Exploration Roundup in Vancouver in January.

While mining has contributed to the prosperity and the quality of life that we enjoy today, future prosperity will be further enhanced by a diverse economy. Our government has made a commitment to develop a fund for promoting economic diversification and innovation in Yukon. This year we will be completing the groundwork needed to successfully launch this new initiative.

To stimulate the development of economic opportunities in Yukon communities, the regional economic development fund's budget will be doubled from \$405,000 to \$800,000. To support the growth of local brewers and distillers, the Yukon Liquor Corporation will review its pricing policies to ensure that there is the right balance between profitability and supporting local producers.

Let me say here that our government appreciates the advocacy and contributions of business groups and other non-government organizations. Yukon businesses compete with

each other, but they also know that Yukon competes with the world, so they value collective action that supports the growth that benefits all of our businesses. We are committed to listening and leveraging their knowledge.

In the spirit of listening, we have heard from Yukon's burgeoning media industry. We heard the Yukon film production fund and the Yukon film development fund had not kept pace with matching federal funding programs. Specifically, these two programs did not allow for the funding of digital media elements. Federal programs require digital media elements, so we have fixed this to allow Yukon media producers to take advantage of innovations and technological changes, while providing them with enhanced access to national funding sources.

We need to make it simpler and easier to do business with the government. We need to reduce red tape in registering with government. We will invest \$100,000 in the case management system of the Employment Standards and Residential Tenancies functions. This will improve customer service and it will reduce red tape. We are also addressing the need to reduce red tape in the professional regulatory licensing system with an investment of \$90,000.

The Government of Yukon recently launched phase 1 of the Yukon corporate online registry. Our government will continue implementing this multi-stage project. This suite of new e-services will reduce red tape for Yukon businesses and organizations and will make it easier to interact with the Government of Yukon.

When the Yukon government spends, Yukon businesses should be benefiting as much as possible. At the same time, governments must get the best possible value for public investment. Improving government procurement systems and services help to achieve both. We are investing \$150,000 to continue modernization of procurement.

In the land title regime, Yukon is breaking new ground. This year we will be contracting for services to develop a new system for the Land Titles Office. Among other benefits, it will support First Nations in seeking market financing of settlement land. It is believed to be the first initiative of its kind in the world for a land titles system. It will also support housing availability by allowing the Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations and municipalities to create condominiums on leasehold title.

Yukon's infrastructure needs to be renewed. Every day we benefit from the foresight and vision of previous generations. They built roads, highways and community infrastructure that transformed life in Yukon. They were ambitious and determined to create the Yukon of their dreams. Today, our generation is called upon to do the same.

Yukon infrastructure must be renewed and it must be transformational. It must serve growth in our communities and economy. It must address inequality by connecting people to opportunity and by improving their quality of life. We will plan carefully and strategically. We will make investments that consider multiple generations. We will do this through a five-year capital plan for infrastructure.

This year, to support the movement of people and goods, we are investing \$15.25 million for bridge repairs. This budget invests \$33.4 million for highway maintenance and repairs. The budget also continues to support the restoration of critical highways.

Infrastructure for the future also means investing in institutions of learning. We will support the ongoing transition for Yukon College to provide university education.

We will also provide \$8 million this year for the continued development of a new French language high school. We will invest over \$11 million in the maintenance of government buildings, including schools — work that will include radon remediation.

Mr. Speaker, just as the economy relies on the movement of goods, the new economy relies on the free flow of ideas and information. Connectivity is a gateway to global opportunities in learning and commerce. We also need to make it easier for Yukoners to connect with government services. Our government will continue supporting the fibre diversity project to ensure more reliable and consistent connectivity.

We have also heard from businesses and other shareholders that they can benefit from more access to government information. Government, in its operations, collects a lot of data, a lot of information. Inside of government we do not always see the full value of that data. Businesses and other organizations often see innovative ways that data can be leveraged to benefit the economy or to help citizens. For example, as I said, we are already putting more tourism information online so businesses can use it. We are in the early stages of planning for open data. This year we will invest \$100,000 on developing an open data repository.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are very proud of their territory. We work in common purpose together. We are also deeply connected to our communities. That is why our government has also committed to healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities. More people are recognizing that Yukon communities offer a wonderful quality of life. People growing up in the Yukon want to create households of their own and build a life in the place they love.

To support that dream, our government will ensure land is developed. This year, we will invest \$9.8 million to develop new lots in Whistle Bend. A total of 79 new lots will be ready for sale for the public in the fall of 2017. Work is underway on Whistle Bend phase 4 design, which will provide 170 lots.

We are investing \$14.3 million in 2017-18 to build surface works and underground utilities this summer. To support the growth of smaller communities, \$30 million will be invested across the territory under the Government of Canada's small communities fund and the clean water and waste-water fund.

This will support over 30 projects, including a solid-waste investment in Haines Junction, Mayo reservoir upgrades, a Watson Lake wet well and lift station, Old Crow lagoon upgrades, and a Faro pump station — just to name a handful. This budget invests \$660,000 to plan for the replacement of

three group homes in Whitehorse so residents can fulfill their vital services to people in need.

We will invest \$553,000 to support the Salvation Army Centre of Hope to fund 25 shelter beds and 20 transitional living units. To support the building of affordable rental units, we are also investing \$1 million in the municipal matching rental construction program. Our government has also provided Habitat for Humanity with \$500,000 in support for a new multi-family affordable ownership project in Whitehorse.

Our government is investing \$200,000 in energy retrofit projects. This will help plan, design and implement energy retrofit projects in Yukon government buildings. In doing so, we reduce operational costs, increase local economic benefits and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To improve air connection in Dawson, our government will invest \$250,000 to Dawson City Airport planning. Again, we are taking the time to do it right. We are seeking the best information to make the best decisions so that we meet the goals of Dawson residents. The airport is a vital connection. We need to make sure investments meet community needs today and into the future.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are proud Canadians. They are excited to be celebrating the 150th anniversary of Confederation. This budget provides \$300,000 in funding for celebratory activities, including for Music Yukon, and Canada Scene signature events. We are also investing \$130,000 in developing a heritage management plan for historic sites in Yukon First Nation final agreements.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, budgets are not only a product of the government. They also are a reflection of the people — of their hopes, their concerns, challenges and opportunities. Yukoners are hopeful about the future of our territory. They are realistic dreamers. They chose dreams that take work. If you walk down any street in our territory or you visit any river or lake, there's a story. These stories are about previous generations that transformed the Yukon — stories that shape our present day. Well, there is history happening in Yukon today. We are shaping a future. Decisions we make now will reverberate in decades to come. This is why our government will focus relentlessly on making decisions that are credible and stand up to scrutiny because we know that they will be tested by time.

Evidence-based decisions — it sounds technical, it sounds dry and it seems detached, but our government sees it differently. We see it as the most hopeful way of governing. It's not blind hope. It's a confidence that Yukoners can confront their real challenges — that we have come of age. It speaks to a belief that we can solve any problem we see — that we can accomplish and achieve any goal that we set.

Yukon is already leading the way on reconciliation and partnership with First Nations. There is no place in the world like the Yukon so there is no lead we have to follow. This budget supports the commitments and hard work that Yukoners are willing to put in. It is the first budget in a series that will build a brighter future in the territory. Work has already begun. We're only just getting started. Real change is coming.

Let me assure Yukoners that they will see the evidence that it's happening. They will be part of the transformation. We're stepping boldly toward Yukon's future. We're doing so with confidence and we're doing so together.

Motion to adjourn debate

Mr. Hassard: 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. 201 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 3:00 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 6

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, May 1, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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| Clerk of the Assembly | Floyd McCormick |
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| Sergeant-at-Arms | Doris McLean |
| Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms | Karina Watson |
| Hansard Administrator | Deana Lemke |

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, May 1, 2017 — 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. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month. I rise today to pay tribute to everyone who works to eradicate sexualized violence and to those who educate the public about violence and sexualized assault.

Sexualized assault affects all of us, and all of us have a role to play to ensure that our streets, homes, communities and territory are safe places for everyone. The reality is that one in four Canadian women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime and that this number is three to four times higher for indigenous women. We also know that the territories continue to have higher rates of violence than provinces and that young women are much more often the target of sexualized violence. Immigrant women, women with a disability, and those who identify as trans or non-binary are also more likely to experience sexualized assault.

These statistics tell us how broad the impact is, but they tell us nothing about what this personal violation feels like, how it shapes women's lives and how the fear of violence and concern for safety impact all women in all communities. We can and must do better in learning from victims, in listening to their experiences and in responding to and supporting victims to make choices that help their own healing. We are fortunate in Yukon to have several 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 to further the conversation around sexualized violence and supporting victims. The theme of their campaign this year is: "Flip the script" on social norms that encourage violence. Please take a look at their website at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre or you can find them on Facebook to learn more about this theme and these events.

We are fortunate that it not just during Sexual Assault Prevention Month that these groups are hard at work. They work throughout the entire year. With summer approaching, the consent crew will once again be out at Yukon festivals and events. This fantastic group of volunteers has buttons, signs, stickers and information about consent and sexual assault. The consent crew is operated as a joint project between the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and Les EssentiElles. The goal is to share the message that sexual assault is never

acceptable and to ensure that people know the difference between non-consensual sex and sexual assault.

Through the continued hard work of the community partners, I know that we are making a difference in the lives of women and girls throughout the territory.

The Women's Directorate is working with Justice and Health and Social Services to support our government's commitment to improve services to victims of violence and sexualized assault in Yukon. We are taking a victim-centred approach to addressing sexualized violence, putting victims' needs and choices first, whether or not they choose to report and to whom. We know that the reporting rates are still low, especially for sexual assault. Recent media reports, including *The Globe and Mail* investigation on unfounded rates of police-reported sexualized violence, and high-profile cases, have highlighted the challenges victims face in our systems.

It is our responsibility, as a society, to change the way we treat victims of sexual assault. The goal is to improve social response to victims at all levels, whether that is within the justice system and social services, or within our own communities, so the victims feel believed, honoured and supported.

We are all aware of the upcoming work of the commission for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and their mandate to investigate the systemic causes of the increased rates of violence experienced by indigenous women, including sexualized violence.

We know how important the national inquiry is to our territory, and our government is committed to ensuring Yukon plays an effective role in the inquiry and to increasing our government's efforts to improve community safety and reduce violence against indigenous women and girls.

The Women's Directorate, along with First Nations and community partners, will continue working together to address violence against indigenous women and girls. The safety of Yukoners is a top priority for our government. Equality cannot be realized in the absence of safety. Through our violence prevention measures, support for community partners and more inclusive and equitable policy and programming, we hope to make change in achieving both.

I hope that not just this month but every day we can work together to change any aspect of our culture or community that tolerates or turns a blind eye to sexualized violence and to reach out to support the choices and needs of victims.

I would like to introduce Alex Hill — she is a staff member from the Women's Directorate — to thank her for all of her hard work and all of the people who work within our systems, organizations, governments and First Nation governments for the hard work that they do each and every day to reduce violence in our communities.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to those among us who have been victims of some sort of sexualized violence in their lives

and to lend our voice to the campaign to bring public awareness to violence and sexualized assault in our territory.

May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Canada. Across our country, people are raising awareness about the prevalence of sexual violence and assault and offering dialogue and tools aimed at eliminating it.

I would like to share a key slogan I came across as a theme for this month, and that is: “No one asks for it”. This is important for every member of our community to remember. If you or someone you know is a victim, know that the fault lies with the perpetrator. Victim-blaming is a common occurrence. It leads to further problems in our society and is a common factor to the surprisingly low reporting rates of sexual violence worldwide.

One in three or four Canadian women will experience sexualized assault at some point in her life. According to Statistics Canada and a report on trends in sexual offence, only one in 10 incidents of sexualized assault are reported to police.

The rate of sexual offences against women is 3.5 times higher in Yukon than in provincial data across Canada. Sexualized assault is one of the most common violent occurrences against women in our country and also one of the most under-reported. Sexualized violence and assault is the focus of attention and campaigns once a year, but it’s important for people to remember that thinking about prevention and education should be a focus in all communities, schools, workplaces and homes year-round. We can work together as a community to promote bystander intervention as a strategy for prevention of various types of violence, including bullying, sexual harassment, sexual assault and domestic violence. We can adapt our behaviour and learn when to mind our business, when to pay attention and when to take a stand against something that is just not right.

It’s time for our community to stand up against the social norms of silence and turning a blind eye to inappropriate behaviours — to watch out for one another and speak up when something is not right. Teach your children to tell a trusted adult when they see or experience inappropriate behaviours from others. Teach your older children to be aware in social settings — to watch out for their friends and to ask that they do the same in return. Educating our children to use their voices will result in them growing up to be adults who speak out against wrong and bring true realization to the concept of bystander intervention.

I would like to urge the men and women in our community to report incidents of sexual violence and assault. To break the silence is to potentially save someone else from facing a similar situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus 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.

Earlier this year, after a 20-month investigation, *The Globe and Mail* released a series of articles about the reporting of sexual assaults in Canada. Their research revealed that one of every five sexual assault allegations in Canada is dismissed as baseless and thus unfounded. In the policing world, there are many ways to shut a case without laying a charge. There’s a code if there isn’t enough evidence, a code if the complainant doesn’t want to proceed, but to close a case as unfounded means that a crime was neither attempted nor occurred. It’s a classification that renders an allegation as baseless, yet leaves the victim voiceless.

I highlight this investigation and recommend that you read the articles because I believe that it will help us answer the question: Why don’t women report rape? It’s important to note that the RCMP and other policing agencies in Canada have made commitments to tackle this systemic problem. It’s also important to note that they won’t be doing this work alone because women’s organizations will be beside them the entire way.

Last May, I found a poem written by a Nova Scotia teenager, Kayley Dixon, who was 14 at the time of writing. It’s hard to understand that women both young and old are still living this reality. Her poem is called “A touch of sexual assault”:

From the age of 12, we were told that if boys pulled our hair, or poked us with pencils, it meant that they liked us. But we didn’t like it that much.

We were 13 years old when we would walk down the street and had men look from our feet to our face, and we listened as they completely replaced our identity from “human” to “object”. As they said cringe-worthy things to us, we wanted to run. We were frozen in place, but continued walking fast-pace, turning on whatever sidewalk was closest just to get away — even if it didn’t lead us in the way that we were originally going. Because Momma always said, “If you see a strange man following you, you go to the other side of the street, and remember, if they ever grab you, scream.” And this is something we had to learn at the age of 13 because we are just young fiends.

We were spanked by the boys at our school, but it was cool because it just meant we had nice bodies. And they rated our bodies on a scale from one to 10. And if you were a 10, you would learn to spend your days hearing whistles, purring, and “damn girl” because if you were a “damn girl” then that meant you weren’t a “damn girl” at all, you were just a toy labeled “Do whatever you want to me, even though I don’t agree”.

And we had to watch what we wore because if too much shoulder was showing, we had to change our clothing because it distracted the boys from their learning. So the only thing we were learning were tips and tricks to tie our shirt up so that it didn’t hang too low, because that would show the guys that we want it because wearing shorts and tank tops meant we were flaunting it.

So when we were 16, we screamed because the men that followed us on sidewalks finally caught up to us. We quietly said, "Please don't touch us there. We know we're asking for it by wearing these heels, but we just feel so uncomfortable, so stop." But that meant go. We said no, but that meant yes, so they grabbed us, and unzipped our dress. They threw us down, where our dignity sank lower than the ground. They hovered over us, and we pleaded for them to stop. They got on top and you don't need to know the rest, because we are some of the 68 percent of victims that will never tell a soul. So we'll just grab our dresses and go home, take a few showers, and try to get some sleep.

In the morning, we will pick out the outfit that is the most discreet, because we want to make sure no other man from the street thinks we look sweet enough to want a taste. We want to make sure that we are as covered as possible so that our identities are not replaced with "walking candy".

And we will sit at the back of the class, where nobody will ask how our weekend was because if they asked we may just burst into tears. And we will live in fear. We will run home so that we never see the same men again that wait for us to be alone.

We went from little boys poking us to men provoking us. We went from little boys pulling our ponytails to watching the trail of tears fall down our pillow every night because we knew once we fell asleep, we would see the men in our dreams — no, sorry — nightmares that caught up to us on the sidewalk that night and left us bare. We went from playing with our toys to being toys ourselves. So boys will be boys, and us women will never tell.

In recognition of Yukon Territorial Skills Competition

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Yukon government to pay tribute to the participants at this year's Yukon Territorial Skills Competition. Last week, competitors from across the Yukon demonstrated their skills in trades and technology at the Yukon Territorial Skills Competition. Over 40 of our high school students showcased their mastery of complex skills in events such as carpentry, electrical, mechanics, hairstyling, baking and welding. The competition showcased the knowledge and craftsmanship demanded by skilled trades and technology.

I'm told that the largest crowd ever also were spectators. Approximately 800 people saw the complexity of building a cabinet and wiring an electrical circuit. Throughout the day there were a number of demonstrations.

Whether it was putting the finishing touches on a delicious cupcake or filing down the edges of a finished weld, these participants took pride in every detail.

I was very pleased and lucky to attend the awards banquet last Friday night, as was the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. It was rewarding — very much so — to see the

students' pride in being recognized for their work and how proud the mentors were of their protégés.

An important part of what makes this event so exciting is the wide participation of volunteers, mentors, judges, staff, organizers and helpers. They're all committed to the event and to supporting trades and technology here in the Yukon and beyond.

Those who work in skilled trades are a key asset to our communities and to our economy. They are responsible for the infrastructure and services that improve the quality of life for all of us every day. They work on housing, power, water, roads, communications, vehicle repairs, esthetics and cooking, and they are experts in all of those fields.

On behalf of the Government of Yukon, I would like to thank the organizations that worked very hard to promote the trades, technology and innovation in the territory, including Skills Canada Yukon, Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, Employment and Social Development Canada and Service Canada, our Advanced Education staff and Yukon College, and Yukon employers and the Apprentice Advisory Board.

Yukon's apprenticeship program has been successful thanks to the collaboration between education, industry and community partners to train the tradespeople that Yukon needs. During this year's Territorial Skills Competition, we were given a glimpse into the bright minds of our trades helping to build Yukon's future, guided and supported by our expert leaders.

Thank you to Skills Canada for organizing and hosting this competition, and congratulations to all of the participants. Some of these students will move on as part of Team Yukon to the Skills Canada National Competition in Winnipeg, which will be held from May 31 to June 3. On behalf of the Yukon government, I wish them all the best and I know that we will be very well represented.

Before I close, I would like to note in the gallery today Tracy Erman, executive director of Skills Canada Yukon and Ryan Cumming, a board member. Thank you for being here.

Applause

Ms. White: It's with great pleasure that I rise and congratulate Skills Canada Yukon on the absolutely fantastic competition last week. It has changed a lot from when I participated because now, in one venue, there are multiple skills and it's really something fantastic to see.

Not only did you have 54 competitors from both secondary and post-secondary education, there were 14 categories, and the real accomplishment is the over 800 students who were able to attend the event — so that is really opening up the trades.

It's important to note that events like this don't happen easily. If it weren't for the tradespeople who volunteer their time and people who volunteer their time for the board, and then the organizers, this would never happen.

Trades recognition across the country is changing and it's in large part due to organizations like Skills Canada Yukon and their dedicated staff and volunteers. Yukon has a large

contingent that will be going to the national competition in Winnipeg, and I don't even think I have to wish them well, because I know they will do really well.

It is really important to mention here while we have both Tracy and Ryan in the gallery that the culinary program at Yukon College has changed in large part and has become a lot more relevant to the industry because of the work that Ryan has been doing. It has gone from a program where retirees used to take it so they could cook better meals at home to being one where people are actually going into it and then they are going into cooking as a trade. We get to see them doing events. They do a lot of catering here in the building. It has been a huge change that makes it really relevant. Thank you very much for that.

Tracy, the event was flawless. It was fantastic. Although I was only at the venue for a short amount of time on Thursday because we had some stuff to do here, what I got to see at the awards banquet and the pride of ownership for the participants was really fantastic. Thank you so much. I will look forward to next year. It can only get better — trades can only grow. We look forward to that in the territory.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Hassard: I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming the president of TechYukon here today, Mr. Rick Steele.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like everyone to join me in welcoming Chief Superintendent Scott Sheppard of M Division of the RCMP here in the territory. With him is Constable Carol Locke. She is with the specialized response unit. Thank you.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming Connor Whitehouse back to the gallery today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling responses to Written Questions No. 4 and No. 13.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the responses to Written Questions No. 9 and No. 10.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling responses to Written Questions No. 6 and No. 8.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling responses to Written Questions No. 2, No. 3, No. 11 and No. 12.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a response to Written Question No. 5.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling responses to Written Questions No. 1 and No. 7.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to research, develop and implement a Yukon early childhood strategy (childcare, development and education) in consultation with early childhood education and health care professionals, parents and First Nation governments in order to improve developmental and educational outcomes.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support Yukon public servants by:

(1) providing political direction, then respecting the work of public servants, while holding them accountable for the delivery of programs and services to Yukoners;

(2) generating more opportunities to public servants to build capacity through professional development (internally and externally); and

(3) reviewing hiring/promotion processes to ensure that they are open and transparent.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure officials with the Yukon Development Corporation, Yukon Energy Corporation, Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to appear in Committee of the Whole to answer questions annually.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to live up to its election promise to allocate \$30 million per year to implement an energy retrofit program for residential, government and commercial buildings.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to live up to its election promise, which stated: "Effective July 1, 2017 the small business corporate tax rate will be eliminated under a Yukon Liberal government".

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make the Financial Advisory Panel's final report, as presented by the panel and unedited by the government, public by the end of the calendar year.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue the work with small business owners and the Financial Advisory Panel to reduce small business taxes.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to create solutions to promote aging in place in a full spectrum of care by:

(1) keeping the Whistle Bend continuing care development to 150 beds;

(2) working with Yukoners, health professionals and stakeholders to find solutions that offer alternatives and transitions between home care and full-time continuing care; and

(3) providing community-based services which allow seniors to age in place to the greatest extent possible.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to include operation and maintenance costs for new facilities, such as the continuing care building in Whistle Bend, in budget forecasts.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support, either financially or through the provision of land, the Vimy Heritage Housing Society's proposal for a supported independent housing facility in Whitehorse.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to promote reconciliation by:

(1) working with Yukon First Nation governments to address the legacy of residential schools by closing the gaps in service delivery and creating a culturally relevant and responsive justice and corrective system;

(2) advocating for the establishment of National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday;

(3) working with Yukon First Nations to identify how the Yukon government can implement its responsibility stemming from the calls to action of the commission; and

(4) implementing training programs for Yukon government employees on the legacy and impact of residential schools.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide funding for land-based healing programs, for the benefit of all Yukon communities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Government of Canada to legalize cannabis use by summer 2018.

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

THAT this House urges the government to:

(1) acknowledge that it has been 10 years since school spring break was extended to two weeks to accommodate for the Canada Winter Games;

(2) acknowledge that a two-week spring break is an economic burden for many Yukon families; and

(3) consult with parents, school councils and the Yukon Teachers' Association on reducing the two weeks before planning the school calendar for 2018-19 onwards.

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

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the Yukon Hospital Corporation's budget request to the Yukon government for the 2017-18 fiscal year with a detailed breakdown of cost pressures the Hospital Corporation is facing, including but not limited to the following:

(1) increased cost of chemotherapy drugs and increased number of chemotherapy patients;

(2) increased volume of patients and services required at the medical imaging and lab departments of Whitehorse General Hospital;

(3) increased costs due to higher staffing requirements resulting from the emergency room expansion of Whitehorse General Hospital;

(4) increased staffing costs resulting from Whitehorse General Hospital operating at close to 100-percent bed occupancy rather than its 75-percent bed occupancy, which is what their funding is based on;

(5) increased costs to meet the needs of patients at the Watson Lake hospital; and

(6) increased costs to meet the needs of patients at the Dawson hospital.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon emergency response to earthquake

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, this morning, many Yukoners awoke to an earthquake. According to Natural

Resources Canada's earthquake monitoring site, the first quake hit at 5:31 a.m. and was a magnitude of 6.2. The second quake occurred at 7:18 a.m. and was a magnitude of 6.4. The epicentre of the quakes was near the Haines Road, about 20 kilometres south of the Yukon/BC border in British Columbia. There were also several aftershocks.

Our emergency crews responded immediately, and thanks go out to them for their swift and coordinated response. The Emergency Measures Organization emergency coordination centre was initiated. They went to level 2 of preparedness, which indicates a moderate-level event and one where we brought in some of the other departments to address the situation on the ground.

In particular, we brought in the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Education. Other departments were put on call. With respect to our schools, there were some temporary closures, including at Elijah Smith, Ross River, and Whitehorse Elementary. Structural engineers have inspected these schools for safety. Whitehorse Elementary has now been reopened.

With respect to highways, engineers and geoscientists have overflowed the major roads. Initial reports are that there is no serious visible damage to our highways. This inspection work will continue, including inspections of all bridges. Public safety remains our paramount concern.

Power went out in parts of Whitehorse and surrounding communities from Lake Laberge to Southern Lakes. We contacted Yukon Energy and ATCO right away and they began the work to restore power and inspect their infrastructure. The Emergency Measures Organization is coordinating efforts to ensure public safety for all critical infrastructure. Highways and Public Works have done a first assessment and have found that there appears to be no damage other than issues at Blanchard highway camp. Yukon Highways and Public Works will be doing an aerial survey with Energy, Mines and Resources' Yukon Geological Survey to assess any changes along the south Klondike and Haines roads.

The Emergency Measures Organization has been in contact with the Alaskan duty officer and is assessing cross-border effects. At present, there are no reports of damage or injury from Skagway or Haines, Alaska. They are continuing an assessment of critical infrastructure.

With respect to emergency preparedness, the timing of this morning's earthquake falls one week ahead of Emergency Preparedness Week. This morning, I asked staff to distribute our latest preparing-for-emergencies guide to all MLAs. This guide is being mailed out this week to all Yukoners and will be available in government offices and community halls.

We ask all Yukoners to please be prepared to take care of ourselves and our families for at least 72 hours in case of an emergency like today.

Hazards in the Yukon include earthquakes, floods and wildfires. We can experience power outages, communication failures and highway closures. This guide helps us all to assess the risks and to take steps to protect our property and our lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition in response to the ministerial statement. First of all, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Emergency Measures Organization and staff from departments including Community Services, Highways and Public Works, Department of Education and any others that were involved that I may have missed. Thank you as well for your work.

I would also like to thank the staff of both Yukon Energy Corporation and ATCO for their work in restoring power early this morning to areas that were affected.

I conclude by echoing the minister's comments, encouraging Yukoners to evaluate their own emergency preparedness, to recognize the national recommendations on being prepared to last 72 hours on your own through an emergency preparedness kit, and to give serious consideration to things like home heating should an event happen in the winter. If someone has a source of energy that is dependent on electricity, they may wish to give consideration to that, as well as the basic supplies such as food, water and the other items listed in the emergency preparedness guide, which the minister handed out and I believe can be found online at prepared yukon.ca.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party caucus, I would like to thank the Minister of Community Services for his comments this afternoon and on the radio this morning.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the earthquakes this morning certainly did more than jolt most of us awake. It rekindled the importance of Yukon as a community — of having the need for the information and to be able to communicate, not just what happens but who does what when a disaster strikes.

We appreciate the importance of updating the individual and family guide for emergency preparedness. However, Mr. Speaker, as much as we all appreciate that we do have responsibilities as individuals to be prepared, the truth is, in a disaster, it is not enough to base our plans on the idea that just the strongest and the most able among us survive. For example, what about Yukoners with mobility issues or people without vehicles? How and what are we communicating to them? Or in the event the Campbell bridge closes in Whitehorse, how do Riverdale residents know where to go? This information should be readily available — not when the disaster strikes, but in advance to all citizens. Many communities throughout North America — throughout the world — post evacuation routes. We're all familiar with the tsunami evacuation routes in Skagway. But what are the routes in Whitehorse and Yukon communities? What and where are the muster points?

Many Whitehorse residents will remember how 9/11 affected them or their families. That chaos need never be repeated. We look forward to hearing from the minister details on how this government is taking steps to promote information on community evacuation procedures so that in a worst-case scenario, Yukoners can reach safety quickly.

Yukoners simply want to know that the government has evacuation plans — not just one for Whitehorse, but throughout the communities — what those plans are and how to get government updates during an emergency.

We all know that we should have three days' worth of personal supplies on hand at home, but emergencies like fire and earthquakes can happen at any time, including when we are at work, and prevent us from getting to our personal emergency supplies.

What happens when people aren't at home if a disaster strikes? Where do people go when they can't get home? These are not just simply rhetorical questions. Anybody who has family members who lived in Fort McMurray last spring will know that's exactly what happened to thousands and thousands of people, including many in my family. The plans for dealing with these situations surely exist, but they are only useful if they are widely shared with Yukon citizens.

Before I close, I would like to give a big shout out to CBC Whitehorse. Being live on the air immediately after the first earthquake this morning provided all Yukoners with an invaluable reminder of the importance of our national broadcaster and we applaud the professionalism of the local CBC crew. The on-air interview at the second — there was an on-air interview with a seismic expert during the second earthquake — and I have to say that was amazing radio to have somebody talking about the experience of sitting through or crawling under the table during that earthquake and having the seismic expert give advice.

Mr. Speaker, we look forward to working with this government to support the development and wide distribution of a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan for Yukon that's developed in collaboration with municipalities, First Nation governments, first responders and really important community stakeholder groups.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to thank the members opposite for their comments. I really appreciate it when this message is coming from the Legislature.

Just to follow up on the Leader of the Third Party, I appreciate her request to get information out to people. I note that — and I will give a little bit more information because what happens is you have to get the ministerial statement in by 11:00 a.m. and so there are a few updates. I will try to give them to you now. Also I note that Community Services is holding an information media briefing I think at 3:00 p.m. where some of that information will be available. I will do the work to follow up on the request for that information.

First of all, there are no reported injuries and we are very thankful for that. I mentioned that public schools are being assessed. Elijah Smith and Ross River are closed currently due to structural damage. That is the latest information that I have, and we will be informing the public as soon as we hear a change in that. Whitehorse Elementary School has been assessed by a structural engineer and is now open.

Yukon highways have undergone an initial road check and we have not identified any issues at this time. The Department of Highways and Public Works is organizing a

more comprehensive check of all the highways, including bridge inspections.

Just going back to the schools — I note that every fall — I think on October 19 — there is a 10-19 moniker — there is a ShakeOut campaign where we work with our students to get them practised at the “drop, cover and hold on” and I think Sandi Coleman — I don't know if we're allowed to name names — the broadcaster on CBC today, did a very good job of that and I think that was a good acknowledgement.

There has been some minor damage to the Blanchard highway camp. The Blanchard camp was close to the epicentre of the earthquakes and also the Lynn Building here in town has been closed. The Emergency Measures Organization will be giving a technical briefing this afternoon.

Again, I thank all members here today for working with us to make sure that our citizens are safe — and a shout-out to all those folks who have been working to keep us that way today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Hassard: Last week, the Premier released his plan to send Yukon down a long-term path of big deficits and big debt. While the Premier took a record amount of time to get back into the Legislature, many Yukoners were eagerly awaiting to see his plans. Unfortunately, the plan put forward by the Premier means our children and grandchildren will be paying off debt for years to come.

So can the Premier tell this House what year he is projecting that Yukon will come back out of debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What we've done in the budget forecasting is what the Yukon Party should have done in previous budgets, which is to show the real cost of governance and to show the long-term plans and the long-term costs to run a government. It's not as if there's a whole new suite of big, huge promises. We campaigned that way. We said we weren't campaigning on big promises and on big new spends. It's a good thing we didn't, because now that we see the trend of how the piggy bank has been spent down over the last three years from a quarter of \$1 billion to pretty much nothing right now, we're just showcasing that trend into the future. We're identifying that we need to work together here in the Legislative Assembly to identify the long-term spends, the long-term needs, and come up with a plan.

So that's what the Financial Advisory Panel is all about. It's about working with the opposition and working with stakeholders in the Yukon to identify all of the concerns, and to identify the new financial department to see if we're on track there as well, but also to showcase the costs that were not necessarily being showcased by the previous government.

Mr. Hassard: I'll take that as a no — the Premier doesn't have any idea.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's vision of a territory burdened with big, long-term debt is a scary prospect for many

Yukoners and their families. Going from \$93 million in the bank to \$216 million in debt will have big impacts on Yukon. According to the Department of Finance, economic projections and O&M costs in the Premier's new budget don't even calculate for the economic and financial impacts of the Premier's carbon tax scheme. The Premier promised that this budget would show, in his words — and I quote: "The true cost of government." Yet on day one, Mr. Speaker, we find out he left out major new costs.

If the Premier wasn't doing this analysis, as he said he was over the past six months, why did he wait until the end of April to table a budget?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We did commit to the Financial Advisory Panel and, in that good work, we're going to have a better idea of where we are and what measures we're going to go to in order to turn the bus around and to get back to a sound fiscal situation. But again, Mr. Speaker, this is our way of showing Yukoners the long-range plans. It's our way of showing not just what's happening on a day-to-day budget, a year-to-year budget, but moving forward into the future.

It's no surprise to anybody who has been following the budgeting process that we don't showcase the real cost of government. That's what we're doing. We're also showcasing a lot of spending that was done previously that was not accounted. The member opposite talked on the news about \$100,000 for transition, but there is also: \$3.5 million for additional teachers and educational salaries; \$2.2 million to open additional beds at the Thomson Centre; half-a-million dollars for costs associated with the Royal visit; \$1.8 million for the new Salvation Army Centre of Hope; \$2.1 million in demolition costs — the list goes on and on and we will showcase all these numbers.

What we're doing is we're showcasing the costs and how we got to where we are — the costs that were not being calculated by the previous governments — and we're showing a new way of doing a financial exercise. We're very confident that the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel will help get us back to financial solvency and financial —

Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's plan to throw Yukon into massive debt — he has projected economic growth to be far lower than the national average. As we know, the Premier hasn't done an economic analysis of the impact of the carbon tax so, for all we know, Mr. Speaker, this growth will be even lower. Further, his own budget documents say that increased gasoline prices will have a negative impact on Yukon's tourism sector through increases in costs to travel to Yukon, which could dampen visitation. This will obviously hurt our economic growth as well, Mr. Speaker.

Considering that his plan to throw Yukon into a \$216-million debt is based off of incomplete data, we may end up even further in debt.

Will the Premier commit that he will not go further than \$216 million in debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As far as economic context, we know that we built into the economic forecast the impact of the investments that were made through the 2017 budget, including the impact of capital investment, to improve community infrastructure. We've done a lot more than the previous government had.

We will commit to the Yukon Party, as the Official Opposition, to work together to make sure that we come up with a plan with the Financial Advisory Panel to get out of this current situation.

Now, we could go back and forth and talk about who got us where we are as far as this financial situation, but I think the good work this summer will look forward, as opposed to blaming the past. We just have to move past this and, right now, we don't have a piggy bank. That money is gone; \$250 million is no longer here for us.

We do have to take into consideration deficit spending if we're going to access federal funding for infrastructure — that's something we want to do. Do we want to go past our cap? No, we don't. We absolutely don't want to go past our cap, and we're going to work very hard for Yukoners to get back online within the next couple of years. Before the next election — maybe even sooner, and hopefully even sooner — depending upon the decisions we make based upon the Financial Advisory Panel, we'll come back to a situation where we show Yukoners that we're taking a look at the government as a whole and we're going to move forward to make sure that Yukon gets back on to a financial path that works for Yukoners.

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Cathers: Contrary to the Premier's statements, as Yukoners should know, this Liberal government inherited the rosiest financial situation that any new government in the territory's history has ever had on taking office. On Thursday, we learned that the Liberal government plans to increase spending and plunge the territory's finances deep into the red. The Premier plans to spend Yukon's cash in the bank, run a \$58-million deficit in 2019, and spend \$216 million we don't have. Ultimately, it will be Yukoners who have to pay for the Premier's reckless spending through increased taxes and fees.

Will the Premier at least tell Yukoners which taxes he's planning on increasing in the future?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question and the concern from the Yukon Party. Again, forecasts are exactly that. They are forecasts. What they do is take a picture in time — if we continue at the same pace as we are at right now, this is where we are going to be. If we continue at the pace that we were left with by the previous government, these are the problems that we are going to see in the future. What we are hearing on this side in government is that people are thankful that we are showing the real cost of government, that we are showing the trajectory of that piggy bank being spent down — the actual capital costs and operation and maintenance in the budget as well. We can go back and forth and we can discuss how we got to where we are here today, or we can all work together with the Financial Advisory Panel to come forward with a solution so that we don't have to cut services and

hopefully don't have to raise any taxes as well, and we can come up with a plan that works for Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: Again, contrary to the Premier's statements, as he knows, this government inherited the rosiest financial situation any new government has had on taking office. The Premier has taken to spending money that he does not have faster than a duck takes to water. On Thursday, we learned that the Premier's plans are written in red ink. The Liberal government inherited almost \$100 million in net financial resources — basically cash in the bank — and they want to spend that and \$216 million they don't have. Why is this Liberal government spending like there is no tomorrow and planning to leave a huge debt for future generations to pay?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: You know what? This is an absolutely ridiculous conversation. We watched for five years as you built and did not plan on how to run those facilities or how to staff those facilities. I look across the way and I see members across the way giggling. I am not giggling. My kids' financial future, when it comes to that government, is in jeopardy. All we saw was lack of planning and spending. We have inherited a situation. We have a \$150-million build that was not planned for. It was rushed. We have problems with the actual structure and now we have to figure out how to staff it. I think there about 200-plus people who have to go into the facility to work there. There is not even a proper human resources strategy in place, and I think the cost is about \$36 million. I think my friends across the way understand exactly how we got here. Some giggle because they may not understand. Some across the way look pretty serious because they know exactly how we got here.

Mr. Cathers: The only laughter on this side was at the absurdity of the minister's claim. The Premier has claimed on several occasions that the previous government did not include operating costs for the new Whistle Bend continuing care facility in the budget and tried to blame his spending problem on the previous government, but there is a big problem with that claim. Not only were the operating costs for the Whistle Bend facility included in the fiscal framework, the Member for Klondike — the Premier — was in the Legislative Assembly last spring when the Minister of Health and Social Services told the House that fact and how much was budgeted for future operating costs. Instead of taking responsibility for his own spending problem, the Premier is trying to point fingers. Part of leadership is taking responsibility for the decisions you make — like the decision the Premier and this government made to delay coming back to work in the Legislature by a record six months. Will the Premier do the responsible thing now and reverse course on this path to massive debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: That is exactly what we are doing. We are reversing the course. We are showing the trajectory left to us by the Yukon Party for the first time. We are doing lots of first-time things — like the economic outlook being in the budget as well. I guess, as opposed to going back and forth, the member opposite is right. The previous government did give us an estimate of how much it is going to cost to run

the Whistle Bend facility. I believe that number was \$2 million.

I think the real number that is being shown right now is somewhere along the lines between \$20 million and \$30 million. If people are listening and they want to know the real costs, they can compare the two. The good news is that we will get to that reality very soon. We will have a cost analysis of how much, because we will have people in that building working and that number will not be around \$2 million. It will be closer to what we were saying.

Again, we're trying to steer the ship the right way. We're going to commit to that. We're looking at a good situation here as well as far as GDP moves forward. We have a good situation. We're looking to the opposition to work with us to make sure that we prioritize the government's commitments moving forward on programs and services. I look forward to working with the members opposite on this pursuit.

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the budget tabled last Thursday confirms that there are fiscal challenges ahead for the Yukon government. Years of reduced own-source government revenues and limited growth under the Yukon Party has led to serious deficit forecasts for the foreseeable future.

Yukoners know that we need to diversify our economy to reduce the impact of the boom-and-bust cycle of the resource extraction industry. In the last election, this government promised to expand the Yukon Development Corporation's mandate beyond energy and to create an economic infrastructure fund to support innovation and diversification, yet Thursday's budget was silent on this promise.

Can the Premier explain why his first budget abandoned his election campaign promise to expand Yukon's innovation sector?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yukon government supports a diverse growing economy that provides good jobs for Yukoners and will target government investment to help diversify the economy.

The Yukon Development Corporation has been directed to establish a \$10-million fund to support economic diversification and innovation, which will increase investment opportunities while helping build sustainable jobs for Yukoners and supporting innovative approaches to existing and new industries.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, the corporation has been tasked with investigating possible models and developing options for the fund, which we will bring forward for government approval in due course. We anticipate the fund will initially be available starting in 2018-19 with a full rollout the following year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, we don't expect this government to fulfill every one of their commitments in its first budget, but when the government forecasts important deficits in the years to come, one would think they would start working on a solution right away and the reality is that this government will have to act. It can't put it all forward. They

will either need to focus on growth and strengthening our economy or they'll resort to cuts in spending and services to Yukoners.

Investing in innovation now is a key opportunity to strengthen and diversify our economy. Hopefully the Premier doesn't need an expert panel to tell him that. It's without a doubt the most effective way to reduce the impacts of the ups and downs of commodity prices. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, it's a question of priorities.

Why did the Premier prioritize cutting corporate taxes over investing in innovation and diversification?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was a lot in that question. I'll stick to the point on diversification and innovation.

As I stated here, we're still committed to diversifying the work of the Yukon Development Corporation with some guidance from the chair and the board of the Yukon Development Corporation. In discussion with them, part of their wisdom was to take a moment to take a look at a governance structure that would work. There have been some challenges in the past when Yukon Development Corporation sort of stretched its mandate, so right now the mandate is to get cheap reliable power and make sure it's there for industrial growth. We have to revisit that mandate. First and foremost, we're still committed to that.

As you go through the budget, you will see that the Regional Economic Development portion — or the RED department — has increased its budget. It's really the only place within Economic Development that we've had growth. We had a \$400,000 budget, now we have an \$800,000 budget, so that gives us a bit more flexibility where we can focus really on the communities and diversifying the economy. That's where I can work with the Minister of Tourism and others here to make sure that we build more assets and products for the tourism sector. We look at still being able to enhance the manufacturing sector while still being able to support what looks to be a very thriving resource sector.

Ms. Hanson: Reliable Internet connectivity is essential not only for the innovation sector, but for Yukon's businesses in general. There is little point in discussing innovation in today's economy if our fibre optic infrastructure is lacking, yet this is another important missing piece in last week's budget.

Everyone agrees on the necessity to create redundancy in our fibre optic connections in order to put an end to regular service outages. Multiple studies have been conducted on the two current possible options — the Skagway and the Dempster loops — yet this year's budget allocates no money to fibre optic infrastructure. Even the long-term plans that look out as far as the year 2021 don't project a single dollar for this project, one expected to cost in the millions of dollars.

Is improving Internet connectivity a priority for this government and if so, why are there no planned investments for the fibre diversification project in the mandate of this government?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'm going to do my best to answer that. I think the opposition will probably be able to help me

with another question here, so we'll be able to make sure we have a fulsome conversation today on this topic. Thank you, because I didn't get to touch on it on the second supplementary.

The fibre optic outage has a significant negative impact on businesses and residents as the Leader of the Third Party has mentioned. The Yukon government is committed to moving forward with a diverse fibre optic link to protect Yukoners from future telecommunication outages. The Department of Economic Development has submitted two applications to the Connect to Innovate federal broadband funding program as of now.

One application is for the Juneau link, which connects Whitehorse to Skagway, Alaska through the south Klondike Highway and interconnects to Seattle. The other application is for the Dempster route — certainly I can get this information to you too in writing if you like — which connects Dawson City to Inuvik along the Dempster Highway and interconnects with the Mackenzie Valley fibre link. The final decision on the fibre lines route will consider the needs of Yukon residents and businesses as well as the results from these funding applications. Hopefully I will have a chance to expand on this a little bit more during Question Period.

Question re: Salvation Army shelter and transitional housing

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sunday was the last night to access beds for individuals using the Kwanlin Dün temporary shelter. The shelter opened this winter as it became clear that the Salvation Army was not able to accommodate every person needing a warm place to stay. The home provided accommodation for 10 individuals and has experienced few if any vacancies since opening. It was a safe and warm place to spend the night for many who had no other options.

With this closure, many of these individuals will be left to sleep in the rough or couch surf. While the spring sun makes for warmer afternoons, most nights still experience below-zero temperatures.

Can the minister explain what options are available for these individuals left in the lurch without housing?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I can say right now is the facility in question is a building that was opened on a temporary basis to get the residents through the coldest parts of the winter. The facility itself is a facility that is not safe and we are not occupying the whole space. We are looking at working with the stakeholders in our community to address a reduction of poverty as well as homelessness and we will continue to do that.

At this point, we are working to open the Centre of Hope facility in the coming weeks and months so that will help to address some of the pressures that we're feeling right now in our society.

Ms. White: We've been told that the new Salvation Army will not be opening until this fall at the earliest. That's at least five months away. The current Salvation Army is always at capacity and the fact is that some people cannot

access this emergency shelter for a variety of reasons. To make things worse, we're in the middle of eviction season and I hope that the minister knows that this is the time of year where people who her department puts into hotel rooms for the winter are evicted to make room for our summer visitors. This means a lot of people end up homeless or precariously housed.

Mr. Speaker, where are these individuals supposed to live? Where are they supposed to find warm and safe shelter?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The department is working with each individual who applies for accommodations. We are case managing each file as it comes in and defining priorities. We are collaborating with the Yukon Housing Corporation as well as Health and Social Services to provide those who are hard to house.

We are looking at options, recognizing that there are immense pressures in our society and we are working and we will work to define strategies to eliminate homelessness in our community. Between the departments, we are assisting and defining some of the pressures. Working with our stakeholders in the community as well is a significant component in rural Yukon — so looking at what we can do to get residents who are currently in Whitehorse from their communities back home to their communities where we know that they are safe and where they do have homes to go to.

It's a bigger — I think broader — Yukon question that we need to resolve and we are working to do just that with the stakeholders, with our communities and with the First Nation governments, as well as looking within the government departments.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm still unclear where people who were accessing that emergency shelter last night will stay tonight.

If there wasn't enough affordable housing in the winter and people ended up staying in hotels, I doubt somehow that they will find affordable housing when they are evicted from those hotels. With the closure of the shelter, spring evictions from hotels and a delayed opening of the Salvation Army, we're in the same place we were when we saw a tent city outside this building in 2011. We've seen the coming and going of the poverty reduction strategy and ongoing work on a housing strategy, but the reality is that little has changed for many individuals in Whitehorse and the communities.

Mr. Speaker, what concrete and immediate action is being taken to address the needs of citizens with no place to sleep tonight and what are the very specific plans for the old St. Elias group home site?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So the question for the 10 residents that occupied that space — it was not a full-time facility and not open 24 hours a day. It was open a set period of time through the coldest part of the winter.

The department is working with the City of Whitehorse as well as Kwanlin Dün to look at alternate options to ensure that those residents who utilize the facility have accommodations. We are again looking at a broader strategy now that it is warmer. As well, as indicated a few days ago, sometimes we

have to go to the emergency measures necessary to ensure that residents have shelter and that might mean putting them in hotels. It's not the ideal solution, but the longer term plan is really to come up with a strategy that works, which is the homelessness strategy and the Housing First strategy that is being considered. Thank you.

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, by throwing Yukon into a record amount of debt, the Premier is essentially mortgaging our future. In the Premier's own budget speech, he said that the further you go down a path, the harder it is to come back. Well, the Premier's budget has set us down a path of long-term debt with no indication we will ever come back from that.

Earlier today, he mentioned that his Financial Advisory Panel will look at a number of issues. We look forward to seeing the terms of reference so we get a better idea of what they'll be doing.

Mr. Speaker, is the Premier telling this House today, though, that he has tasked this panel to come up with a plan to get Yukon out of debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What the Financial Advisory Panel is going to do is take a look at all options. We're going to include local capacity and we've already announced the local individuals who are going to be helping out in that field, but also are relying on a wide breadth of resource and capability from a group of Canadians. The job of the advisory panel, as the member opposite knows, is to take a look at options. It is then our job as government to show that leadership and move forward.

Again, Mr. Speaker, having an economic forecast that is different from normal — it's actually showing the real full cost of accounting and the trajectory on which we are currently — what we're doing is not a politically expedient thing. It's actually showing Yukoners the real situation. Hopefully we'll be able to work with the opposition with the panel to come up with the results and analyze them and move forward. I know that the member opposite was talking during the motion about presenting all of that information to Yukoners and we absolutely plan on doing so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. By digging the Yukon into this massive debt, the Premier is passing the consequences of his decisions on to future generations. Yukon will now be forced to pay millions of dollars in interest payments. In fact, by the Premier's fourth year in office, Yukon could have paid up to \$14.5 million in interest payments. Without a plan to get Yukon out of debt, the Premier is forcing future generations of Yukoners to pay off this mortgage. This is \$14.5 million that could go toward schools or health care.

Can the Premier tell us whether Yukon's interest payments will come out of current departmental budgets or if he is planning on borrowing even more money to pay the interest on all his new debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we are offering Yukoners a whole bunch of options this year. We're changing a lot of things. The first thing that we're doing is the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel. That's an important step as we have shown Yukoners the real cost of governance. We have those numbers down, not only for this year, but moving forward.

This year's budget — which is what we're debating today and the next few months in the Legislative Assembly — is a balanced budget, but we've showcased the issue of what is happening in future years when future pressures come online.

These future pressures should have been identified by the Yukon Party, but they weren't identified by the Yukon Party. As a result of that, not only are we doing the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel, but we are also taking a look at changing the Department of Finance as well. In that change of the Department of Finance, we are going to be better at scrutinizing and making sure that the fiscal responsibility for all departments is there. We will be working on a whole government approach to make sure that the real cost of government is being forecast, not only this year but into the future.

The member opposite realizes and knows that forecasts are exactly that. They are estimates moving forward as we take a look at this current situation — as we take a look at the current trajectory that we were set on by years of the previous government. That is what it is, and we are putting it down on paper so that Yukoners can tell where we are. We are doing the Financial Advisory Panel to get a better understanding —

Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Kent: With respect to the Premier's Financial Advisory Panel, the mandate or the terms of reference seem very open-ended. We are curious on this side of the House. As part of its mandate, will it be looking at budget cuts? If so, are there any areas of government services that are off limits and not open for consideration to budget to cuts, or is everything on the table?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It's a good question, and I have no problem sharing the information with the member opposite. The panel will be engaging with Yukoners on the fiscal and economic challenges that are facing the Yukon and also providing Yukoners with an opportunity to comment and to make recommendations about potential government fiscal, economic and spending options. The public engagement is anticipated to start once the spring legislative session concludes in June. It will break during July and August and restart in September. The work of the panel will not replace any future direct budget decisions between the Government of Yukon and First Nation governments, municipalities and organizations. The information gathered by the panel will be used to determine the future decisions as we get to that situation.

I will reiterate that we do have some tough decisions to make. All together, we have some tough decisions to make. We are governing today on being open and accountable. It was an important decision to make. It was a hard decision to make to showcase the forecasts as we have, showing the full

costs of governance. But again, it is the work that we needed to do and it is the work that Yukoners rely on their government to put out there.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would like everybody in the Legislative Assembly to help me welcome a visiting real estate agent from Vancouver, Mr. Ben Kielb.

Applause

REPORT ON LENGTH OF SITTING

Government House Leader's report on length of Sitting

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I 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 an agreement on the maximum number of sitting days for the current Sitting. The House Leaders have confirmed that the current Sitting should be a maximum of 30 sitting days, with the 30th sitting day being Tuesday, June 13, 2017.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare the current Sitting shall be a maximum of 30 sitting days, with the 30th sitting day being Tuesday, June 13, 2017.

We will now proceed with Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 201, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, Mr. Hassard.

Mr. Hassard: I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to speak in response to the 2017-18 Budget Address.

I would like to just begin by thanking my family for putting up with me over the last few years through this political job and for the incredible support that they have provided me thus far. Additionally I would like to thank the constituents of Pelly-Nisutlin, which — I could remind everyone here — is the best riding in the entire territory. I would like to thank them for electing me for a second time into this Legislature, and I would like to particularly recognize all of those who helped out on the campaign and helped me get here again today. I'm extremely grateful to all of those people for their time and dedication during the election period.

It's definitely an honour to be here once again to serve the residents of Teslin, Ross River, Faro and all of the people along the way in between. I look forward to continuing to work not only with the municipal governments in those communities but also with the First Nation governments — of

course, the Teslin Tlingit Council in Teslin and the Ross River Dena Council in Ross River.

With regard to the budget, I think it's extremely important to note all of the hard work and long hours that were put in by the public servants in all of the departments to produce the numbers that we see for this year's government, particularly considering the new way the government sought to roll it out. The work that you do as public servants does not go unnoticed by the Official Opposition and we certainly appreciate all that you do for the territory.

On that note, I will start things off by noting things that I was happy to see. First, I cannot deny that this fiscal year's projection of a surplus, although a modest one, is good. We're always happy to see a surplus. We see no new fees introduced to Yukoners. That's good. At face value, there are a number of commitments that are all good and I look forward to seeing them implemented.

Personally, I am happy to see the Ross River staff housing six-plex project in this budget. We do know it was a project that was established under the Yukon Party government and tendered by me, in my role as the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, and I'm very pleased to see that it is moving forward as planned.

As well, the Minister of Economic Development mentioned in Question Period today the increase in the regional economic development fund, or the RED fund, from \$400,000 to \$800,000. I certainly appreciate that and I look forward to seeing more details as that rolls out and seeing how it will benefit all communities, but my communities in Pelly-Nisutlin in particular.

I was pleased to see the government's commitment to lowering corporate tax from 15 percent to 12 percent. I think that's very important for businesses throughout the Yukon, but there are a few things inexplicably missing from the budget today.

Firstly, as the Leader of the Third Party mentioned in Question Period, is the lack of funding for the dedication of the fibre optic line. The Premier previously claimed that the redundant fibre line project was ready to go in the fall of 2015, and after a significant amount of work and partnership that went into the planning of this project, he is correct. It was set to move forward with design and construction, yet there is no sign of this project in the budget. It begs the question: Is ensuring redundancy for Yukoners not a priority for this government? The previous government was a strong proponent for growing and supporting a robust information, communications and technology sector. We see an increase in the IT envelope included in their long-term plans, but what will be included in this — because there are no details, Mr. Speaker?

Additionally the previous government was dedicated to improving connectivity for all Yukon communities. That included committing investments for new cell towers to bring much-needed cell service to rural Yukon, particularly in the non-incorporated communities. I'm curious if the government considered including this in their budget, or why they didn't consider including this in their budget as well.

Mr. Speaker, will the government work to expand coverage to people without service in these rural areas, including Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fox Lake, Ibex Valley, Junction 37, Mendenhall and Champagne? This is extremely important to these areas considering that, without cell service, they don't have access to important emergency services such as 911.

Something else that we didn't see much mention of — or any clear mention of — was the paving of the Dawson City runway. We see money set aside for various airport projects, so I'm curious: Does this include Dawson City, or is this another broken promise from the Liberal government today? It would be nice to be provided some details on the status, for sure.

Another point that has been raising a few questions is the new Financial Advisory Panel. This is an interesting commitment and may be good in theory, but we certainly are lacking important details like: What are the terms of reference? It was interesting — the Premier spoke about it a bit today during Question Period, but it still begs the question: Does the Premier not have enough faith in the public service, in the staff in Finance and Economic Development to build a budget?

The Premier also mentioned that the Financial Advisory Panel will come up with solutions on how to get out of debt. You know, it's interesting Mr. Speaker. For years the Yukon Party governments were all able to stay out of debt without needing an expert panel — so, interesting.

We've seen that it has taken six months under this Liberal government before the Premier had to seek advice on how to govern and how to clean up his own mess. Like I said, we have not even seen the terms of reference for this panel, so I'm curious. Is he telling the House today that he has tasked this panel with a plan to get Yukon out of debt for sure? It will be interesting to know if they're slashing budgets to departments. I'm curious. There are many questions like that which we certainly have not seen any answers to as of yet.

One thing we do know is that the government has set aside \$250,000 in the budget to run this advisory panel. That's kind of an interesting number because, when you consider that the government spent over \$110,000 on transition for their government, which was one month, I'm curious as to how they expect five people to do work for five months for \$250,000. I guess one of the questions out of that will be whether they will be taking rural Yukon into consideration, or does this financial planning stop at Whitehorse city limits? What communities will they be visiting? If they are visiting communities, I have to ask the question: Will the panel have ATVs and canoes, because many of my constituents are spending their time on the Pelly River or the Nisutlin River trying to ensure that their families have food for the winter. Maybe the panel will be taking their four-wheelers. I hope they stop at Dragon Lake on their trek up the North Canol because that's where my constituents will be. I'm curious. How will they be heard or will they be heard?

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. Even with the Premier's own constituents — that's prime time of the year for them to

be doing their gold mining. Will the panel be travelling to the Black Hills and to the Fiftymile River to consult with his own constituents? How will their voices be heard? How will their thoughts be wrapped into this consultation process?

As I said before, there certainly are some good items in this budget, but I think that all of these good announcements have to be described as “bittersweet”. If you take into account the inevitable debt and deficit this government is going to saddle the territory with to pay for these things, these announcements definitely look a lot less impressive.

Mr. Speaker, after spending five years in government, I certainly do understand that you cannot please everyone at all times. There is always something that somebody wanted to see in the budget that just can’t make it, and I can appreciate that.

That being said, this budget definitely gives us a glimpse into the quickly growing debt and deficit that will be created under this government. It’s safe to say that I really don’t believe that will be pleasing anyone. It’s interesting that instead of focusing on the future, this government is entirely focused on the past and pointing fingers. I think that was shown last week in the media when the Premier talked at length of the trajectory that this government was on. He mentioned that again today in Question Period. It’s a little confusing that he felt — to me it’s confusing anyway — that he felt the need to include this in his speaking points, but he didn’t really feel obligated to take action and correct this trajectory if he felt it was so wrong. In fact, the government appears to be doing the complete opposite.

The Premier stated in his budget speech that the longer you go down the path in the wrong direction, the harder the trip back will be. I’m curious. If the Premier really believed that the government was on the wrong path, why wouldn’t he turn us around instead of doubling down on debt and deficit and then blaming the previous government for it?

I heard some scoffing during Question Period when the Member for Copperbelt South mentioned the bank account having \$93 million in it when the Liberal government took office. The reality is — and it’s even in the Liberal’s own budget — that it shows that, yes, there was in fact \$93 million in the bank when they took office. The economy is showing signs of improvement, so why did the Premier feel that it’s necessary to take \$84 million out of those saving for this year? It shows that his small surplus of \$6.5 million really doesn’t mean a whole a lot when it’s followed by three consecutive years of big deficits — and I mean big, when we’re speaking of up to \$60 million — and \$216 million worth of debt by 2020.

It appears that the Premier will be spending at least \$216 million that Yukon just doesn’t have. Ultimately it will be Yukoners who have to pay for this reckless spending, and we’re assuming that will be through increased taxes and fees. We have to ask the question: Will the Premier at least tell us which taxes he’s planning on increasing in the future to pay for this spending? When are we going to have to start paying it back? Is this going to be my children paying it back — my grandchildren, great grandchildren? Where do we stop?

As well, how long does he anticipate it will take to pay back all of this debt? The forecast that the Premier has put forward is only to the end of his mandate, so you have to wonder if he does not care who is going to paying this debt off or how it will be paid off. We’re essentially leaving it to our children and grandchildren, as I said, to worry about. I would have to ask: Why is the Liberal government spending like there’s no tomorrow and leaving a huge debt for future generations to pay for?

The \$216 million doesn’t even account for the interest on that debt as well. In fact, in the Premier’s fourth year in office, the Yukon could pay up to \$14.5 million in interest payments alone, and that’s \$14.5 million that I feel could be spent in a much better fashion.

Can the Premier tell us whether Yukon’s interest payments will come out of current departmental budgets, or is he planning on borrowing even more money to pay the interest on all of this new debt? The alarming lack of details isn’t — I don’t feel — being transparent about the true cost of government as we’ve heard so much about. In his own plans for debt, debts and deficits, the Premier is still trying to blame his spending problems on the previous government. It’s important that the Premier understand that being in government means taking responsibility for the choices you make, such as taking responsibility for why it took so long to get us back here in the Legislature or taking responsibility for promises that have already been broken. Instead of taking responsibility for his own fiscal mismanagement the Premier continues to blame the previous government.

Another big issue that we see is, due to the government’s non-interest in doing the work to analyze the impacts that the carbon tax will have on the economy, that wasn’t factored into the budget. The government’s own budget documents say that increased gasoline prices will have a negative impact on Yukon’s tourism sector through increases in costs to travel to Yukon. This doesn’t take into account the cost of the carbon tax. It is fairly common knowledge that increased prices in gasoline are certainly going to affect visitation numbers. When visitors are considering coming up north, we know that they are going to think about that cost and it will be a key factor in where they choose to go. If costs are significantly lower to stay in the United States or somewhere else, then obviously there is a better chance they are going to go there rather than here. Of course, we can only assume that because we still have not been provided with the details to back up any claims on the carbon tax. This seems to be a growing trend with this new Liberal government — a lack of details.

The Premier’s new budget plan is projecting our GDP to grow at a much lower rate than the national average. As we know, the Premier hasn’t done an economic analysis of the impacts of the carbon tax. For all we know, this growth could be even lower. The same goes for the debt numbers. Is \$216 million going to be enough? Considering that his budget plan is based on incomplete data, we may end up even further in debt. This to me does appear to reflect the true cost of government.

If the Premier wasn't doing this analysis as he said over the past six months, then why did he delay returning to the Legislature so long? Why did he feel the need to wait until the end of April to table the budget?

Another example — if you look at the economic projections for the resource sector and its anticipated contribution to GDP, those projections don't account for the costs of carbon tax as well. The actual projections will likely be lower. Yet we are still here and we are still waiting to hear what the Premier has found out with regard to how much this carbon tax is going to cost Yukon families and businesses. Not only do we have no information, a mere eight months from when the carbon tax will be implemented, the projected debt and deficit could potentially be much higher than they are initially claiming. Omitting important information like this certainly isn't being open and transparent with Yukoners.

The Premier has a number of times referred to the net financial assets as the "piggy bank". Traditionally a piggy bank contains nickels, dimes, quarters, loonies — one time mine even had a \$5 bill in it — but the point is that piggy banks are a great way for children to learn the value of money and saving money — not so for governments. In all seriousness, we are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars, not quarters and loonies, and you cannot minimize something like that. Yukon taxpayers are not children and I don't think that they should be treated as such.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party spent years building up that bank account and I know people are going to scoff at that as well, but the fact of the matter remains. The Yukon Party put that money there and the reason they put that money was so that when there were economic slowdowns, we had savings. We had an economic slowdown and thankfully we had that money in the bank and we were able to ensure that the impacts of the global economy's downturn had fewer negative effects on the Yukon than it may have, had those savings not been in the bank.

Because of all the work that the previous members in this Legislature went through to ensure that money was in the bank for all Yukoners for those economic slowdowns, I don't think that gives this current Liberal government the right, or the social licence, to spend the money right into the red all in one fell swoop. I have said before that a wise man once told me that no matter how hard you try, you cannot spend your way out of debt. That is such an important little anecdote for the Premier to take to heart.

This new government boasts about evidence-based decision-making. Well, I have a question: Where is the evidence that running a deficit and creating enormous debt is a good idea?

We can talk for days about how great it is to see more companies investing here in the Yukon — these large companies like Newmont and Barrick are just a couple in the growing list of companies investing here in the Yukon. That's great and everyone has agreed that it's wonderful to see that. It makes me question even further that if things are getting better in the Yukon, then why is the bank account being emptied further, rather than growing? If this is how things are

when the economy is improving, what will we see out of this government if the price of gold goes to \$700 an ounce and Newmont, Barrick, Goldcorp and Agnico Eagle all say, "We're just putting these projects on ice for now". Then what do we have? We don't even have the savings account left to fall back on.

It's very interesting, but meanwhile we're seeing campaign promises being broken or amended right here on the floor of the Legislature. We've heard promises of seasonally dependent contracts being tendered before March of each year. Now it's May and we've heard, "Well, next year". Next year doesn't help Yukoners get through this summer and this coming winter.

So I have to say to the Premier that if you're going to make promises to Yukoners, it's important to ensure that you can actually follow through with them. They promised to eliminate the small business tax by July 1, 2017. That's something that we in the Official Opposition are always going to support. We would also support you living up to those promises, because two is a small number, but it's certainly not a zero. How many more broken or amended promises are we going to see?

Another thing that I would like to mention — that the Premier spoke about — was that he told Yukoners that they would be seeing real change with this government. I'm pretty sure that I heard the federal Liberals using that when they were campaigning too. We've taken a look through the budget. We worked on finding the substantial changes the Premier was talking about and I'll give you a list of a few of them, Mr. Speaker.

We know that with the previous government — the government that I was involved in, so that's the government that I will speak about — we saw five years of surplus budgets. In just one short year, this government will be turning that into deficits for an entire mandate, so yes, that's a real change. This government's predecessor left \$93 million in the bank and no net debt. The current Finance minister is quickly depleting those dollars and is set to take over \$216 million in net debt by 2020. Again, real change.

When the former Premier took office, his government showed the territory that it's possible to ensure Yukon's finances stay in the black, even through tough economic times. This Premier is showing us quickly how he can turn a plus sign into a minus sign — again, real change. From a government that met all of its election commitments and took meeting them very seriously, to one that is breaking or amending these promises and minimizing their importance — real change, Mr. Speaker. From a government that stood up for Yukon on the national and international stage, to a government that stands up for Ottawa — real change. The list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker. After a decade of a government that was concerned about getting to work right away after the election — truly hitting the ground running, Mr. Speaker — we see a government that is dragging its heels on moving forward.

My final comment today, Mr. Speaker would be: If this is what this government considers “hitting the ground running”, I would hate to see it if they just hit the ground walking.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his reply to the budget speech. I know it was well thought out and considered. Although some of the points in it I may not consider to be entirely valid, I'll move on with my take on it.

First off, I would like to say I am pleased to be here on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün and the Ta'an Kwäch'än nations. I also would like to thank the staff working very hard behind the scenes in all the departments to help us put this budget together. It took a lot of late nights, a lot of working back and forth. Our ministers did a great job — my colleagues. Once again, thank you to them.

Sound financial decisions are the hallmark of good governance and this budget will positively affect the lives of my constituents in Copperbelt North and the rest of the Yukon in many ways. We heard about the wants and needs of Yukoners at the doors during the campaign and many of these requests are reflected in this budget.

As I said in my reply to the throne speech about how it set the tone for our government, this budget is a fiscal road map for government and Yukoners. They can see both where we are and how we plan to get further on down the road.

Let's reflect on that map for a minute. The map is going to be created by the following principles outlined in the budget: Infrastructure — we are reinvesting in aging infrastructure. I am seeing over \$90 million just in the highlights here alone for highway restoration, bridge projects, airports, infrastructure — things that have been left to go fallow under the previous government and now we need to catch up. You can only let things go for so long before those chickens come home to roost.

Wellness is another big part of our platform and our budget — a people-centred approach to wellness. We are putting \$771,000 into enhanced home care. We are funding new full-time addiction and mental wellness workers in eight communities. We are supporting the land-based healing program, which seems to be working quite well. Just in pure stuff that we use every day — \$650,000 is going toward the purchase of four new ambulances.

New health care positions — enhancements to home care; a commitment to e-health, which will help take some of the strain off of our overworked doctors, nurses and other health care professionals; and 11 new full-time addiction and mental wellness workers. These and land-based healing, working toward First Nation relationships and reconciliation — all of these things are important in moving forward, and we move forward collectively working with our First Nation partners and other Yukoners.

Education — we have made a commitment to lifelong learning. A new school curriculum — my sons are going to be beneficiaries of this new curriculum, a curriculum that will help them understand First Nation culture, understand the

diversity that is the Yukon, and understand that, moving forward when they become the leaders of tomorrow, they know we have to work together. We are increasing school staffing where it seems appropriate and needed. These types of resources — because our children are some of our most important assets, and we have to make sure that their education outcomes are satisfactory so they can continue to help and improve life in the Yukon for their families and for themselves.

How about moving Yukon College more toward a university? Once again, my sons will be the beneficiaries of this type of innovation. They can stay in the Yukon to get a good percentage of their post-secondary education through the college itself, through distance learning sponsored by the college and supported by this government so that in the end the costs to parents, the costs to the students themselves — a quality education is provided for them and put within the reach of a lot more people.

Supporting the Carcross/Tagish learning centre is another very important budgetary commitment we made to move forward with children at a young age to help them make education a more important goal for people — make it something they want to move forward with and desire.

Our environment is also foremost in our minds when we're doing these sorts of things. We're looking right now at innovative ways to help power the Yukon. We have a shortfall of capacity right now. That needs to be addressed, and not with just the standbys of diesel and so on, but with innovative renewable resources, partnerships toward helping in the communities to come up with community-driven projects. First Nations also need to partner with this and help us to move the Yukon to a point where our power is stable, our infrastructure is good, and we can move forward with our economic growth.

Lowering corporate taxes, something the member across touched on — that we only lowered it one percent for the small businesses and three percent for large businesses. This is putting us squarely in the competitive field with the rest of the jurisdictions in Canada. By reducing corporate taxes, we are making more money available to Yukon businesses to reinvest in the human resources in their companies in the Yukon, which will help to create good jobs for Yukoners and our kids who are returning here and want to make a life, a family and a living here.

Innovation and growth are also being supported. We are starting research on developing an open data repository. This will help to put all the information that people are seeking within government — to do business with government and to do business themselves — where they can access it easily, cutting down on their time, costs and so on when they're trying to come up with a new project.

I already touched on e-health, another great way — we as a family have touched on e-health from some of the other provinces when we've had issues with allergies and so on with our kids when they have been travelling. It was quite supportive.

We are trying to develop a diverse and growing economy by connectivity, by putting forward a commitment to the redundancy in cable. We are just waiting now for our federal counterparts to see how much funding they are going to come through with and then a decision will be made.

Something new — the Financial Advisory Panel to work with Yukoners to engage them in how government exercises fiscal options to help grow the economy. We are not looking for someone to tell us how to do our job. What we want to do is have a vehicle to present to Yukoners the options that are available to get us where we want to go, all the way back to the road map. When we're driving from Whitehorse to Dawson, it may only look like there's one road but there are options. You can turn off at Carmacks; you can turn off here.

These are the options that we have to present to Yukoners. Give them the options. Option A will take us here and option B will take us there. Let them be involved in the process of government and how we deal with their financial future. This will be our report card. This will be our road map.

We campaigned on being heard and that's what we'll do. The committee will go out and talk to Yukoners. They might have to jump in a canoe or on a four-wheeler. Heck, they're going to have to fly to Old Crow. We'll get them there. We want to hear from Yukoners. We want to hear the ideas. We campaigned on there being some great ideas out there, and we need to hear them. We are not an island over here. We're looking forward to working with the rest of the House and Yukoners to diversify our economy and make it stronger.

This budget is a thoughtful, measured and responsible financial framework — one that is evidence-based in focus, and it will serve Yukoners and my constituency very well.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to this 2017-18 budget, and I do want to thank all those who worked so hard to prepare it — the staff and the members opposite.

I would like to first take a moment to thank my family here: to my wife, Donna, on whom I rely for so much and who is always there through thick and thin, busy schedules, lots of time apart, but home will always be with you; to my two sons, who put up with the politics thing when I'm sure they would rather be talking about something else; to my mom and dad, to whom I owe my solid foundation as a person — your love and support will always be appreciated; and to my sister Harmony — your guidance in the past five years — and I'm sure in the next five — is appreciated. You are quite politically aware and savvy. Without the incredible support and understanding of my family, I would not be able to do my job to the best of my ability and I thank them.

Likewise, without the continued support of my constituents, I would not have the chance to represent our amazing riding of Kluane. I wasn't going to, Mr. Speaker, but there are a few new members in the Legislature today and I just want to highlight sort of what my riding looks like. It starts at the Takhini River bridge and there are oodles of folks who live at the Takhini River subdivision and in between there and Mendenhall, and in between Mendenhall and

Champagne, and in between Champagne and Canyon, and in between Canyon and Haines Junction. It heads down the Haines Road, and there are constituents scattered out there — the further one being in BC, Lance Goodwin. I told him I would get his name in Hansard, so Lance's name is in Hansard now. Then you head north, up the Alaska Highway to Haines Junction. You won't get very far and you're at Kloo Lake, then you're at Silver City, and then there are folks up to Destruction Bay. Then all the way from Destruction Bay, there are people in between Destruction and Burwash, and from Burwash all the way to Beaver Creek — and now we're starting to see a few more people in between there. Some of the older highway lodges are disappearing, but you're still starting to see people living there. It's a big, diverse riding, and my constituents, I believe, are those to whom I owe so much. I'm proud to serve them and I thank them for their guidance.

I guess I would be remiss if I didn't thank those on my campaign team who helped me this time around, especially Libby Dulac and Jennifer McPhie. You two were a rock and I'm so thankful for that.

For those who came door-knocking — and I know we all had to door-knock — it was a pleasure and we had so much fun. We met so many interesting people, some of them new, some of them we've known for a long time and never a dull moment. There was lots of listening and lots of writing. I commit to each and every one of you to represent your concerns, ideas and needs, both at home and in the Legislature.

We have heard from the Premier of his government's priorities for this year. There are some really wonderful things in the budget and there are some other things that maybe I'm a little disappointed in, but I'll talk about some of that. After years of our government delivering forward-thinking balanced budgets that Yukoners could be proud of, I was a bit disappointed with the budget that this government has had a record six months to prepare. The conclusion I came away with after hearing the budget speech from the Premier was that essentially this government has much work to do in order to understand the needs of Yukon. Their lack of detail leads to many presumptions and questions and we'll get those questions out. Their heavy funding allocation to some groups and disregard for others has been noted and we've heard it from Yukoners. They have begun to build a picture of what our territory will look like under a Liberal government and it's not a picture that includes all Yukoners.

I would like to talk about a few of the government's shortcomings with regard to this long-awaited budget reveal. I will have many questions, most of which will be highlighted as we go through the details in the department debates. I have spent many years working with the United States government to reinstate the building and maintenance work of the Shakhwak agreement on the section of the Alaska Highway — the transportation bill, the MAP-21 — since its removal in 2012.

I have spoken with senators, governors and Canadian federal government counterparts. I have sent letters

highlighting the importance of this fund to rebuild this critical linkage of Yukon and Alaska. Two of my most recent were sent out only this year as the MLA to area residents who depend on this highway and on the benefits that the US highway tourism brings to their businesses and our towns. Our former Premier travelled to Washington to advocate for continued US funding. I remember back then there was a bit of criticism for our lobbying efforts, but it isn't important. I can only hope that our new Premier sees the importance of continuing these efforts and from what I'm hearing, it sounds good from his new position.

As the previous Highways and Public Works minister and the MLA for Kluane, I'm curious to know whether the Premier's reference to a funding allocation for the highway repair and maintenance in his budget speech includes critical ongoing maintenance to ensure the highway between Whitehorse and Haines Junction and beyond remains a safe and reliable mode of transportation to residents and visitors. The future of the Shawkwak project remains unclear. Like I said earlier, I do urge the government to continue lobbying efforts, but also to continue funding repairs on that stretch of highway. If they don't continue the work required, I'm one who can tell you that progress made up until this point will deteriorate and the costs will build.

I worked hard in the last five years brushing along our highways and I am hoping funds allocated continue for public safety on our highways. We need to continue on the previous government's work on highway signage for communities. I think there are some positive things moving forward with that, working with the municipalities, our local area committees, First Nations and chambers of commerce.

This will benefit with the signage I was discussing, so standardization and updating policies will help the tourism industry and all of the travelers on our highways. Staying on public safety on our highways, it has been brought to my attention there is a need for turning lanes in the Mendenhall, Canyon and Takhini subdivisions. I travel the north highway often and I definitely see a need.

Civic addressing was being implemented for rural Yukon and this government needs to continue on with this and I can just say that an example is there are three Takhini subdivisions, so you can see where there would be some confusion for emergency responders.

I will be looking to get an update on how reconciliation with White River is coming along. It was something the previous government had been working on.

With some of the Building Canada fund folks in recreation, I look forward to finding out when the new community centre will be built in Beaver Creek.

I'm a bit frustrated with the fact that the government is not prioritizing the maintenance upgrades needed to the Destruction Bay marina. Studying is not good enough. I think action needs to be taken. I sent a letter right after the election highlighting the issues. Subsequently the Kluane Lake Athletic Association, chambers of commerce, individual businesses and more have sent letters and correspondence. The Government of Yukon has an MOU with Kluane First

Nation to develop cottage lots on Kluane Lake and that's where boat access comes in with this. I still haven't had much of a response, but we're studying it and I do believe it should be a priority. I know my constituents sure do.

In the budget, I see no mention of the school in Burwash Landing. There is also an MOU between the Yukon government and Kluane First Nation to move forward with this. I look forward to this.

New key infrastructure too that is needed in our communities are, for example, a nursing station in Destruction Bay. I believe it's at the top of the list next to the Old Crow nursing station to be replaced and I have heard from constituents — and I am hoping and maybe this is a bit of a shout-out to the ministers — that they have not yet come to the community to talk with the local LACs and community members about this. I'm hoping and I'm sure they will probably be on tour this summer to chat with everyone.

There is an MOU between the Yukon government and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations on local area planning between Takhini River and Haines Junction. I don't see that in the budget, but I sure hope that this work is going on. Local area planning as we know is key so we move forward on opportunities for Yukoners.

When I was made aware of the Liberal government's plan to point the Yukon's financial ship downwards into deficit and debt, I was disappointed for the future generation of Yukoners — for my kids and grandkids. I thought of the hard work it will take once again to right the ship. Floundering with the territory's finances cannot be good no matter how this government tries to justify it. On behalf of my family and my constituents, I ask that this government take careful note of the financial situation that it projected going forward, look at all the potential negative repercussions of this discussion and reconsider following in the federal footsteps down the path to debt. The Yukon is very unique and we should be treated as such.

You were left a gift of a good financial situation and record from our Yukon Party government. The Premier has said himself — and I think we've heard this — that they are determined to ensure strong public sound finances for Yukoners. That is not the result of strong sound public finances, so with all due respect, I think our Premier got it wrong.

Playing games with the public purse is not to the benefit of Yukoners; it simply mimics Ottawa. I note the lack of funding for sport and recreation with great interest. I could not help but take note of the increased tobacco tax and think that the best way to encourage our youth not to start smoking in the first place would be to encourage physical activity and allow options and support to youth to develop skills in their chosen sport. I believe that lowering the rate of smoking within the Yukon Territory starts with investing in our youth. Our government could have added resources to help smokers on their quit path. While more expensive cigarettes might seem like a perfect way to get people to quit, it really is simply a money-maker for the government. Help people to work on their addictions rather than taxing them. I would like

to see this government use the funds derived from the tobacco tax in full for prevention in youth through sport investment and into programs to help people quit smoking. Allocating these funds back into prevention and solutions would give this tax meaning.

While I also noted that the government will be investing in youth groups, which I am in favour of, I would also have liked to see similar specific funding being allocated to sports organizations. Taking away sports funding and removing letter grades for students in grades 4 to 9 does not reflect highly on this government's regard for our youth. I believe our children need to learn to measure themselves against others. This encourages goals and a sense of self. When our children measure their progress against that of their peers, they will be encouraged to make positive decisions to do better. Children also achieve this determination to succeed within sports and recreation.

I am disappointed with the choices this government has made with regard to student assessment and sport funding. I hope they will change their tune and reconsider the path they are taking. Our children will have to live with our decisions, so make them good ones.

There is a special group of Yukon's population that did not receive any mention of the government in the Premier's Budget Address or elsewhere. This government covered lot development. He covered some staff housing, low-income housing and housing retrofits, but nowhere in the budget did the Liberal government make any indication that it will provide for seniors housing.

Our seniors have not been recognized. No funding has been allocated to ensure that they are taken care of. More specifically, I speak to my riding of Kluane. The Yukon government had committed funding to complete phase 2 of our seniors housing in Haines Junction. This is a necessary project and I am disappointed in this government for not taking note of the importance of this funding for the residents of Haines Junction, aging populations and for those local surrounding First Nations and residents who live up the north highway. This has been a priority of mine as the MLA for Kluane, and I will probably always be talking about it.

I would like to hear why this government overlooked not only this important project, but the housing requirements of seniors across the territory. The Premier said himself that the Yukon will have more seniors in the future and we must begin planning for the services that we will need. Unfortunately, there was no mention of what those services might be. I am thankful the previous government invested so heavily in seniors housing and hope the current government will realize the need for continued investment in projects to house and to serve some of the most important members of our communities.

The Premier mentions continued support of the fibre diversity project. It is not surprising that there is no further detail regarding this important investment in our territory. I believe we asked the government to confirm that they plan to go ahead and build upon the work done on the Dempster fibre line. Their response was that they were considering other

options going forward and will not commit to continuing with the project.

I think that this is unfortunate, based on the time and money already invested in the project, not only by government but by private industry. I would encourage the government to re-examine their path going forward and weigh the benefits of the northern fibre loop. Mr. Speaker, providing Internet reliability and redundancy to northern communities is important going forward and this investment must be made on behalf of all Yukoners.

The government has committed to a significant sum of money to celebrate activities regarding Canada's 150th anniversary. I was hoping to see that our rural communities would receive a bit more, as the funding allocation is mainly to Whitehorse and to perhaps Dawson; \$300,000 is quite a budget to plan celebratory activities.

I would like to remind the Premier and his team that, while 150 years is an important milestone for our country, Yukoners can't help but notice the lack of funding for so many important areas in this budget and wonder why celebrations are more important than fulfilling the number of old promises that the government had made.

I anxiously await the release of more capital projects to benefit our communities, as do many Yukoners. With the opening of the new F.H. Collins school and the Sarah Steele Building, we have important projects with immense positive impact on our community come to an end. The Salvation Army Centre of Hope is nearing completion. We will soon enough be opening the doors to a beautiful new continuing care facility to relieve pressure on other critical health care facilities. There are a number of critical projects that should be in the hopper, waiting for the green light from this government — projects that would address community problems and needs in the long term and provide a continued stream of work for our construction sector in the short term.

Schools are nearing their life expectancies — I spoke about the one in Burwash. Seismic testing undertaken during the last term of government shows this — and I was glad to see today that we were so fast at inspecting our schools and our government infrastructure, and I thank the minister. I listened to him on the radio bright and early driving into town — good work there.

I have already touched on seniors housing and another good example of this project brought forward to the government by the Vimy Housing Society. They are a determined group and made seniors housing a priority. They have performed extensive planning for the benefit of all seniors in our community. We will all grow old and we will all need somewhere to live, so I would urge the government to reconsider their stance on this project and the others of this nature for our communities. I think I read a motion in the House today.

The Premier stated that this government is allocating \$250,000 to the Dawson City Airport planning. While this is no surprise, as he has been a star advocate for paving the Dawson runway — we have heard him many times in this House — there is no specific mention that this is what the

money will be used for. Is this money going toward expanding the terminal or paving the runway? Has this government reviewed other community airports and aerodromes across the Yukon to determine whether changes and upgrades are required in other communities? This is a vague commitment and should actually have Dawsonites asking for clarification and other community residents asking: "What about us?"

This budget contains money to plan and replace three group homes in Whitehorse — once again, no mention of rural Yukon.

Additionally, there is no mention of this government putting money into other aspects of live-in childcare. Yukon needs foster families. There is no mention of incentivizing foster families to care for Yukon children as an alternative to group homes. The government had six months to consider all problem areas and chose to put planning dollars into group home replacement instead of maybe tackling the areas that would see more positive results immediately.

I look forward to digging down into the Liberal government's 2017-18 budget by departments. There will be news releases with what you are doing and we will learn more. I am hoping that your ministers will be able to provide some thoughtful detail about the questions I have outlined today and many more to come.

By this time in the last mandate, as a new MLA for Klune, I had been given a ministerial portfolio — that was relatively large, I might add. I was also almost through my second Sitting and a barrage of Question Periods. We had had our budget out and contracts were plentiful. I say this not to boast, but to identify that I was new, I was learning and I was overwhelmed. It took me awhile to adjust and figure this out, as I am sure folks across the way can attest to in this House today. I am thankful for the staff I had in the departments who guided and advised me. I am also very happy for the patience back then of my family and friends. It was much appreciated. I also learned something early in life from my family — not to judge or paint people with a broad brush, but to take time to get to know those around you.

In conclusion today, I do look forward to the next five years. We are new and we are getting to know each other — working with the members opposite — so we can keep the Yukon the best place to live, work, play and raise a family.

Mr. Gallina: I stand before you today to reply to the first budget being tabled by this new government. There are several themes I see coming from this budget and the Premier's recent address that I would like speak to, as well as their relation to my constituents in Porter Creek Centre.

First, I would like to recognize the team who put this budget together. This team that I am a part of owns this budget along with its delivery and management. Our caucus has done the difficult job of making responsible financial decisions based on our vision for this territory, which is a result of what we heard from citizens. I want to take this time to thank civil servants for their contributions to the preparations of this plan. As someone who has been through the corporate financial planning process, I can appreciate the

condensed timelines, collaboration required and adjustments needed to be made in light of a government transition to get this budget and financial plan prepared. For their work and dedication to their job and commitment to Yukon people, I say thank you.

Sport and youth initiatives — in my experience as a community investment manager in this territory, I have been fortunate enough to work with many sport and youth organizations. This government has committed to continuing and increasing core funding to a number of youth organizations. This year, our government is investing \$220,000 in additional funding for youth groups. We are investing in resources and supports that help children and youth.

This will fund drop-in centres, leadership training and after-school programs to help young people build confidence and self-esteem. It will support the Boys and Girls Club, the Heart of Riverdale community centre, Bringing Yukon Towards Equality and the Youth of Today Society. We're also investing \$60,000 in the Singletrack to Success program. This will expand the development of mountain biking trails by youth so that young people working on the project will build a sense of achievement.

We're increasing the rate of tax on cigarettes and loose tobacco in order to promote health among Yukon residents, including youth.

I see the value of engaging youth and adults in sporting activities. The Government of Yukon will provide \$325,000 to support the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle to deliver traditional sport development and leadership training in all communities. This will help to train Team Yukon as they proudly represent us at the North American Indigenous Games in July.

Our early childhood development strategy — I'm the father of a young family who has accessed many early childhood services offered here in the territory. I feel fortunate to live here with the services available for my children. During the recent campaign leading up to the 2016 election, I had the opportunity to participate in an early childhood education forum at Yukon College where candidates heard from parents, childcare workers and other interested parties throughout the territory. The format was a question and answer period and the participants were passionate and united in wanting commitments to improving the delivery of early childhood care services in this territory.

At this forum, I listened and heard many questions and concerns. I heard that parents want what's best for their children. Parents of children with special needs face often insurmountable obstacles to receiving adequate services to address the needs of their children and this has an impact on their everyday lives and the lives of their children.

I heard that childcare providers want to understand the children who they are entrusted with caring for every day. They come from a place of caring. When they enter the childcare field, it is top of mind that they foster and encourage development in children and provide support to families. I heard that the participants want firm commitments on

addressing the multiple issues they see every day concerning children. They want less talk and more action. We've heard Yukoners and our government is supporting an early childhood strategy to improve developmental outcomes.

Additional federal funding will help increase the number of subsidized childcare spaces in rural Yukon. That also helps to improve school readiness. Health and wellness begins by helping young people get a good start in life. Yukon is stronger when young people have hope and confidence. A healthy childhood and adolescence is the beginning of success in school, work and life. We are investing in resources and supports that help children and youth.

The reconciliation process — as we look forward, we believe a better future for Yukoners requires a renewed government-to-government relationship with First Nation people of Yukon built on partnership, cooperation and respect. We are wholeheartedly committed to the path of reconciliation. That is why we have committed annual funding to host the Yukon Forum four times per year. After a very successful first meeting of the Yukon Forum earlier this year, we look forward to more productive discussions at the next meeting later this month as we continue to develop a strong working relationship between Yukon and First Nation governments.

We are also investing money to support the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle in delivering training to communities and to Team Yukon to attend the North American Indigenous Games in Toronto. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recognizes the North American Indigenous Games as an important pathway to reconciliation. We are happy to support the athletes and support staff heading into these major games, which promote positive impacts of sport and wellness in indigenous communities.

The government is spending money to coordinate our participation in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which will begin here in our territory at the end of this month, and is also providing funding for indigenous women's organizations. The budget also includes funding for the First Nation housing program as well as a Yukon-made land-based healing program, including renewed commitments to the Jackson Lake healing centre. There are many areas where we can work in partnership with First Nations to ensure that all communities in the Yukon continue to grow and thrive, and the Yukon government is taking a whole-government approach to reconciliation with First Nation governments. By working collaboratively with First Nations, we are moving in a new direction toward a future that will benefit all Yukoners — our whole-government approach.

Beyond forging reconciliation with First Nations, our government is committed to taking a whole-of-government approach to improve the lives of all Yukoners. By coordinating the operations of various departments and corporations, we are ensuring that we take a focused, measured approach to investments in jobs, people, and communities across the territory. By making investments in aging infrastructure, we are protecting the roads, highways,

bridges, airports and airstrips that connect our communities and allow people and goods to move between and beyond them and setting the foundation for future projects and development. By working with First Nations and communities to find innovative energy solutions for the north, we are moving toward a more sustainable future that meets the needs of our growing economy while reducing our impact on the environment. By investing in education initiatives, we are supporting learners of all ages and the teachers and the staff who help them to advance and achieve their educational goals. By spending money on data and tech-based services and initiatives, we are fostering innovation and growth in the territory.

Through investments in home care, addictions and mental wellness, staff and land-based healing programming, we are supporting Yukoners' well-being with effective programs and services. By changing corporate tax rates, we are making Yukon more attractive for investment and growth. Investments in the arts, regional economic development and a territory-wide tourism strategy will help sustain and create good jobs in a diverse and growing economy.

The creation of an expert Financial Advisory Panel will contribute to our efforts to incorporate public input into evidence-based decisions that meet the needs of Yukoners now and into the future. On the Financial Advisory Panel, I see this as an act of responsible government. This isn't about coming up with a scheme to solve all of our problems or a campaign to tell people what we as elected officials think should happen. This is about being open and accountable to the electorate. This is about collaborating with the business community, governments and the community-at-large in an effort to truly outline our financial situation and work toward achievable, well-thought solutions.

As we've seen with a significant reduction in our surplus, if we don't begin to get our financial house in order, we'll be in a situation where Ottawa and other provinces and territories look to us and question the value and benefit of the support they regularly provide us.

This advisory panel includes established Yukoners and qualified financial technicians who know how to properly engage with community stakeholders and report their findings in a non-partisan manner. Mr. Speaker, the benefits of this panel are unquestionable and I look forward to working with my constituents to engage in this process.

In closing, I believe this budget is people-centred, takes an approach to wellness and helps Yukoners thrive. It's strategic and will help build healthy, vibrant communities. It focuses on strong government-to-government relations with First Nations and it will foster reconciliation.

It will help to diversify and grow economies to provide good jobs for Yukoners in an environmentally responsible way.

Ms. McLeod: I would like to begin by thanking the residents of southeast Yukon for their continued support and their trust in me to serve them as MLA for Watson Lake. I'm proud to represent such an incredible, diverse and spirited

group of people and I look forward to the work I'll do on their behalf in this term, both in the riding and in the Legislature. The people I represent are resourceful and strong, and they expect to be respected as a vital part of the whole network of Yukon communities.

They entrust me with their questions and concerns and hold expectations for me to get back to them with answers. I work diligently and quickly with those questions and concerns and respectfully ask that the members of this government do the same — to treat the people of Watson Lake with the same respect they do for their own constituents. I look forward to having critical and meaningful conversations with the new ministers on their behalf.

First, I have to say that I really love budgets. I love budgets from all levels of government and I follow them quite closely and always have. Budgets — especially the territorial budget — affect Yukoners on a very broad level and there are few who escape its effects. My constituents — like most other Yukoners, I'm sure, who pay attention to budgets — all want to know: What's in the budget for me? They all want to know how this budget is going to affect me. How is this budget going to improve my life?

That, of course, is the eye that I turn to when I read the budget. I want to know what's in there. What's going to help? My understanding was that this budget was going to be improved. What I have found is that there is a lot less detail in it. It's a lot more difficult to find out what the money is being spent on, but that's what we have Committee of the Whole for. I'm sure we can dig down into those details because that is where we're going to find out exactly whether or not this budget is doing what it says it does.

I have to convey my disappointment and dismay in the projections that are shown in the budget. For the Yukon to go from no net debt to shocking debt by the end of the Liberal government's mandate is quite simply a misguided and irresponsible approach to handling our taxpayers' money.

As a homeowner and a taxpayer, when I run out of money I have to quit spending. I can't continue to take on debt. It doesn't matter what the family wants. It doesn't matter what I want. I have to stop spending.

Yukoners need to know that their government is not going to follow the federal lead into debt, which, I can assure you, most Canadians are in shock over. They want to see their government live within its means. This is not the picture our government has painted so far, and we are six months in. To claim the good as its own and to pass the buck on whatever is negative — this is what we have seen so far. I hear it over and over again, even though the Premier today sat and said, "We are not going to do that." Then the very next speaker did that.

It has chosen to place blame on the previous government for leaving them with a deficit this fiscal year, complete with the convenient omission of the fact that their government shared almost equally the spending of the 2016-17 fiscal year. The actuals for the 2016-17 year have yet to be released. It blames a \$29.4-million special warrant on the previous government rather than accepting any responsibility for reconvening the Legislature at such a late date — well beyond

the start of a new fiscal year. Living within its means is something that the government cannot show with an infographic. It is shown through thoughtful effort and detailed commitments. I know that we have been criticized over the years for doing that thoughtful work and making a commitment to a balanced budget because, you know, you can't please everybody and somebody is not going to be happy.

But we provided balanced budgets year after year, and I urge the current government to focus on prioritizing. From one look at their projections, our grandchildren will be paying for this government's mistakes for years. The Premier said in his Budget Address that Yukon's current path was leading to further fiscal uncertainty. I cannot imagine what fiscal uncertainty our children and grandchildren will face if this government continues on their new-found path to debt.

The Premier has stated that his government will evaluate the implications of lowering the small business tax rate before making future decreases and, obviously, as the interim Leader of the Official Opposition has said, we would support this. This move obviously involved considerable calculation. If only the government could commit to being calculated and measured with the implications of a carbon tax on citizens before lending its solid support to the notion of the carbon tax. The government has given itself an out if their promise to eliminate the small business tax goes south. Is this going to be what we have to look forward to? A governing team who makes excuses for breaking promises before they even try to fulfill them just in case they don't go the way that they want.

The Premier mentioned in his Speech from the Throne the negotiations his government had with Ottawa for the \$11.4 million in federal contributions for home care and mental health initiatives. This money is stretched over 10 years. We all know that. The \$520,000 per year is not going to go very far. I look forward to seeing how the communities will benefit from this money. Yukoners are well aware of the unique challenges each rural community in Yukon faces with regard to mental health.

I heard earlier today that there are mental health workers — new ones hired and distributed. We have no details on where, when or how, but again, it's one of those things where the devil is in the details and at the end of the day, this money has to go toward helping Yukoners, not simply providing additional jobs. As I say, I look forward to seeing how this figure breaks down and would appreciate seeing a breakdown of how this money will be spent and the analysis that led to the decision of how much to put where.

This government is — I don't want to use the word "indifferent" because that might not be really what I'm trying to say. It hasn't paid enough attention to the fact that Yukon is in need of additional funding for medical travel. That's the conclusion we have to draw from the lack of effort they put in to securing this critical funding during medical funding negotiations with Ottawa. I have not seen any reference to medical funding measures planned for in-Yukon and out-of-Yukon travel for Yukoners, over and above what we have seen already. I have not seen proof that any federal health

funding can in fact be dedicated to medical travel as the government has suggested.

I would like to hear more regarding the investments made to support 11 new full-time addictions and mental wellness workers in rural communities. Again, I'm assuming that was rural communities because I don't think that was actually said. I don't know where these positions are going to be deployed. Again, those are the details we still need to hear, but I am interested to hear the details of the plan and how the government means to allocate funding and personnel.

There is no mention whatsoever to increasing the number of foster families in our territory and I'm disappointed to see that a government that can come up with money to replace group homes can't find the money to look at ways to increase the number of foster families across the Yukon. This would relieve the pressure on group homes. Ideally we would like to see more Yukon children placed with Yukon families. Yukon foster families need help from the government finding ways to attract more foster families. That would see us reduce the strain on the group homes that are not always in favour.

The Premier mentioned in his throne speech the clean water and wastewater projects that will be key priorities this coming year. As I previously stated in this House, Watson Lake has three projects that are approved, they just need to be released for tender. Watson Lake residents have been questioning when these projects will be started for some time, and I hope the Minister of Community Services gets these projects out the door as soon as possible.

I mentioned the aging infrastructure and the importance of upgrades to the town for residents and tourists alike. The Watson Lake Visitor Information Centre is past the point of repairs and upgrades, none of which have been discussed in this budget. This should be a key priority for this government. Replacing the visitor information centre in Watson Lake would be an important step in making Watson Lake the place we all want it to be. As the first impression of Yukon communities to visitors — as the gateway to the Yukon — we need Watson Lake to be a thriving and sustainable community. If government begins with those infrastructure projects already approved and work to identify the next priorities, Watson Lake has the drive to excel and improve. Upgrading the bones of the community — the aging infrastructure — will increase the quality of life for residents. It will give certainty for the future as my community deserves — and indeed all communities across the territory deserve.

The budget highlights make vague reference to investments in aging infrastructure. This of course piques my interest since once again I realized there are very few details contained in this budget. There is no information as to which communities will see these investments, although we did hear that the City of Whitehorse will be getting some major projects funded. There is no information on whether new projects have been identified.

The government has changed the way it highlights the budget. Instead of breakdowns and concise points showing where the government plans to place the money to be spent, they have infographics, pictures of telephone lines and bridges

prepared with bold text. I can appreciate creating a document with visual appeal, but it unfortunately leaves many of us wondering how each picture might apply to our communities. I say it again: when communities read the budget, they want to know what is there for them and how this is going to improve their lives.

The budget depicts \$30 million for infrastructure investments in communities across Yukon. It mentions \$35.8 million for all Yukon highway restoration and rehabilitation projects. It mentions \$6.5 million for restoration and rehabilitation of Yukon airports and airstrips. I'm left wondering what these figures mean for the people of Watson Lake. Do we have more money for infrastructure projects coming our way other than the projects identified and approved under the previous government? Is there restoration and rehabilitation money coming our way for our section of the Alaska Highway? Is our airport and airstrip going to see improvements?

For the safety of the travelling public, brushing of Yukon's highways is of paramount importance. I didn't see any money in the budget for this. The Liberal government has committed to allocating funds to 30 infrastructure projects, naming a number that were underway from the previous government, and it would be nice to see these projects move forward. I look forward to seeing when these tenders will be put out for contractors to bid on and prepare for work so they are busy this year.

I'm encouraged to see that within the government's reflected priorities and visions for Yukon, they included strategic investments to build "... healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities". That's a quote. This is my priority as well. This is my priority for my colleagues and it has always been a priority. I look forward to seeing what this government has in store for our rural communities.

I would like to bring attention to the Liberal plan to make land available for lot development. I appreciate the continuation of lot availability in Whistle Bend as the previous government had worked continuously to make lots ready for families. It's a little hard to understand though why Whistle Bend is the only area referenced for lot availability after the Premier stated his government would ensure land is developed. Does this government have any plans beyond Whistle Bend?

While it's a compliment to us, I guess, to see this ongoing development and funding, I have to wonder what else is going to be developed for the folks around Whitehorse, because there are a lot of people who don't want to live in a subdivision. They want to see some rural development. They want to see some larger lots and some country residential lot development. The people in Whitehorse are not alone there. I think that there are many communities that have not seen land development in many years. I know in Watson Lake, it has been probably 30 years since there has been subdivision development. I'm not even sure that's the way to go at this point. What I do suspect is that there has been no discussion with the Town of Watson Lake in this regard.

What I do suspect is that there has been no discussion with the Town of Watson Lake in this regard.

With regard to tourism, I am happy to see the number of commitments the government has made to the tourism sector within this year's budget. It will be interesting to see when an economic analysis is finally done on the implications of a carbon tax on the tourism sector and whether these investments will be enough to keep the visitor numbers up. I look forward to seeing this — perhaps when Ottawa has time to dedicate to understanding this task on behalf of or in collaboration with our territorial government.

I look to the government's commitment to sustainable economic growth providing good jobs for Yukoners, and I wonder how this relates to southeast Yukon. We know that forestry is at a standstill, and now the Liberal government has suspended the staking of mineral claims for another year. So what is the plan? I look forward to these conversations as we go forward to look more closely at the budget.

I am encouraged to see this government making investments for youth groups a priority and, after all, we agree that our children are our future. I am concerned, however, that certain groups were specifically mentioned and I would like to know what sort of funding is offered for our rural youth. We have heard the Premier comment on funding allocated to the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle to deliver traditional sport development and leadership across the Yukon. That is an incredible way to focus on First Nation traditional sport and I appreciate seeing it in the budget. I look forward to seeing how my community can benefit from this funding. I have not yet come across any dedicated funding to other sport and look forward to hearing more about the other sport funding that this government has dedicated this year but failed to highlight in the budget.

The only reference to physical activity is an investment of \$2.5 million into the F.H. Collins track and field. I understand that, since the track at F.H. Collins was moved due to the construction of the new school, it is warranted and I am happy that it is progressing. But I would like to make note that Watson Lake also has a need for maintenance and upgrading of their track and field. Our small town is having trouble coming up with the \$22,000 that we need for it. Perhaps this government could package that into this \$2.5 million and the worry of raising funds could be eliminated. I bet that Watson Lake isn't the only community affected by a lack of attention to their sport fields. I do want to thank the Department of Education for the contribution that they have made so far in upgrading this track and field. However, it is a job half-done and that is not very good. We have seen almost no investment for a number of years.

I would like to hear the breakdown for the cost of this new track and field during budget debate and see perhaps if there is room to dedicate some of this funding to other jurisdictions. I would also note that, with soccer in full swing, we haven't heard anything from this government on the repair and maintenance of soccer fields across the territory.

While track is an important feature, there are a number of other projects and organizations that should have had

significant enough funding to be listed along with this project. With the dedication of the Department of Community Services in past years with the previous government to funding for other sports organizations, I cannot imagine that the current government has bypassed funding altogether, so I will await news on the funding for sport and sport organizations when we delve into those departments.

Having a couple of Olympians who began their love of sport in our small town, Watson Lake residents hold sport and recreation dear and have a continued appreciation for all sport and what it has to offer our youth.

I'm happy to see just how much this government has built on the good work of the previous government. For the Liberal government to speak at length about all of the hardships they inherited from the Yukon Party, it's rather flattering to see a number of good things coming that are a continuation of our hard work.

They have left out many groups and perhaps that's simply an oversight in speech drafting and I'm sure we'll find out more about that when other organizations stand up and say: "Hey, I think you forgot us."

I can say that Yukoners may benefit in some way or another from this 2017-18 Liberal budget. I'm inclined to believe that a selection of Yukoners will benefit greatly — others, maybe not so much. We have not heard any detail on how this spending will affect rural Yukon or whether the communities will see results. I look forward to going into the budget in greater detail and hopefully it will receive a number of clarifications and answers to my questions.

Just before I conclude, I want to acknowledge that over the years and even as a Yukon Party government, we don't always get what we want for our communities — our ridings. It doesn't mean that today it has to be a hindrance. There are things that I have asked for, for my community for a while. I didn't get them before. I see no reason why I can't continue to work on those projects and why a new government wouldn't support them as being good for Yukoners.

I want to thank everyone for their attention this afternoon and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to rise and respond to the Budget Address on behalf of the good people of Whitehorse West. My little riding is compact — a microcosm of the greater Yukon, rolled up in a neat little package. It is a diverse neighbourhood. There are a few home-based businesses. It has our territory's first and only French-language school, though that is soon to change. I'll advance that in more detail later.

This riding's strength is its people — a diverse, thoughtful bunch who come from across the territory, indeed from across the entire country and the world. These people speak a dazzling array of languages. They reflect the globe's cultures and they come from all walks of life, all professions. So make no mistake, Whitehorse West's issues are the territory's issues and, prior to the last election, the people of Whitehorse West — indeed, the people of the Yukon — asked to be heard.

As I walked the riding last year, I heard from hundreds of people. I heard what they wanted from their government. I heard what direction they wanted the Yukon to go. I heard about education, schools, teachers and curriculum. We're dealing with all that today. I heard about health, mental health and hospitals. Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with that today. I heard about housing and poverty and social work. I am pleased to say we are dealing with those issues today in this budget.

I heard about the need for prenatal nutrition. I heard about libraries and their continued importance in this digital age. I heard about truth and reconciliation. I heard about our jail — about what it's like to be a jail guard.

I heard about what it's like to be a nurse, and I learned what it's like to be a nurse who has been beaten by a patient, about what it's like to be a teacher or a teacher's assistant, and views about how the teaching association or the government's union handles its members. I heard about what it's like to be a police officer and how staffing affects the job. I heard what it's like to be a social worker, about the pressures and the successes in that field. I heard what it's like to work in the hospital's warehouse — a place few of us get to visit, but that, according to those who work there, plays an important role in the supply and delivery of hospital care. I listened to those people; I heard what they had to say, and I'm actually convinced that the warehouse is very important to the way our health care is delivered, but we don't often get there and we don't often pay it much heed.

I heard about homelessness and hunger. I heard what it's like to live on a pension or live without one. I heard what it's like to be a single mother or father and how difficult it is to manage childcare in this territory. I spoke to a woman who had health problems and was forced to sell her trailer because she couldn't afford the mortgage. She was transitioning to social housing and had to leave behind many of her possessions — find a place to store them. She is particularly sad, Mr. Speaker, about moving away from the concrete fireplace she had made that was imprinted with her recently departed dog's paw prints. She was very sad about that, Mr. Speaker. We shared some tears that evening.

I heard what it's like to be in a wheelchair and the challenges around getting regular exercise in this city if you do find yourself in one. I heard about unemployment in industry and mining, and commuting to Saskatchewan for work. This was last year, Mr. Speaker. I also heard about what it's like to commute to the Yukon from Kelowna for work.

I heard about the need to protect our environment and about our trail system in Whitehorse and the territory — some of the challenges about managing use on that trail with ATVs, skiers, hikers and dogs, and how this growing population is going to deal with that.

I heard about our campsites and that they need a little love. We are going to deal with that this afternoon in this budget.

It's a long list. It's quite a list, but it could be a lot longer. It only scratches the surface of some of the things I heard from Whitehorse West residents. I could go on and on and on, but

I'm not going to this afternoon. I'm going to save some stuff for the next several weeks and parse out this information to my colleagues and those on the other side of the House. I'll tell these stories because this is why I'm here. Yukoners asked to be heard. They asked to be heard. This budget — our first budget, this Liberal government's first budget — is putting what we heard in action. All that information is rolled up in this document — this very first effort on the part of my colleagues. It is quite a process building a budget like this — of this size, of this importance. You can imagine a bunch of people fresh out of an election campaign trying to figure out their departments, forging new relationships with their deputies and other managers, learning how this machine works, buffeted by daily issues, and long-existing ones — ones that have existed for years — and simultaneously familiarizing yourself with the rules around the drafting of legislation and committee structure and the job of being in the Legislature, trying to get those committees reformed — committees that have sat dormant for years and that this government has put back into place to represent the people of this territory. We had to familiarize ourselves — learn about being a legislator — all of us have here. Meeting the staff — hundreds of people, each with a story and a role in this civil service, each with their own needs, wants and pieces of advice.

All the while we've been doing this, we've been working out the numbers — working together as a team, trying to juggle the needs of Yukoners and of our constituents with the commitments that we've inherited. We've inherited a lot of commitments. You guys have mentioned them. There's engineering work and environmental screening that has to go on, and all that stuff we've inherited and we're making it work. We've been listening to our departments and the needs they've identified — combing through them, seeing what's vital, and what is perhaps a “want to have” and not a “need to have”.

Fortunately — and I say this seriously, Mr. Speaker — I have a bunch of people around me, both in this caucus and in these departments, with a lot of real-world experience — people I have grown to trust, people who I know will check my own biases and assumptions and will challenge me and will help me do the good work of this government, people who will listen when I tell them what the people of Whitehorse West have told me. Through that process, working together — all of us working together — hammering out this document, having tough conversations and thinking things out, looking at the data where it was available, Mr. Speaker, because it's not always available — we're going to work on that too. We crafted this document.

It took a tremendous amount of work on the part of the civil servants. Our departments were shepherding this new crew through literally billions of decisions — or, rather, decisions worth billions. They worked really hard, exceptionally hard. They put in a ton of hours, a lot of late nights, a lot of time away from their family and their friends. This is what public service is all about, and I'm grateful for the efforts so many put in on our behalf and the people of the

Yukon. This is where we landed. When we began this process, things were looking grim.

The righteous indignation we have seen on the other side of the House is a little rich, Mr. Speaker. Yukoners know what's going on. They do. They're an intelligent, thoughtful and resilient bunch. You just have to look at the media, Mr. Speaker. If they turned to the *Whitehorse Star* on Friday, they know how things are working. "The current government has shown a badly needed degree of wisdom in choosing to tap experienced private-sector advice to launch a major review of how spending decisions are initiated and how the process can be streamlined and improved.

"In fact, the advisory panel the premier announced Thursday is a step that should have been taken several years ago," but wasn't. "Just scan the budget for evidence of that."

They know what's going on. They know where we've ended up.

Some on the opposition benches are a bit befuddled by this government's economic projections. I'm not surprised. They didn't do it. They're not familiar with it. They don't know how it works. This is something new and something they don't understand — planning, looking to the future and giving a true account of the cost of government. That's all new. But they will begin to understand. They will see the wisdom of this transparent, realistic approach to budgeting that this government has taken.

There was a lot of red ink, a lot of commitments — not a lot of planning for those commitments. My colleagues, all of them, rolled up their sleeves and started the hard work of governing. We were and continue to be prepared for that work. As I've said, it took weeks and weeks of late nights and early mornings, a lot of reading, a lot of interpreting, a lot of discussions and poring over the ledgers, talking, evaluating — discussing. Hard questions were asked and answered and eventually things started to come into focus to a better place — not the best place, mind.

It would have been nice to have \$250 million in the bank. It would have been nice to have \$93 million in the bank. It would have been nice even to have \$15 million in the bank, but those days are gone — squandered, I would venture.

Yukoners should look around and assess what they have to show for the Yukon Party spree. What's the legacy? What was the plan? Where were we supposed to land? They haven't said. They're not saying anything. They won't say now. We're legislators, not illusionists, not conjurers. There were no rabbits being pulled from hats, their legs flailing to the delight of the crowd. We have limited resources, so as the Premier noted that when we build a facility like Whistle Bend and do not factor in the cost of operating that facility — a cost that will be between \$20 million and \$30 million, perhaps more — well, it's baffling how you could do that. Citizens in the territory might have another name for it. I will let them weigh in on that on their own. I know they have their opinions.

When you don't account for things like that it will eventually have an effect. As my good friend, the member for Copperbelt South just said, chickens will come home to roost. Well, this Liberal government inherited a few chickens and, to

be honest, we suspected we might. We're prepared to deal with them on behalf of all Yukoners. We were in fact elected to deal with them, and this first budget is our start at dealing with them.

It is not going to be easy, of course, but a little hard work on behalf of a good cause and for a brighter future for this territory and its citizens — well, who can begrudge that? The people on these benches will deal with it. My colleagues are a thoughtful, committed and deeply experienced crew. We are considered and measured. Yukoners are an innovative and hardy bunch. Working with our constituents and all citizens, we will bring order to these finances. We will bring order from the chaos. It has already begun with the document the Premier tabled last week. Deficits were pared back. This year, everyone expected a deficit, but we didn't want one. We didn't want a deficit. We worked hard to pare and prioritize, to plan and to execute a new way of doing business. As I said, it took weeks and we delivered a small surplus — a sliver of a surplus. That was a clever headline, Mr. Speaker — hats off to the scribe who penned that one. The hard work is not over. There is much more to be done. With Whistle Bend, the French school and other infrastructure we have inherited, once all that comes on line we will face deficits. We are being open about it. We are talking about it. The members opposite don't quite understand that approach, but that is all right. That is what we were elected to do.

These deficits are not what we wanted. It is not something that we ever wanted this territory to contend with. A \$250-million surplus would have been far better — or \$93 million, as I have said. We have nothing — less than nothing in fact. However, by sharpening our pencils and getting to work — a lot of hard work — we created a \$6.5-million surplus this year. We have started turning the ship. It is a big ship and it will require a lot more effort to turn it further, but this little government will turn it. We will do it. As I said, it is not where we want to be, but it is what we have inherited and we will deal with it methodically and with consideration, with planning and reason, with transparency and cooperation.

Of course, we have things we wanted to do and because of the finances we inherited, we had to reassess. We have had to reprioritize. We had to delay their implementation — delay, not eliminate. For example, our good friends on the Official Opposition benches are chattering a lot about our promises and, yes, we wanted to drop the small business tax to zero. That was our promise. We take promises seriously on this side — very seriously. It was painful for us to see the books, to realize the trap we had stumbled into — that the cupboards were bare and there was just a mess of IOUs in the cupboards. That was a much-publicized \$9.4-million surplus. It was actually an \$8.2-million deficit. That is a shock. As I said, my talented colleagues went to work and, working together, we made decisions — hard decisions, responsible decisions, tough ones. They still grate on us, believe me. None of us like this. It would have been easy to push on, ignore what we have learned and just execute on a promise to lower taxes to zero. Why didn't we? It was not the right decision today.

Things change — things were not as they seemed. They were not what the public had been told, given the circumstances — the real circumstances, not the illusory. It was not in the best interest of our citizens of the territory. Our situation has changed and we as Liberals assessed that. We did the right thing, not the easy thing — the hard thing. That is the devil's bargain. That is the job and we will do the job. I have heard that steely resolve in my colleagues — that resolve to serve all of our citizens' best interests. We put our good names on the line to serve Yukoners, so we are and we will.

In this one case, our promise was taken from us with the poor management that preceded us. We'll take our lumps. We'll make the hard decisions, not the expedient ones, and we'll serve Yukoners.

By expanding mental health services in the communities — my constituents asked for that and this government is delivering on that promise. It will diversify the delivery of health care in the territory.

For more than 20 years, I've heard about efforts to incorporate midwifery into the Yukon health care system. This government — my colleagues are going to do it. It's fixing primary health care, making sure citizens have access to doctors, nurse practitioners or nurses with expanded roles. It is expanding the services that can be delivered by pharmacists. Expanding services — that's what we're doing. We're not building stuff; we're expanding services. We're training new nurses annually instead of every 18 months. My constituents asked for that. We're delivering on that promise, Mr. Speaker. We're listening. We're investing in addiction services at the Sarah Steele Building and on the land — land-based healing. This government is investing in childcare. As I said earlier, we'll build a new French high school. We have \$8 million dedicated to that project.

This government is also pushing ahead with reconciliation with First Nations. We're an active participant in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We're amending the *Human Rights Act* and the *Vital Statistics Act* to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender identity or gender expression — again, things that my constituents and constituents across this government asked for.

We're investing in affordable, accessible and safe housing across Yukon. In Whistle Bend, we're investing \$9.8 million in lots and we're doing phase 4 planning. Why? Because we're looking down the road a little bit — that's what we do when we're a government. We look ahead and see what demands are going to come when we build a Whistle Bend facility that requires hundreds of new staff. Where are they going to live? Planning for housing lots is important to this territory to make sure that we don't run into that sort of shortage that our predecessors orchestrated.

We're going to eliminate diesel as a primary source of energy in the Yukon. We'll do this methodically through considered and measured investments and retrofits, renewable energy and alternative energy initiatives.

We are working with First Nations and municipalities. This doesn't cost money, but it makes financial sense working

together, because working together we spend money more efficiently. Our citizens across the territory — all citizens — get better bang for their buck. This cooperation brings more planning, more certainty for our resource sector.

Part of this reconciliation process is healing. There is a new statutory holiday. That holiday — with all its trimmings — as it evolves, will create new economic opportunities for businesses and communities throughout the territory. We will all be richer for it.

We are working to expand the tourism sector. We are working with the agricultural sector to build on initiatives of Yukon farmers and agricultural producers. We are delivering on a lot of promises. Because of this, the territory's citizens are optimistic; they see a lot of promise. For me — I'm working to improve airports. We are gathering all of the information we need to make an informed decision on the Dawson City runway paving. We are doing what we said.

We are completing a review of the territory's airports and aerodromes. There are four airports and 25 aerodromes in the territory. Once that review is done and once we have the information, we will invest properly, methodically considered. We will invest in our airports to enhance economic activities and improve community safety.

I've listened to pilots, I've listened to air carriers, I've listened to those who own aircraft, I've spoke to a couple of people who jump out of aircraft — fixed-wing and rotary-wing enthusiasts, owners, pilots, people who love aerodromes, people who are just enthusiasts. They have told me what their frustrations are — their long-term frustrations, years-long frustrations. They have told me what their hopes and dreams are and how they would improve airports. We are listening and we will work to improve this important community infrastructure.

We are investing, as my colleagues across the House said, \$6.5 million to improve, restore and rehabilitate Yukon airports and aerodromes. As the Leader of the Official Opposition has noted — and I appreciate his support on this: in this budget, we are buying the gear we need to keep improving our community runways.

This government is starting to pull together an open data repository. We want to get more information before the public we serve. We are developing and implementing e-health services for our citizens. We will spend \$1.6 million on that this year, Mr. Speaker — improving health care.

We are starting to improve our *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. We want easier and broader access to government information that balances the privacy of our citizens. We are working hard to increase the technology envelope to support economic diversification and innovation in the information and technology sector. As my esteemed colleague from Porter Creek North has said, we have two applications in on bandwidth to improve and bring the redundancy that this territory needs to diversify and improve its tech sector.

We are improving hiring to create an open, transparent and inclusive civil service. We are supporting, as I said, reconciliation with First Nations. My colleagues and I are

working to improve staff housing and to fix procurement. We want to increase the ability of local businesses and First Nations to secure government tenders through changes in how government buys goods and services. This is a huge job, Mr. Speaker. It requires a lot of work and attention. We have been gathering the information, reading the reports, poring over the documents, discussing the problems and opportunities. We know where the frustrations with the business community lie. We know where the frustrations with the chambers lie. We know why the contractors are frustrated. We are now working to fix the problems. We are working to get the large seasonal contracts tendered by March 31, 2018. We are working on getting a five-year plan — a plan, Mr. Speaker — so contractors know what is coming and can prepare their businesses, to get the partnerships and skills necessary to do the work that is coming down in the future.

The goal is to be measured and considered. We want to seek out information and do the research to consider what we're doing. That's important. That's what Yukoners want. That's what they asked for — to be heard, to make sound decisions based on real information and to make the tough decisions when the information warrants it. That's what this government committed to; that's what this government will do.

This Yukon Liberal wants to make Yukoners' lives better — all Yukoners. We're focused on creating jobs, strengthening and diversifying the economy and protecting the environment. We are working together as a government and we're working together with other governments, with First Nations and municipalities. We're working with the unions. We are working with the business community, with the chambers, with non-profit organizations. We want all communities in the Yukon to grow, to be healthy, diverse and thriving. This is a whole-of-the-Yukon approach, comprehensive and inclusive because nobody has a hamperlock on good ideas.

We have reached out to the opposition, to both parties, to work together on behalf of all Yukoners to turn this government around. It's a real offer. It's a real change. We want to work together. We're working within the fiscal constraints created by the past government's mismanagement. That has forced us to adapt to take a hard look at our promises and make some hard choices, not blunting our resolve.

We have a long-term plan that will create jobs and improve the quality of life for all Yukoners. Our government is committed to strengthening and diversifying the Yukon economy. It is committed to making life better for all. We are investing in our people. We are investing in our businesses and in our industries to diversify the economy. Yukoners asked for a coordinated approach to the economy. Yukoners asked for a methodical, evidence-based approach to governance. They asked for collaboration. They've asked for a lessening of the corrosive partisanship that has marked other legislative sessions. We're prepared to do that, Mr. Speaker. We're prepared to work together. We're providing the government Yukoners asked for. We're providing the

leadership they asked for. Yukoners asked to be heard. This budget demonstrates that we're listening.

Mr. Cathers: It gives me pleasure to rise and to speak to the budget tabled. I would like to first of all, in rising in this Assembly, begin my budget speech by thanking my constituents for the opportunity to continue to serve them and work with them as their MLA. It has been a pleasure working with them and representing them during the past 14 years as MLA for Lake Laberge, plus the months since the election campaign.

I would also like to thank everyone who helped with my campaign, including family and friends, several of whom had spent several weeks of their time last year helping me with my re-election campaign. I am especially grateful to those people who donated large portions of their time, putting their own lives on hold, to help me in that regard.

I would like to begin by talking about some of the good things in this budget before I point out areas where I think it's lacking.

I look forward in future budget debate — during department-by-department debate — getting information about whether priorities of my constituents are reflected in this budget. I understand from the briefing by officials that there is something contained within the Highways and Public Works budget for the Takhini River bridge which, as I identified in a letter to the Premier, is the most common capital priority I've heard from constituents — wanting to see the pedestrian and cyclist walkway that we planned to add this year put on to the Takhini River bridge to improve safety, and also to begin the longer term planning for replacement of the Takhini River bridge on the Mayo Road with a wider bridge.

My constituents are also interested in seeing continued investments, such as in Ibex Valley. The Ibex Valley Local Advisory Council has, I believe, written to the government, identifying their interest in seeing a community well developed in Ibex Valley. That is a request that I support, as MLA for the area.

I am pleased to see that there is continued funding in this year's budget for programs that came from my constituents originally as ideas, including the rural well program. This is notably one that has, as of the last figures I had, resulted in over 320 families receiving wells drilled as a result of the program loaning them money. It is set up in a way that the loans are 100-percent repayable.

I would also like to commend — I look forward to hearing a breakdown of where the new fire trucks that are included in this year's budget are to be located. I also look forward to hearing information about where the ambulances that are being purchased are planned to be sent to eventually, or what the rollout schedule is for them. I should correct myself — typically the ambulances begin their life of service in Whitehorse to test them out, but I'm interested in hearing from the Minister of Community Services what communities will get the ones that had recently been in Whitehorse during that test phase.

I would also like to commend the Liberal government for continuing our practice of — in the last five years, we've made significant investments in both fire and EMS with a significant purchase of new vehicles every year. I notice that, this year, the purchase of ambulances is actually higher than what officials had recommended to us in the past, which was the replacement of two per year, but I'm certainly not going to criticize that additional investment. I commend the government for recognizing the need to continue to invest in these areas, as we did during our time in government.

I'm also pleased to see new funding for the rural mental health and addictions positions. I look forward to hearing more details about that spending. I'm pleased to see funding for EMS with — let me get the exact wording of that commitment here. I believe that somewhere in my notes, there was a notation of increased funding for the electronic information system at EMS, which I'm pleased to see.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to note — returning briefly to constituency priorities — that I have appreciated the opportunity to have a conversation as well as correspondence with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Community Services about the interest a number of my constituents have in developing increased recreational opportunities within the area. The opening of the research forest is something that was important to my constituents. It used to be walled off from the public and only accessible to government staff. In fact, through developing it, there are many people who are not only appreciating the forest and the opportunity for increased recreational activity, but they also understand the research better, so that research is going to a far broader audience than it previously would have. As I noted in correspondence with both the ministers I referred to, there is an interest by my constituents in seeing increased recreational opportunities within our area, which includes Ibex Valley, Hidden Valley and MacPherson, the Takhini Hot Springs Road and the Mayo Road areas. That interest includes seeing the trails within the research forest potentially packed by a snow machine under limited access in the winter to preserve the generally non-motorized nature of those trails while allowing for uses such as kicksleds to have a better packed trail within the area.

There is an ongoing discussion now about the possibility of developing a community centre. As I briefly conveyed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources during a conversation, there is an interest in seeing a community centre — the most commonly thought of location I am hearing from constituents, and which came up at a recent meeting I held to discuss recreational infrastructure is the potential for developing that at the research forest area through simply adding an addition on to the existing building that is at that location — to better meet the needs of the community. I look forward to continuing to talk to ministers opposite about that and to receive more information on it.

I was disappointed that there does not appear to be money in the budget for the expansion of cellphone service, as the Leader of the Official Opposition noted. We would like to see — are urging the government to move forward with the

expansion of cellphone service to areas including Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fox Lake, Mendenhall, Junction 37 and Champagne. That would build on the work that we did during our time in office of supporting the expansion of this communication service and emergency service to a number of Yukon communities that otherwise would probably still to this day not have cellular phone service. That has provided a benefit to Yukoners, both in terms of economic and social means as well as emergency services in times of need. It has allowed them to call 911. I would be remiss if I did not note that as we are now still into the first year of rural 911 service, I would like to again thank the officials in both Community Services and Justice who I worked with on that, as well as thanking previous colleagues who contributed to those files, including the honourable Currie Dixon and the honourable Elaine Taylor.

I would like to thank as well Northwestel and the RCMP for their assistance in both the creation of the new 911 call centre and the expansion of 911 services to all Yukon communities.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be talking at great length on the speech. I'm very interested, as I know are my colleagues, in digging into the details in departmental debate. We are, quite frankly, concerned about the numbers shown here in the Liberal government's new projections. It flies in the face of the information that we had from Finance officials.

I have to start in beginning my critique of the budget that I'm disappointed that there seems to be the notion on the government side that somehow the Finance officials in the Yukon government and senior managers within other government departments don't have a handle on the financial picture. Quite frankly, having worked with all these people, I know that they do have a very good understanding of the finances of each and every government department and the territory. They have an excellent understanding, particularly within the Department of Finance, of the areas where typically government lapses and revotes money, both in terms of O&M and capital, and have a good understanding of cost pressures that can emerge within the fiscal year.

I would also like to note that when the members — there seems to be this notion or the assertion on the part of the Premier and most recently the Minister of Highways and Public Works that somehow supplemental budgets are a bad thing and that increased spending is due to poor decision-making. I would point out to members that there are a couple of good reasons why that is not always the case. A notable one is increases in the wildfire season that can have a very significant impact on the fiscal picture. In the 2013 fire year, we had to spend an additional \$7.5 million over what had been budgeted, due to a much higher than normal year for wildfires. Budgeting for wildfires is not something that can really be done. Climatologists can, to some extent, predict whether a season is thought to be or is likely to be warmer and drier, but those predictions often go awry because of the imperfections of trying to predict long-term weather patterns.

Again, an area like that is one where I would think most Yukoners would agree governments should maintain cash in

the bank to deal with an unexpectedly high fire season. When there becomes a need for more resources than normal, government has no choice but to invest in increased personnel on the ground as well as increased helicopter time and air tanker time simply to keep Yukon communities safe.

Another example of an area where I would point to the government that funding in the supplementary budget is not a bad thing is in the area of new and emerging pressures and priorities. I'll give an example of one of those that occurred after the start of the 2016-17 fiscal year and which the Minister of Tourism and Culture was a part of. I commend her, as well as Kwanlin Dün, for their work with us on the community safety officer program that was put in place by Kwanlin Dün.

That is an area where, when Kwanlin Dün came to us with a request for that — they had first approached us early in 2016 — but Kwanlin Dün First Nation did not itself have final numbers on the program when the budget was tabled in the Legislative Assembly, so government had two options. We could have partnered with Kwanlin Dün, as we did, and got the program up and running, or we could have left it to the point where we would still be in this Assembly today and there would still not have been funding for this program, which, from what I hear, is working quite well.

I would again point to that as an area where the current Cabinet might want to rethink their views on this and realize that, sometimes when those emerging pressures and requests emerge, I would hope they would share our view that it was better for government to step in at that point and partner with Kwanlin Dün than it would have been to say to them, "We've done our budget for the year, and you're going to have to wait until April or May 2017 before we're in a position to consider this request."

I would also note that one of the things that has not been noted by the Premier and others in some of the narrative around the budget is areas where the previous government had booked more as a contingency than ended up being required. In fact, if they were to sit down with Finance officials and officials from departments and actually work with them and listen to their advice, they would develop a much better understanding of the budget and would realize that, rather than bringing in a bunch of so-called "outside experts", they can actually get a better understanding of the budget by working with the dedicated and competent staff of the Yukon government.

I hear the Premier scoffing at that, but I would point out again that the picture presented by the current government, in terms of their projections, is significantly different from the best information we had from officials when we left office. Quite frankly, we are concerned by that. We don't know whether they have overbudgeted so they can, after the Financial Advisory Panel, claim a victory in solving the problem that didn't actually exist in the first place, or if they've made mistakes in those projections or if they're planning to significantly increase spending beyond what is necessary to continue the current government services.

I do have to point out to the public, who may not be aware of all the details in the budget, that if you look to the significant difference between what we had tabled in the Legislative Assembly — which was, I would point out, developed by the Yukon government and senior officials — there's a very big difference in those numbers. While the members of the new government like to stand up and try to paint a picture, as the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission said — let me get his exact words here. The Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission referred to the need to bring — in his words — order from chaos.

Quite frankly, on behalf of officials of government who work with government and provide advice on what needs to be tabled, I am offended by those comments — that they have indicated that officials would be part of such a chaotic approach and need this new Financial Advisory Panel somehow to help get them out of this supposed swamp.

I would also note that for Yukoners who are listening or reading this in Hansard, we see a significant reduction in the information provided in the budget highlights in this year's budget compared with the budget from the last fiscal year. The budget as tabled by then Premier and Finance minister Pasloski in April of last year included 11 pages of budget highlights. There was, for the Department of Community Services alone, over an entire page dedicated to that department. Likewise there are other departments, such as Health and Social Services — also more than a page dedicated to that department alone. With a breakdown for everything, Health and Social Services listed the amounts budgeted for construction of Whistle Bend, the amounts budgeted for the Salvation Army Centre of Hope, the replacement of Sarah Steele alcohol and drug services and MRI and emergency room expansion. I won't go through the entire list here in the interest of time but again, that department alone had over one page dedicated to it. We've seen the 11 pages of budget highlights whittled down to a mere four. Quite frankly I question that decision. It seems to demonstrate less transparency and less accountability from a government that promised to be more transparent and more accountable.

In the four pages of budget highlights included in the budget tabled by the Premier, in fact there is less information on those pages than was included in the last budget. The budget that was tabled in 2016 has pages full of text. It's not pretty, but it provides a lot of information. The budget tabled by the current Premier is prettier because the pages are taken up with pictures and infographics — and there is less information. I don't see how that is becoming more transparent and more accountable. From my perspective, there is less content, less detail, simply more fluff and platitudes, but less transparency.

Specific areas that I'm particularly concerned about include the amount of red ink in this budget. I should return to something I missed mentioning — I thought about something else, but I should return again to pointing out for Yukoners who are listening the difference between the surplus and the deficit for the 2018-19 fiscal year as presented by the Yukon

Party government last year and the difference projected by the current government this year.

In the budget tabled last year, which reflected the best available information at the time, it showed for the 2018-19 fiscal year an anticipated annual surplus of \$29.03 million. For the 2019-20 fiscal year, there was a projected annual surplus of \$17.5 million and we, quite frankly, are baffled and very concerned about how the current Liberal government has changed the 2018-19 projected estimate from \$29 million in an annual surplus to an annual deficit of \$48.9 million and how they've changed an annual surplus in 2019-20 from the \$17.5 million annual surplus projected to a projected deficit for that fiscal year of \$58 million — also notably comparing the net financial assets end of year of what we understood to be the case last year and tabled in this House to what is tabled by the current government.

We've seen the net financial assets in 2018-19 — we had projected net financial assets end of year at \$38.079 million — effectively \$38 million of cash in the bank, on top of the fact that there was going to be an annual surplus for that year. Again, the net financial assets — i.e. cash in the bank — for the 2019-20 fiscal year was \$27.62 million. The current Liberal government has changed that \$27 million of cash in the bank to \$216.25 million in red ink.

Mr. Speaker, we can think of three potential reasons for the change: either planned increase significantly in spending beyond what is necessary, a deliberate over-projection — for example, it's potentially the —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Minister for Community Services, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I just heard the member opposite suggest that we were giving a deliberate overprojection, which sounds like we are misleading. I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I'm unaware of the exact — 19(i) or 19(j) or whatever it is — but that's what I'm raising as an issue.

Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: I believe the Standing Order the member meant to reference is 19(g), and I don't believe that I have contravened that Standing Order. I was explaining three different potential reasons. I did not accuse anyone of lying. I suggested that perhaps there was overprojection.

Speaker: Are there any other submissions on this point of order?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I support the point of order. It's the second time the honourable member has come very close — I almost stood the first time — but I think, in context, what's important is that he is suggesting that there could be falsehoods being put forward by this government that will later be corrected.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, I suggest that you refrain from using the term “deliberate misstatement”. In my

view, that does come within — I can review it later, but that comes within the purview of section 19(g) of the Standing Orders, so I would suggest, in your submissions on this debate, to avoid the reference to a deliberate misstatement.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will of course respect your ruling on that and I will rephrase that as an overprojection of costs.

If the overprojecting is occurring, it may be a case of perhaps another explanation. Explanation number two is that perhaps they simply don't understand the fiscal picture and don't understand things such as typical lapses in everything, such as personnel and capital, or naively believe that government can completely avoid those lapses.

The third potential reason is potentially that government plans to increase spending significantly to — if I may quote the Premier while in opposition — “buy the hearts and minds of Yukon voters”. Again, we do not believe these numbers are accurate or reflect the finances unless one of those three reasons has occurred, and we believe that it is entirely a choice made by government, not a reflection of basic needs. If the current government chooses to go from a fiscal picture that would have seen government with cash in the bank and an annual surplus in the 2019-20 fiscal year to their plan, that would see government \$58 million in an annual deficit and \$216 million in red ink or long-term debt, and we don't believe that represents a responsible trajectory.

I look forward to digging into the details of this in future debates with members. I also note that this has been made more difficult for anyone to dig to the bottom of because of the choice to use two special warrants and spend almost half-a-billion dollars through those measures. It does make it easier to potentially blur the lines between the fiscal years and, certainly for the media and anyone not intimately familiar with the government's finances, it makes it harder to see where this government has — as we know they have — made choices to spend during the last half of the fiscal year that represent new spending. As I noted to the media, in fact some of those initiatives are good initiatives but they are new spending.

I would also note that we have a situation where the choice of when to book the pension plan solvency deficit for both the hospital and the college was a new, emerging issue that could have and should have been booked in this fiscal year and the choice to book that roughly \$4-million figure in the past fiscal year counts for \$8.2 million of the supposed deficit and would reduce the current financial surplus for this fiscal year to a mere \$2.5 million, down from the current number.

I would also note that we see a reduction in corporate taxes. We also understand from officials that this will lead to an increase in personal tax revenue as a result of that. I think that the Premier should be up-front with Yukoners about who is going to be seeing a tax increase and why.

Other specific projects that I don't see included in this budget — we are concerned by the lack of funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation, both in terms of O&M and for

specific projects. Those include the Meditech replacement system. For Yukoners who aren't familiar with that, Meditech is an electronic health information system used by the hospital. It is also used to share information with specialists and hospitals Outside. That technology is in need of replacement. The fact that there does not appear to be money for that is of concern because that system is reaching a point where it is not interacting as well as it used to with Outside systems. That has a real impact on the efficiency of the system. Because of the importance of the situation they are dealing with, it is also something that can potentially be a matter of life and death — whether the system is running. Not to overstate the situation, but I would note that this is a critically important piece of the hospital's infrastructure, and I would encourage the government to recognize that need and fund that replacement project as early as it is humanly possible to do.

We are also concerned — as alluded to in the motion for the production of papers by my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake and the Health and Social Services critic — that we had understood, based on projections, that the hospital's needs for this fiscal year are higher than what we see included in this budget. This is based on our understanding of the projections for costs, based on increased cost pressures, including the increased costs of chemotherapy drugs, increased volume of chemotherapy, increased volume in the medical imaging and lab department and increased staffing costs associated with the emergency room expansion and last, but not least, the fact that the hospital's current funding agreement funds it based on an estimated 75-percent occupancy and it has currently been running closer to 100 percent. Based on all of those reasons, our understanding was that simply to maintain its current level of services, the Yukon Hospital Corporation needed fully three-percent more of an increase to its budget than is included within the budget tabled here in the House.

I would again note that, in saying that to the members, I am not going to paint any doom-and-gloom scenarios. I am going to simply say — and say sincerely — we believe that you have underbudgeted for the Hospital Corporation and you need to recognize the cost pressures. If they don't have the funding they need, their only option is to look for areas to reduce services. As noted by my colleagues, despite all the claims of accurate budgeting and fully projecting costs, we not only see the reduction of the pages showing the budget highlights, but we see the fact that there is nothing budgeted for a carbon tax that will come into place within this fiscal year.

In the area of Whistle Bend operation and maintenance costs, as I pointed out to the Premier and Minister of Finance earlier today, not only did the Minister of Health and Social Services state the costs, what he said in the House was substantially higher than the Premier referenced. In fact, he stated those costs while the Premier and then-Member for Klondike was sitting in his seat in this Legislative Assembly last April. Again, we would encourage him — in fact he may

wish to review that and consider whether he wishes to retract his remarks and apologize for that statement.

One thing on my list of positive things that I missed mentioning is that I am pleased to see that the Liberal government has continued funding for the physician recruitment and retention initiatives, the health education bursaries and the nursing education bursaries. We had heard rumours that they were considering eliminating those and we believe that those programs have been very useful at providing over 100 Yukoners with training in health professions, as well as being an important part of our overall initiatives in attracting and retaining physicians here in the territory.

I meant to — in my earlier remarks — I will correct that error now and I thank the Official Opposition Leader for the roles that he has entrusted me to take on as critic for the Official Opposition, which include Finance, Justice, the Protective Services area of Community Services and Sustainable Resources from Energy, Mines and Resources. I would like to thank him and all my caucus colleagues for the opportunity to continue to work with them and their support for me in those roles and in this Assembly.

I would also like to thank our staff as well as many volunteers from the Yukon Party for their continued support of all of us in doing the work that we do. Without all of them, we would not be able to be as effective in these roles as we intend to be during the life of this Legislative Assembly.

As I drop my books, I would like to note as well that, as my colleague the Member for Watson Lake pointed out, it's important for Yukoners listening that the new Liberal government was government for the latter half of the 2016-17 fiscal year. We are not going to spend as much time talking about the past as the future, beyond the fact that we will point out to Yukoners through debate in this Assembly — we will demonstrate the fact that, in fact, contrary to the assertions of the government, we did leave them with cash in the bank and an annual surplus for the 2016-17 fiscal year.

In fact, when you look at spending decisions that they decided to take on in the latter half of the year, as well as things that they decided to book in the 2016-17 fiscal year — when you take those numbers away, Yukoners can see that we left them over \$100 million of cash in the bank. Net financial assets are commonly called "cash in the bank", but are literally cash and cash equivalents. I would point out to members that when the Yukon Party took office after the Liberal government's time in the Cabinet offices, we were literally a million dollars from triggering the *Taxpayer Protection Act* because of the situation they had left government in. The Liberal government, under the Premier of that day, had literally been paying interest charges to meet payroll during that fiscal year.

I know members are looking at the budget and I think they may even be finding it a genuinely daunting task, but it's important to recognize that times aren't as tough as you think they are and no other new government has ever inherited \$100 million of cash in the bank.

The pressures you have for future fiscal years — if you're looking for help on how to find your way through it, you will find that, contrary to the plan to get in a bunch of Outside experts, the advice you need is within the Department of Finance, as well as within some recently retired Finance officials — if they're looking for Outside advice — who can tell them exactly how to understand the budget and how to improve and manage governments, both within the fiscal year and understanding how to accurately project for future fiscal years.

I'll just briefly rebut a few of the outlandish statements made by the Minister for Highways and Public Works, the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, and note that, contrary to his assertion that the government has reinvigorated committees that sat dormant for years, there's one committee that hadn't met in recent years, of all the standing committees, and that is the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. That committee actually hasn't gotten down to work yet, but I would note that one of the reasons it wasn't active in previous years was that there had been no request from either the Official Opposition or the Third Party to reactivate that committee. While we'll give the government credit for calling a meeting of this committee, I would also note that we had suggested that and suggested to them two areas where this committee should focus its efforts on studying the way that regulations are interpreted and consider making recommendations to the government on improvements in those areas. Just for public knowledge, those areas that we have proposed — we have suggested the committee should review how the building inspections office is interpreting the Building Code — and the way the appeal process that is theoretically in place has never actually been used under the act, so we are suggesting that's an area for review. We have also suggested a review of the way that Environmental Health Services is conducting its work, and considering whether changes are necessary in that area. That's based on what we've heard from Yukoners on the doorsteps, both during the last election and since that time.

While I won't spend a lot of time rebutting the former editor of the *Yukon News*, a long-standing critic of everything Yukon Party — and previously of the Liberals, by the way — I would note that, contrary to his statement and assertion that we're befuddled and there's something new, something we don't understand, the only thing we don't understand is where you're getting your numbers from. We had a detailed picture of the future cost pressures of government presented by officials and tabled in this Legislative Assembly last year by the former Premier. We can only see the three explanations I listed for the dramatic change in this government's projections.

I will note my very sincere disappointment that government seems to have so little confidence in senior managers and Finance staff that it's calling in so-called Outside experts to fix the problem. I don't see a problem with them calling in someone to provide additional advice, but it's really notable that on this committee they don't have a single member of the Yukon government public service. There is no

one currently from the Department of Finance; there are no past employees, no past senior managers. There seems to be an attitude from the current government that these people didn't know what they are doing. In fact, I believe that to be fundamentally wrong and mistaken.

Understanding that I'm wrapping up my time and I talked longer than I thought I did, I will simply note that, in conclusion, the government will find that we will be tough critics but they will find that points we are raising are ones being raised by Yukoners and are points that need to be made.

It will find as well that in areas — if they are willing to work with us as they indicate they are on things such as the priorities of our constituents, if we make a request and get a reasonable response, we will also give credit where credit is due for the fact that they've chosen to work with us in those areas.

With that, I will wrap up my remarks and look forward to further debate on the 2017-18 budget.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: With respect to addressing the Member for Lake Laberge — I'm new at this as well, but what I would say to you is that I understand that there is a fundamental disagreement with respect to how numbers have arisen and how they have been arrived at, and I would hope that, during the course of this legislative session, there will be a wholesome debate as to how the numbers are arrived at and you will receive, hopefully, satisfactory answers going forward.

I understand your concern. Obviously you have concerns as to how the numbers going forward have arisen and I look forward to the debate.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Before I move into the discussion on the budget, I would like to thank the members of the Official Opposition for bringing some of their personal insights into their speeches today, as many of us did last week. I appreciate that — for you to take this opportunity to do so.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members, friends, people of the Yukon, I rise in the House today to stand with my Liberal colleagues in support of our first budget for 2017-18.

We deliberated long and hard over this budget. We found ourselves in a much less fortunate situation than we expected coming into office and had difficult choices to make. Our values and enduring priorities are reflected in this budget.

The values and priorities of Yukon people as we understand them are reflected here as well. They are the foundation of all we do. This budget has been said to be a careful budget. I agree that we have been careful with Yukon's public purse and careful not to be more disruptive than needed as we take our leadership responsibilities.

I believe careful and incremental change can lead to bold outcomes to make our inspiring vision for Yukon come alive. I also believe in using evidence and good advice in moving forward, and I will not speak on behalf of our Minister of Finance. I'll leave that to him to discuss the panel and the decisions made around that.

Moving forward, this includes honouring our First Nation traditional knowledge and lived experience as an important source of wisdom. Our government is working with Yukoners to make lives better. The budget includes responsive investments in programs and services to support Yukon individuals, families and communities. Yukon businesses are the backbone of our economy and we are committed to working with them to diversify the economy, create more jobs and build business opportunities. The environment is the legacy inherited from our ancestors and we are stewards for the future generations.

Our amazing landscapes and healthy environment is foundational to the growth of tourism. We can grow a sustainable economy and create opportunities at the same time as we protect our environment. It is very important to us as Yukoners.

During my campaign, I promised to lead with integrity. I promised to carry out my responsibilities in a respectful way. I made a commitment to bring people together to create our own Yukon version of reconciliation. My intentions remain the same as I do my best to carry out my responsibilities and support my Cabinet and caucus colleagues as we work together.

I deeply respect the role of public servants — the people who serve Yukoners each day at the front lines, as well as many people in support. The management roles are essential to the quality of life for the Yukon. We could not do what we do without dedicated and inspired public servants. I remain committed to contributing to the best quality of work life possible for those individuals working with me.

Government-to-government relationships with First Nations and fully engaging municipalities are both key to building vibrant communities. Our budget invests in working together.

Our budget in Tourism is just over \$32 million. Although a small budget in relative terms, Tourism and Culture plays a significant role in the territory and the lives of Yukon people. Over this next year, the department will invest \$9 million in local businesses and non-profit organizations to support development in tourism, historic sites, heritage resources, arts and archives. Operations funding will be provided to 11 museums and seven First Nation cultural centres as well as the Yukon Historical and Museums Association.

Approximately 100 Yukon tourism businesses will leverage \$700,000 in marketing funding to support their investments in marketing. In Tourism we are investing in a multi-year tourism strategy at a cost of \$150,000. We hope to involve as many tourism operators, those knowledgeable about the industry, First Nation tourism leaders and Yukoners in creating an exciting path forward.

We are also planning a winter tourism summit to explore building a longer tourism season with further product development and marketing.

Two big anniversary events that we have heard spoken about here today — Canada's 150th anniversary and the 75th anniversary of the building of the Alaska Highway — will receive funding. I would like to elaborate a bit, and I thank the

Member for Kluane for raising this matter. Most of the contribution that this government will make will go to communities. It will be done through the Culture Quest program. Our events within the City of Whitehorse will be done in partnership with the City of Whitehorse. There was \$100,000 already committed to projects before we even came into office. When we came into office, decisions hadn't been made other than for two projects. We did our best to pull together a plan that will address these anniversaries. I am pleased with the partnerships that we are going forward with. The majority of this funding will go to communities for events as they see fit.

Our arts and culture funding programs account for \$4.5 million of our budget. The Yukon Arts Centre will be hosting an arts summit at the cost of \$75,000. We are investing \$500,000 in a digital development tool that will engage a global audience in sharing the wonder of Yukon online. Six information centres employ 15 full-time staff members and account for \$1.2 million in salaries and benefits — mostly in the communities outside of Whitehorse.

I would also like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for raising the concerns about the Watson Lake visitor centre. This is an aging facility that has come to the end of its useful life. There is no question about that. Repairs and upgrades for the current facility are complicated by the age of this building. The planning process to propose a new visitor information centre has begun, and I am happy to say that here today. It is currently undergoing review within Yukon government. Following the initial review process, planning for a new Watson Lake visitor information centre will require community consultation and the commission of a business case. That is what we are working on right now. I recognize that some work had been done late in the mandate of the Yukon Party, and we will build upon that. I will personally go to Watson Lake to have those discussions. I am really sorry that the Member for Watson Lake did not successfully accomplish this on behalf of her community. It is a really big part of building tourism and putting in place those mechanisms so that tourists have a place to obtain the information that they need. Thank you for raising that.

We are planning a two-year comprehensive visitor survey at a cost of \$200,000. The Carcross/Tagish First Nation learning centre is a new facility and our government will contribute \$145,000 to operation and activity funding related to the cultural component.

The Yukon Archives vault expansion will keep up with our ever-growing collection and preserve even more historical documents. The second half of our \$3 million commitment to the expansion of MacBride Museum of Yukon History will be made to support the completion.

A historic sites planning position was made ongoing to support implementation of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and support the development of heritage management plans and the continued work with our Yukon First Nations.

During previous years, this position was considered one-time funding, year after year. It was clearly an ongoing need and was budgeted as such. This is one of the costs of running

this government that was not accounted for and is now accounted for in the out years. This is a small example of that, where it was a position that clearly needed to be ongoing and was year after year budgeted for as a one-time funded position. I just want to point that out that this is one small example within my department.

The tourism and culture sectors provide over 3,000 jobs and \$250 million annually revenue for Yukon businesses, which represents four percent of our GDP. Investing in culture, heritage and tourism is important to the vibrant Yukon and opportunities for all communities and people.

Before I move on to other areas of responsibility, I would just like to touch on a concern the Member for Watson Lake brought up on the impact of carbon pricing on tourism. Yukon government has committed to ensuring that all funds collected through carbon-pricing mechanisms in Yukon will be returned to individual Yukoners and businesses through rebates. I know we're said that several times, and I'm just going to relate it back to tourism.

This means that tourism businesses will pay slightly more for fossil fuels; however, this will be offset by rebates. For example, a tourism business that pays more for fuel will also see a corresponding rebate. Therefore, the prices of products and services offered should remain unchanged. By 2018, all Canadian jurisdictions will have carbon-pricing plans in place, giving no jurisdiction a perceived competitive advantage. That's something that's very important to keep in mind — that this is Canada-wide and that this is a federal carbon-pricing program.

The Women's Directorate is a partner with First Nations, other Yukon government departments and aboriginal women's organizations in the work of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

We are supporting three aboriginal women's organizations with a one-time allocation of \$150,000, which will assist them in working with us on supporting engagement and truth and reconciliation and the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls processes. Now, this program is one of the programs that will be reviewed this year. In addition, we are investing \$97,000 per year to support a senior advisor for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls for a two-year term. Transfer payments to women's groups and equality-seeking organizations will continue, along with the allocation of \$200,000 through a violence against aboriginal women's fund. The women's equality fund provides \$300,000 and the women's community projects funding offers \$10,000. These are allocations to assist with training, organizational development and program expenses.

Overall, these funding mechanisms, along with funding to support staff positions in key organizations, total \$1 million per year. Yukon government education on domestic violence has been advanced through the Violence Ends with Us training program, which has been delivered and supported by a number of departments. The recently completed gender and diversity action plan will guide future activities, including internal training. Gender and diversity analysis support will

continue within government policy, programming and legislation.

I am delighted to support my colleagues in rolling out new initiatives on home care, mental health and wellness, health services, youth programs, housing and land-based healing. I know that many of you are aware of the work that I've done in the Yukon and these areas are of vital concern to me. I am very committed to working with my colleagues to make them more successful than they have been in the past. Improving resident mental health and addictions front-line capacity in communities with 11 new workers will make a real difference in access to relevant support. Of course our priorities will be to those communities previously left behind.

A renewed commitment to fund building a path to wellness — the four-week Jackson Lake wellness team, mental health and addictions treatment will ensure the program continues to serve all Yukoners while planning is completed with Yukoners, particularly Yukon First Nations — is an important commitment.

Local education of health care professionals that are needed to serve our aging population will be enhanced with new investments into the nursing program at Yukon College. Using technology is important in all industries and I believe we can become a global leader in the use of e-health and other applications to better serve our population. In my work in Whitehorse and the communities over the years, I've seen the gaps in programs and services and I'm grateful that our government is in a position to begin filling these gaps.

The commitment to the Yukon Forum and investing \$100,000 in coordination and support will ensure meetings are productive and delivering on the five-year action plan.

The commitment to reconciliation must become core to all of our work in government. We must find ways to renew relationships and work together to create the change needed. I believe we have the capacity to work with First Nation governments and all Yukon people to create our unique path forward toward reconciliation. I see it as an exciting opportunity to build on treaties and create a positive future together.

In closing, I appreciate your attention as I share my thoughts on the budget. I look forward to presenting the details of this budget for which I am responsible to you later in this session and I also look forward to engaging in a good respectful debate as we forge our way forward together.

Mr. Kent: I thank colleagues for the opportunity to respond today to the first budget of the new government. There are a number of things that of course I want to touch on during my time on my feet here throughout the balance of today and possibly into the next opportunity, but first of all, like others in here, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the constituents of Copperbelt South.

Here I would like to take the opportunity to thank the constituents of Copperbelt South. This was a new riding for me, having moved — as many know — from Riverdale to Marsh Lake. I chose to run in a different riding in the last election and was successful. I would like to thank Lois

Moorcroft, Jocelyn Curteanu and Philippe LeBlond, the NDP, Liberal and Green candidates respectively, for their work during the campaign and for what they put in and all their volunteers as well. I know these campaigns aren't simply done by one or two people. It takes a lot of effort on behalf of a number of individuals who believe in you as a candidate and believe in your party and what you're trying to accomplish, so a big thanks to all the volunteers — not only, as I mentioned, in Copperbelt South, but throughout the territory — who helped each candidate, whether they were successful in being elected or not successful.

A special mention to those who worked on my campaign — first and foremost, my wife Amanda, and my son Eli. Amanda was instrumental, as she was in 2011, in me winning again in 2016 and my success in the election, with all that she does for me and for Eli. Although he was too young to be pounding in signs, knocking on doors or any of that stuff, he spent a lot of time away from his dad during the campaign and the lead-up into the campaign. I know that others in here with children or family experienced the same thing. He was pretty excited to see November 7 roll around — on November 8, there was a lot more time spent with dad out at our new house. It was great that I was able to spend that additional time with him after the election, as I think a number of people did spend time with family after the grind of the election itself.

I would also like to thank my mom, who was the primary babysitter for Eli during the campaign. It didn't matter when we needed her or what time, her door was always open to Eli helping her out and erasing a few apps from her iPad and other things like that. We're still trying to rebuild some of those, after not only the election campaign but this last weekend.

Mr. Speaker, I think most members here and people listening who know me know that I come from a fairly large family. I have four brothers and two sisters. We all live in Whitehorse, or in the surrounding area, and make our homes here. Many of my siblings have families. There are actually four generations of my family who now live here in Whitehorse. I would like to thank them as well. Each and every one of them helped out in some way during the campaign. I wouldn't have been able to do it without them. I wouldn't have been able to do it without my mother-in-law and father-in-law, Tom and Louise van Soldt, who were here for the back half of the election campaign and helped out at home as we knocked on doors and talked to constituents.

There's a long list of other friends and volunteers to thank. They were all great and very helpful in my success.

It's the third time I've been elected, and it's the third different riding I've represented, which may be a first for members in this House. It started out of course with Riverside in 2000, Riverdale North in 2011 and now Copperbelt South. I've never run as incumbent and I don't think — until this time — I had ever run against an incumbent either. As I said, it was a great experience and a great opportunity to get out and talk to a number of individuals — reacquaint myself with old friends and meet a bunch of new people as well and listen to their concerns and what they thought they would like to see

the Yukon be over the next four or five years. It was a great opportunity for me to wander through the riding of Copperbelt South. It's a very different riding from what I'm used to representing. In Riverdale North, as you would know, Mr. Speaker, you can walk to almost every household from your door, other than those ones down the Long Lake Road and Wickstrom Road, so for me to spend more time in a car driving to meet constituents was something that was an interesting change of campaigning strategy for me. I certainly couldn't get to as many doors in an evening or a day as I used to be able to in the Riverdale area when I ran there.

Mr. Speaker, before I start to talk more specifically about the budget and the general things that I would like to address and then getting into the specific critic roles that I have, I would like to just take a moment to pay tribute to a former Finance deputy minister from here who passed away recently. Mr. Charles Sanderson, who was a long-time official with the Yukon government and was the Deputy Minister of Finance for a portion of my time in government — between 2000 and 2002 — has recently passed away. I heard the news from a former deputy minister of mine who lived closed to him on Vancouver Island. I know there is not going to be a service, at Mr. Sanderson's request, but I just wanted to send wishes from us. I believe I'm the only one in the Legislature today who worked with Mr. Sanderson before he retired. He was a great deputy minister. I had a lot of time with him and respect for him and learned an awful lot from him. I know that he'll be missed by his family and all those friends who worked with him in the Department of Finance, whether they are still here in the Yukon or have retired and moved on to other places. Again, my condolences to Mr. Sanderson's family.

I would also like to echo what other colleagues have said on this side and the other side of the House and thank the staff and the officials who have taken the time to put this budget together, whether they are Yukon government officials, or caucus and Cabinet staff, or staff of the Official Opposition or Third Party in helping us to critique the budget and make our way through it. Without their help and assistance, we certainly wouldn't be able to have this document before us and be able to ask the questions about it as we proceed through the balance of this Spring Sitting.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up a little bit more on the advisory panel that was announced by the Premier during his budget speech and then later on that day via press release and hope that perhaps members of the government, perhaps the Premier himself, would provide us with the terms of reference, or the mandate letter, for the panel.

That would help us get a better sense of what they are going to be doing and, maybe more importantly, what they aren't going to be doing. I think there is a lot of speculation with respect to their role and I think that would assist in debate in the House and help some of our constituents and other Yukoners who have been asking the question as to what the role of the advisory panel will be.

It came up during Question Period today; there were perhaps more questions generated from what we heard from the Minister of Finance, the Premier. Perhaps many of them

would be able to be answered if we had access to the terms of reference or a specific mandate letter. Hopefully he would consider providing that to members of the Legislative Assembly so we can get a sense for what they will be doing in June and in September.

This is something that we've heard from Yukoners, that the window is very tight for consultations. I recognize that obviously the Premier chose — I believe he said today in Question Period — and I apologize if I am not correct, but I think he said that, once the House rises, they will do consultations for what will be now after June 13 — the back half of June. They will take a July and August break and then be back at it in September. It's a really tight window if the Premier and his colleagues want to ensure that they get the full picture.

Obviously in June, as the days start getting longer and schools start to get out, many Yukoners choose to take their holidays and they may miss some valuable input. In September, school is back in for the fall and parents and Yukoners are busy. There is the traditional harvest that also happens in September, so the Premier may want to consider in his mandate to the Financial Advisory Panel extending that consultation period somewhat. Again, from past experience and seeing what has happened, he may miss an awful lot of people if it's that tight of a window. If he wants to hear from as many Yukoners as possible — and I take him at his word for that — he may want to consider a bit of an expanded consultation time or delaying it somewhat. When we did the Procurement Advisory Panel, I think the consultations were held throughout the winter. Perhaps we got what was a fuller response from the people who wanted to provide input on that.

Like other colleagues on this side of the House, and I mentioned it in Question Period as well today, we are quite concerned with the deficits that will start to accumulate. I did mention today that we are fortunate to be one of the few, if not the only jurisdiction in the country, that does not have a line item in the budget to service the debt — to pay the interest payments. It would be good to get a sense from the Premier on what that will look like — the interest, as we look to the full picture of governing, as I believe he has mentioned in some of his news releases and some of his speeches.

Hopefully he includes that cost to service the debt when he starts to build this budget out a little bit more.

Speaker: Thank you, Member for Copperbelt South. The hour is 5:30 p.m. We will hear from the Member for Copperbelt South at a later date for continuation of his comments.

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

Debate on Bill No. 201 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following legislative returns were tabled May 1, 2017:

34-2-1

Response to Written Question No. 4 re: Yukon vision for education (McPhee)

34-2-2

Response to Written Question No. 13 re: community safety, property crime and illegal drug trade (McPhee)

34-2-3

Response to Written Question No. 9 re: carbon tax in Yukon (Silver)

34-2-4

Response to Written Question No. 10 re: health care transfers (Silver)

34-2-5

Response to Written Question No. 6 re: Yukon resource gateway project (Mostyn)

34-2-6

Response to Written Question No. 8 re: government transparency (Mostyn)

34-2-7

Response to Written Question No. 2 re: compensation for owners of placer and quartz mining claims (Pillai)

34-2-8

Response to Written Question No. 3 re: communication infrastructure (Pillai)

34-2-9

Response to Written Question No. 11 re: communication infrastructure (Pillai)

34-2-10

Response to Written Question No. 12 re: Yukon's agriculture sector (Pillai)

34-2-11

Response to Written Question No. 5 re: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Dendys)

34-2-12

Response to Written Question No. 1 re: review of the medical travel program (Frost)

34-2-13

Response to Written Question No. 7 re: emergency housing for Ross River (Frost)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 7

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, May 2, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

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

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Yukon Liberal Party

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

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Yukon Party

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

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New Democratic Party

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| Sergeant-at-Arms | Doris McLean |
| Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms | Karina Watson |
| Hansard Administrator | Deana Lemke |

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, May 2, 2017 — 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 change which has been made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 1, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition, has been removed from the Order Paper as it is now outdated.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Mining and Geology Week

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to recognize and acknowledge Yukon Mining and Geology Week, taking place from May 1 to 5. During this week, we sponsor educational events for students so they can understand Yukon's unique geology and history of our landscape.

This week is also our opportunity to acknowledge the importance of the science of our geology and demonstrate the incredible mineral potential of our territory. Yukon's mineral potential and investment attractiveness have attracted five of the world's top-10 gold mining companies to our territory.

Last month's announcement of Barrick Gold acquiring an interest in ATAC's Rackla Gold project underlines that Yukon is a world-class jurisdiction for gold exploration and mining.

In March 2017, Newmont Mining, the world's second-biggest gold producer, entered into a strategic alliance providing a \$53-million investment in Goldstrike Resources and its Plateau property in the Mayo mining district. Goldcorp Inc. submitted its application to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board at the end of March for permitting of the Coffee Gold project after it had purchased the asset from the Kaminak Gold Corp. in May 2016.

Yukon's White Gold district, south of the Klondike, has attracted the interest of numerous exploration companies and investments from top gold producers Agnico Eagle mines and Kinross Gold Corp. There are other significant projects that are also underway, including the following: the Eagle Gold project northeast of Mayo is licensed for development and production and is being advanced by Victoria Gold Corp., which has also signed a cooperation agreement with the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun; BMC Minerals has submitted the mine development proposal to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board for the Kudz Ze Kayah project — a lead-zinc deposit in southeast Yukon; and Western Copper and Gold Corp. has also continued to

advance their Casino project through the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board process. We are excited about this rejuvenation of interest in the mineral sector, and we are looking forward to the new mine developments that will provide numerous benefits to our territory and its people.

Placer miners also continue to do very well. Last year placer miners recovered 67,270 crude ounces of gold worth a total value of \$92.4-million Canadian worth of gold. This is the highest annual production recorded in the past decade.

Exploration in mining contributes significantly to Yukon's economy by providing good-paying jobs while also supporting local businesses and communities throughout the Yukon.

Yukon's industry is recognized nationally as an innovator and leader in exploration practices that minimize environmental impacts and maximize benefits for Yukon's First Nations. For example, this past year, Susan Craig received two awards: the Gold Pan Award for the Association for Mineral Exploration BC and the Women in Mining Canada Trailblazer Award. She was recognized for being a role model for industry in the areas of environmental assessment and community engagement and leading and inspiring so many women working in the field of mineral exploration.

Another nationally recognized innovator here in the Yukon is Shawn Ryan who, with his colleagues in GroundTruth Exploration, developed a unique set of exploration tools that minimize environmental impact and maximize value for investors. Their novel approach to exploration has attracted national attention.

Susan Craig and Shawn Ryan are just two of the many creative and dedicated Yukoners who are working to continuously improve our mineral sector and contribute to its success. I want to thank Shawn who, over the years, while working in the mining sector, is always willing to sit down with a person in the industry in Yukon and give them some wisdom on how to look at exploration projects, what the industry is like and how you go about raising funds. He and Cathy are constant champions, not just with their success, but for all Yukon miners.

For our end, Yukon government is working to ensure the proper supports are in place so that exploration and mining will continue to surge forward. One step in accomplishing this is to ensure Yukon's regulatory process is effective, while maintaining responsible development that reflects the values of Yukoners and respects the rights and culture of First Nations.

Yukon has a long, rich history of mining and an even longer and richer history of First Nation culture, stewardship and traditional economies. By working in collaboration with Yukon First Nations to improve management of mineral resources in Yukon we will better be able to tackle our common issues related to mining and mineral exploration. We will find solutions that reflect First Nation values and interests and will ultimately benefit all Yukoners. Together we will determine how to access the resources we need in a way that

respects the environment. Through our respectful and productive government-to-government relationship, we can build the foundation for a solid mining industry that also protects the environment and provides tangible benefits to Yukon communities.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that you learn when you are working with the mining sector is that the people who are here today — they are Yukoners. They are miners, but this is their home and they respect the environment the same way anybody else does. They want to make sure that things are done right. Working together, I think we can reach these goals.

We are moving forward on initiatives that include First Nation governments in resource management that pertain to their traditional territories. By working together to resolve outstanding issues, the mining industry will have more opportunity for growth and that will help to bring prosperity to Yukon citizens and their communities.

The education sector has also benefited. A good example is the Yukon College Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, where Yukoners can be trained for highly skilled and good-paying jobs. Throughout the school year, our geologists visit classrooms throughout Yukon to teach students about geology. During this week, the geologists from the Yukon Geological Survey are hosting numerous events, some of which are family focused, so our youth can learn more about earth science, exploration and mining and how we can help safeguard the environment.

The Yukon Geological Survey is primarily a science organization that produces and houses geological and geoscientific information that is invaluable in numerous ways. Each year they also provide an overview of exploration and production highlights in Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to point out that there has been phenomenal work done on marketing the Yukon as a jurisdiction over the years, but one thing you hear over and over again is that the Yukon Geological Survey and their work have been key to the results that we are seeing now — the advanced work. They are known internationally. Every company that I have had an opportunity to meet with always focuses on the fact that the Yukon Geological Survey is so skilled and their information is so good.

This summer they will continue their outreach activities, including leading public hikes in areas throughout Yukon to share their knowledge about Yukon's landscape and geological history.

Mining and Geology Week is important because it helps us to better understand the mineral sector and how it contributes to the well-being of this territory. Industry provides many opportunities for Yukoners, and we are looking forward to those opportunities increasing in the future.

To wrap up, I would like to encourage everyone to take time this week to join the free activities put on at the Yukon Geological Survey, by the Yukon Geological Survey and the Yukon Chamber of Mines.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and certainly I look forward to those events and will be attending them with some of my colleagues on Friday.

Ms. McLeod: I am pleased to rise today to recognize Yukon's annual Mining and Geology Week.

This week, Yukon students and members of our community have the opportunity to learn about the mineral industry and the science of geology.

For the members of this House, it's an opportunity to acknowledge the great contributions that mining and mineral exploration provides to our economy and our quality of life in the territory. As the Yukon Prospectors Association mentions on their website, "Prospecting and mining have defined the Yukon since the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898".

Our territory's rich history was built in large part by these prospectors, and I believe we should certainly recognize them for their contributions and for the towns and cities originally founded to support nearby mines that have grown into vibrant, thriving communities.

The direct and indirect benefits of mining spread across all areas of our economy and it's felt in every community. Operating mines directly and indirectly employ hundreds of Yukoners, and many more jobs are created during the exploration and drilling phases of projects. As well, the revenues generated from this industry allow us to invest in infrastructure such as roads, hospitals and schools, and programs ranging from arts grants to education and social programs.

I would like to applaud Victoria Gold Corp. and the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun for an initiative that they have undertaken. In October 2011, they signed their collaboratively developed and implemented comprehensive cooperation and benefits agreement, or CBA, which applies to Victoria Gold's Eagle Gold project northeast of Mayo. Since its groundbreaking agreement was signed, Victoria Gold has contributed over \$41 million to the NND and its citizens, to the Village of Mayo and to the socio-economic strength and vibrancy of the entire Yukon. The company and First Nation work together through a CBA committee to help ensure that company expenditures in the region reflect the needs and priorities of the community. As Eagle, the territory's next gold mine, advances, Victoria Gold and NND hope their mutually creative agreement not only benefits NND and the community, but also serves as a model for transparent, effective and mutually respectful industry-First Nation relations across the territory and across the country.

Additionally, the mineral sector offers partnerships and investment that benefits local businesses, including hotels, restaurants and retailers. The industry also relies upon the suppliers of equipment, transportation, health services, engineering expertise and environmental monitoring services.

The Yukon Party has always been a strong supporter of the mining and exploration industry in our territory. Earlier this year, the members from our caucus were able to attend the Mineral Exploration Roundup in Vancouver as well as the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada's

conference in Toronto. As the Official Opposition, we have continued to make attending these conferences a priority to promote investment in the territory and we will continue to engage and advocate for the companies that invest here.

The past two years have brought renewed optimism for the future of mining in the Yukon, and we have seen significant investments from Agnico Eagle and Goldcorp in 2016, followed up this year with partnerships between Goldstrike and Newmont and, most recently, between ATAC Resources and Barrick Gold.

We said before that it requires hard work and determination to get a project to successfully take off, and these have been very promising announcements. That being said, mining is not only about big investments. Mining and exploration is about the men and women who work so hard and dedicate their lives to ensuring this industry continues to define our territory and its future. It's about those who go to work day in and day out to put food on their tables and provide for their families.

Last week, we heard that the Minto mine will continue to operate and mine at least until 2020. Not only is it exciting to hear that a mine with such deep roots in its community will continue to operate, but it's encouraging to know that the employees of the contractors on-site will be able to keep their jobs and keep working.

Public awareness is something that is key for the industry as well. The placer industry has embarked on their "It's in our veins" campaign to build awareness of their industry.

The Our Yukon — In It Together campaign is an initiative of the Yukon Chamber of Mines, generously supported by the Yukon government, to help Yukoners understand the positive impacts the mineral exploration and development industry and the numerous service and supply companies that support mining contribute to Yukon residents, businesses and communities each and every day.

In its third year, the Our Yukon — In It Together campaign focuses on the stories of our friends, family members and neighbours — individuals we all know who work in or support the territory's mining sector, which is such an important part of our private sector — while upholding the economic, cultural and environmental values that we all treasure.

Thank you to Samson Hartland, executive director of the Yukon Chamber of Mines, and Amanda Leslie, Our Yukon — In It Together project manager and campaign storyteller and the entire board of the Yukon Chamber of Mines for their ongoing efforts to celebrate what an essential partner responsible mining is to our present and our future here in the Yukon.

This week, families and students in particular can spend time at the mining exploration and discovery camp, which is situated at the *SS Klondike* National Historic Site, to learn even more. The well-being and success of Yukon's mineral sector is very important. Our caucus would like to thank the organizers of Yukon Mining and Geology Week, including the Chamber of Mines and the Yukon Geological Survey, who work together every year to organize events dedicated to

mining and geology in Yukon and provide a better understanding of what this vibrant industry contributes to our territory.

Ms. Hanson: I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus to also pay tribute to Yukon Mining and Geology Week. It's hard to imagine what Yukon might look like today if not for the discovery of gold and for the ongoing exploration and extraction of our extensive non-renewable resources throughout Yukon. We are pleased to see that Yukon is once again coming out of the down-cycle with the recently announced extended operations forecast for Minto mine and the new and old companies looking to build partnerships with Yukoners and First Nation governments to continue exploration and to build on plans toward opening new mines.

Yukoners in the mining industry are fortunate to have as a partner Yukon College and the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. This community asset continues to plan for and provide training in Whitehorse and in the communities to meet the immediate and future needs of the mining industry and to ensure good jobs for Yukoners. The flexibility and adaptability of this centre to address the immediate gaps and needs provides opportunities for many Yukoners to gain many skills.

Yukon has been on the forefront of change before. We have the resources and the tools to make the non-renewable resource sector an ongoing contributor to our territorial economy.

The Yukon NDP takes this opportunity to thank all those geologists and miners working in the industry today. We acknowledge the important role mining plays in our territory. Yukon has the resources, natural and human, to work with industry to ensure an environmentally sound and prosperous future.

We look forward to welcoming to Yukon more of the most progressive, safety-conscious, environmentally responsible and community-focused mining companies that are prepared to lead the way to a sustainable economic future.

In recognition of Susan Craig's contribution to Yukon's mining industry

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a big day here today. There are many, many things to celebrate.

I rise today to pay tribute to Susan Craig. Sue has an extensive history of making significant contributions to Yukon and its mineral industry. She has received numerous awards for her work in Yukon and across Canada. Sue's work has been focused primarily in Yukon and BC, where she has spent most of her career working in the mining and mineral exploration sectors.

While she is a geologist and explorer, some of her most significant contributions have been in engaging affected First Nations during the environmental assessment phase of projects. For example, she led the permitting and development of the Brewery Creek mine in Yukon and the environmental assessments at Galore Creek and Kemess Underground

Project in northern BC. Sue's work in environmental sustainability at Galore Creek was also recognized by the BC Association of Mineral Exploration by their Robert R. Hedley Award for Excellence in Social and Environmental Responsibility.

In 2012, Sue received the Yukon Chamber of Mines Member's Award for promoting responsible development in Yukon.

Sue has served in a variety of roles with the Association for Mineral Exploration BC, which hosts the Mineral Exploration Roundup Conference in Vancouver. In January of this year, the MEBC acknowledged Sue's meritorious service to the mineral exploration community with its Gold Pan Award. Then, in February, her contribution to Canadian mining was acknowledged when she received the Women in Mining Canada Trailblazer Award for being a role model and inspiring women to work in the field of mineral exploration.

Amazing to see was that when Sue received her award — and I apologize; I don't know how many women were there. There was a room full of individuals, and Bill was there with her. There were hundreds of women who are focusing on careers as engineers, whether it be in the mineral sector focused on exploration or development — individuals who are working in all facets. To see that many individuals focused and listening to the tribute to Susan really put into perspective how she is known and respected nationally and internationally in the mining sector. We're certainly lucky to have Sue here.

The award also recognizes Sue's role with the mineral industry in the areas of environmental assessment and community engagement. She has also served on numerous boards, committees and associations of regional and national scope, including the Society of Economic Geologists and the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board. Sue now serves as a director with Yukon Energy Corporation, the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board and the Yukon Chamber of Mines.

Susan Craig is a highly respected professional geologist with extensive knowledge regarding all stages of mine development and mineral exploration. We're very fortunate to have Sue's generosity and commitment to the mineral sector here in Yukon.

Susan, thank you for putting up with somebody who is new to the role. I appreciate your wisdom and support. That is our tribute on behalf of our government and the NDP. I would like to turn the floor over, as I think there are some other kind words that we would like to share.

Applause

Mr. Kent: I am proud to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to my friend, my son's godmother and long-time Yukoner, Sue Craig.

I would like to share a little information about Sue and the incredible accomplishments that she has made over her career in the mining sector in our territory. She came to the Yukon in 1990 and had what she calls her first foray into community, First Nation and environmental work as a geologist during her first stint at Brewery Creek. Sue attributes this work as the start of what would monumentally

shape her career going forward. She was fortunate to work with experienced people in mining such as Brad Thrall and Clint Nauman, who are both still here in the Yukon today and committed to our mining industry. She has had an incredible and eventful career so far, and we all know her journey is far from complete. She graduated with a bachelor of science in geology from the University of Calgary in 1986 and completed her master's in 1991 at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. She poured the first bar of gold at Brewery Creek in 1995. She was part of the team that received the Robert E. Leckie Award from the Yukon government for excellence in environmental stewardship. She was also part of the team recognized, as the minister said, by AME BC for the social and environmental aspects of the Galore Creek multi-billion dollar project. That happened in 2006.

During Sue and Bill's time at Northern Freegold, she had a field crew that was comprised of 54-percent females. If that was not recognizable enough, Sue figured out that they also took home 59 percent of the pay. For this, Sue was quite proud. Sue was asked by the Member for Lake Laberge, as former Energy, Mines and Resources minister, to be the chair of the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board in 2012. I had the opportunity to work with her in that capacity as well during my time as the Energy, Mines and Resources minister. During that same year, she was recognized by the Yukon Chamber of Mines for promoting responsible development in the Yukon and engaging First Nations.

As the minister mentioned, most recently Sue was awarded the Gold Pan Award this year from the Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia for her exceptional meritorious service to the mineral exploration community. As well, Sue received the Trailblazer Award from Women in Mining Canada. At that ceremony, she commented that she didn't ever approach anything in the industry with the mindset of — and I quote: "I want to be the first female to do that." She simply challenged herself to do new things. Much of the recognition Sue has received over the years is the result of the direct recognition of her peers, for which she is thankful, especially because there are so many people who do so much for the industry and give back to their community.

Of course Sue's accomplishments didn't stop there. A registered professional geoscientist, she has participated on boards, committees and in conferences throughout her years. She has championed projects like Yukon Women in Mining and the Yukon Imagination Library. I am so proud to recognize her for the incredible contributions to the mining industry and to the Yukon in general. You truly are an incredible person, and I thank you, Sue, for all that you have done for mining in the Yukon. I have to say I am very proud to call you a friend.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon Women in Mining

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Our next tribute is fitting after our tribute to Sue. This tribute is to Yukon Women in Mining.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and acknowledge Yukon Women in Mining, a non-profit organization focused

on creating awareness of and attraction to the opportunities for rewarding careers for women in the mineral and mining industry.

Yukon Women in Mining works hard to develop initiatives that foster personal and professional development for women in mining. They are dedicated to promoting the dynamic and rewarding careers available for women in the mineral and mining industry in order to help meet future labour needs in Yukon. The mandate of Yukon Women in Mining is to work with Yukon mineral exploration and mining industry representatives to develop toolkits, events and activities to facilitate increased attraction, retention and advancement of women to one of the most important sectors in Yukon.

Today, I would like to acknowledge the great work done by this organization, which adds massive value to Yukon's economy. I would like to pay tribute to the board of directors that has worked to make this organization the success it is today, including: the president, Anne Lewis; Allison Rippin Armstrong; Wendy Taylor; Marika Isaac; Angela Drainville; Jasmin Dobson; Mary Mioska; and Jane-Marie Glynn. I would also like to recognize chief volunteer, Randy Lewis, who is here today.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize and acknowledge Yukon Women in Mining champions, Eira Thomas, Rob McIntyre, Ron Light and Sue Craig; and our director of strategic initiatives, Math'ieya Alatini.

Yukon Women in Mining has announced a new and exciting initiative, the Yukon mining community experiential extravaganza, which will take place in the communities of Pelly Crossing on May 15, Faro on May 17 and Dawson City from May 19 to 20. This extravaganza will include more than 30 representatives from over 15 companies and organizations who will join Yukon Women in Mining in a week-long Yukon tour to share the benefits, opportunities and careers in Yukon hard rock and placer mining. I look forward to it. I think many of us here will be at the Gold Show and certainly I will have an opportunity there to take a look at this fantastic road show.

With more than 100 careers in Yukon's mineral sector, from geology to environmental sciences, marketing to management and trades to technology, over 2,000 youth — young entrepreneurs — in several Yukon rural communities can discover the occupational trades and professions in Yukon's valuable mining industry thanks to the Yukon mining community experiential extravaganza.

I would like to acknowledge and encourage everyone to take time to learn more about Yukon Women in Mining and the events and activities that will take place during the Yukon mining community experiential extravaganza.

In closing with our tributes, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the organizations that are here today: Klondike Placer Miners' Association is here; Yukon Chamber of Mines; and Yukon Women in Mining. I think there are probably some people here as well from the Yukon Prospectors Association. It was interesting that within minutes of walking down this way after having the opportunity to take this role, they were waiting for

me with a list of things to work on. I was about a minute into the job.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Yukon women in mining.

Yukon Women in Mining is a non-profit organization that was founded in 2012 and also continues to be a great partner to mining and exploration industry leaders by organizing events and activities as well as offering the tools to help bring more women into one of the most important sectors in Yukon's economy.

My personal experience with mining was in the early 1970s. Early on in my marriage, Pat and I lived in Elsa and we both worked for United Keno Hill Mines. This was a changing time for women and we felt we were making huge progress in how women were perceived in the industry. There were women who worked in the mine office, stores and various other admin-type jobs, but there were a few brave women who wanted to go underground and work as miners, blasters and labourers. As the mine manager grappled with the changes in society, he asked if any women in town would like to have a mine tour. I signed on.

After putting on all our safety gear and a headlamp, we crammed into the hoist at the Ruby mine shaft. We dropped a mile underground, leaving my stomach at ground level. Now we were really out of our element, shuffling along in a dark, damp tunnel with only the light on your head. But quickly miners and labourers shouted at us that we weren't welcome, to get out, that we didn't belong. You see, to them, like women on ships, we were bad luck, but we persevered. It was an incredible eye-opener to see how the silver and by-product ores were taken from the earth. I did not ask for a second tour.

Yukon Women in Mining helps us celebrate mining in the territory and the important role women have played and continue to play in this industry. They are a voice for inclusion and advancement for women interested in careers that can have a significant impact on Yukon's economic, cultural and social prosperity. The very existence of Yukon Women in Mining speaks great volumes about the growth and maturity of our mining industry and society. As such, the participation and achievement of women in the resource sector cannot be understated.

This year, everyone has recognized mining champion Sue Craig, she being one of the amazing women in our territory who continues to promote the significant contributions of mining in Yukon and Canada and to the inclusion of women in this industry.

I believe it is important to recognize all the notable women who have brought success to our territory and played a key role in the industry. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Yukon Women in Mining board of directors. Each and every one of you stands as an incredible role model for young women who are working to build their careers here in the Yukon. I applaud you and I encourage you

to continue engaging young women in Yukon to spark their interest in mining.

Today we can celebrate the changes we have seen mining and exploration that have made it an attractive and rewarding career choice for both men and women, bringing economic and social benefits to all Yukon communities.

Applause

In recognition of women in mining

Ms. White: I have taken this tribute in a different direction. I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to recognize the contribution of the mind-blowing women in mining. To be honest, I had a much cooler title, but I didn't want to cross the line of parliamentary language so early in your tenure.

I proudly stand here as a retired camp cook. I have cooked in kitchens all over the world, but my time cooking in mining camps was some of the most fun, challenging, satisfying and exhausting work I have ever done in kitchens. I met incredible people and saw phenomenal leadership from the women I worked alongside.

Today, we salute the trailblazers, the environmental champions, the surveyors, the inspectors, the miners, the blasters, the heavy equipment operators, the geologists, the camp staff, the mechanics, the carpenters, the electricians and the female leadership of both the mine sites and the geological survey.

Without these women, the mines where they work would be very, very different sites. We recognize your dedication and your passion for our territory, and I thank you so much for your contribution.

Applause

In remembrance of Charlie Roots

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. Charlie Roots. I'm honoured to speak on behalf of all of my colleagues here in the Legislature. Charlie was an accomplished and highly respected research scientist with the Geological Survey of Canada. Charlie was someone I knew and admired. Charlie dedicated his career to mapping and understanding the geology of northern Canada, focusing primarily on the Yukon. His work extended across the north, including the high Arctic. Charlie's work advanced our scientific understanding of the geologic history of Canada's north and helped northerners understand the processes that shaped our unique landscape.

In May 1992, Charlie was a key member of a multidisciplinary team on a successful ascent of Mount Logan. It was on this month-long expedition that researchers were first able to accurately measure the height of Canada's highest mountain, using GPS instruments. I note how heavy those instruments were back then, including all of the batteries. The team also collected the first rock samples from the summit.

His colleagues at the Yukon Geological Survey described Charlie as an invaluable resource, and they greatly miss his depth of knowledge about Yukon's geoscience, much of which he learned in the field and on the ground. Charlie's

fieldwork took him across most of the Yukon, mapping bedrock from the Alaska border north of the Yukon River, right across the Northwest Territories.

In addition to his work on the ground, Charlie's contributions to the geological literature of the Yukon are endless. He published many maps and reports that record his contributions to science. During his last years with the Yukon Geological Survey, he compiled unpublished data from the field notebooks of some of his retired Geological Survey of Canada colleagues so their work could also be published.

What distinguished Charlie from most scientists was his passion and enthusiasm for sharing his knowledge of Yukon's dynamic and evolving landscapes with the public. Over the years, he led many walking tours for people who wanted to learn more about the land under their feet. If you've hiked Charlie's Canyon in Tombstone Park, then you've already benefitted from one of his geological legacies. Charlie also visited classrooms and collaborated with Yukon artists to increase awareness of the geology that underlies our territory.

Mr. Speaker, I got to know Charlie through my work as a climate change researcher. We shared a passion for the scientific pursuit, the north and outdoors. A little over a decade ago, I had the opportunity to go on a teaching expedition into the high Arctic with Charlie's father, Fred Roots, with a group called Students on Ice. Through that experience, I got to know Charlie even more, hearing stories of his childhood and his home in Gatineau Park. Charlie will always be highly respected for his devotion to science and how generously he shared his knowledge with geologists, research scientists and the public.

In 2014, Charlie was interviewed in the *Whitehorse Star* — and I quote: "As I can see my end more clearly than most people can see theirs, I focus on being positive and completing things simply... I'm proud of what I've been able to accomplish since learning my fate. Not many are given that foreknowledge."

I'm honoured to acknowledge the significant contributions that Dr. Charlie Roots has made to our territory and I encourage all of us to carry on his remarkable legacy.

I would like to acknowledge the friends and colleagues of Charlie here today. I got a note earlier that his daughter Galena is actually going to be working this summer with the Yukon Geological Survey at the geology camp that her grandfather, Charlie's father, did as a mapping area back in the 1940s. His son Logan will actually be taking part in the Canada 150 coast to coast to coast students on ice trip, which is a wonderful thing and a great legacy to see that family represented.

I would like all of us to acknowledge Charlie's wife Mary Ann please.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have lots of visitors today. I think that first I just want to mention a few people who are here

specifically for — they wanted to be here for the last tribute: Lee Pigage — these are all former colleagues of Charlie's — Grant Abbott, Don Murphy, Joan Turner and I think Mike Burke as well.

We also have a number of the staff I spoke about earlier from the Yukon Geological Survey who are here — Maurice Colpron, Craig Nicholson, Steve Israel, Esther Bordet, David Moynihan, Kristen Kennedy, Panya Lipovsky, Sydney Van Loon, Scott Casselman — also a fantastic goaltender, Rob Deklerk, Olwyn Bruce, Leyla Weston and Carolyn Relf. Carolyn, your team is, especially this week — it's important to announce what a superstar team you have. It's certainly appreciated, like we said, across the country. What we see now with the growth in mining — your team has really led this charge.

Also, Samson is here — Samson Hartland from the Yukon Chamber of Mines; Sue and Bill, who are with Metallic; Jonas from the Klondike Placer Miners' Association; Claire Derome, from Derome and Associates, who is also working on lots of new stuff when it comes to planning infrastructure for the Yukon; Anne Lewis and Randy Lewis from the Yukon Mining Alliance; Heather Burrell from Archer Cathro and also from the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board; Lena Brommeland from Hunter Dickinson, and Stanley Burrell, who I have not yet met but who is Yukon's youngest geologist. He is here as well.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I know that Samson is here on behalf of the Chamber of Mines, but I would like to acknowledge that he is a city councillor and I am putting a shout-out for all of our municipal politicians — our colleagues.

Applause

Mr. Kent: I know that he has already been acknowledged in the gallery, but I would also like to put a special shout-out to Maurice Colpron as well. Last year at the energy and mines ministers conference — I believe it was in Winnipeg — Maurice received a national award as a territorial geoscientist. Congratulations on that award, Maurice. It was well-deserved.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming a Yukon contractor, Mr. Jon Rudolph, to the gallery today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the person we stole from the Geological Survey is also in the audience today — Monica Nordling.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: The Chair has for tabling the *Report on Subsistence, Travel & Accommodations of Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly 2016-2017*, dated April 2017. This report is compiled pursuant to an order of the Members' Services Board.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I have for tabling a report, entitled *Cancer Mortality Trends, 1999 – 2013*, from the office of the Yukon's chief medical officer of health.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Maxwell Rispin and Benjamin Bruce Warnsby to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective immediately; and

THAT Karen Keenan be reappointed to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective immediately.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(3) of the *Human Rights Act*, does remove Raymond Kokiw, Michelle Mbuto, Elaine Cairns and Darcy Tkachuk from the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, effective immediately.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, in collaboration with Yukoners with disabilities, their families, caregivers and community organizations, to develop a plan to implement and monitor the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Hassard: Yesterday, we asked the Premier about his plan to throw Yukon into a hole of big deficit and big debt. Is his plan for debt to be in Yukon for many years to come? Yesterday I didn't get an answer to this question so I'm hoping that today, maybe we will.

Can the Premier tell us what year he is projecting that Yukon will come out of debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We can go back and forth again as to where the current financial situation is, but we're happy to move forward. There is a change in the budget planning methodology for the 2017-18 budget. The full cost of future commitments is now included in the long-term fiscal framework. This was not the case in previous iterations of the long-term financial plans contained in the budget documents. Many programs were assumed to have automatically ended or fractions of costs were included in future plans. For example, items not included in the fiscal long-term plan would be things like the Whistle Bend continuing care facility and the full cost of the collective bargaining agreements.

Again, we're talking about having full cost accounting. This is a snapshot of where we are right now, based upon where the previous government has left us. These are forecasts moving into the future. We're very committed to working with the Financial Advisory Panel to come up with all options. From conversations we have had on this side of the Legislative Assembly, we are confident that, within our mandate, we will get ourselves back into a financially prudent situation.

Mr. Hassard: Again, no answer.

Yesterday, it was pointed out that the Premier's new budget doesn't account for the impacts of the carbon tax on the economy or on the O&M budget for the Yukon — this, despite the fact that he took a record six months to bring back the Legislative Assembly and table his first budget. This means that the Premier might be underestimating the size of those deficits and the size of his huge debt that he wants to drag the Yukon into.

If the Premier's budget truly accounts for the true cost of government like he says, then why has he not included the cost of the carbon tax?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Once again, the federal carbon-pricing mechanism is going to be the backstop from Ottawa and, once again, this is revenue neutral, so, for every dollar that is being put in, that money is going back into the economy. We are doing full cost accounting, and the full cost accounting includes all of those costs that were not in the previous mains: \$2.6 million for cost overruns for two rural hospitals, never accounted for; \$3.5 million in costs related to pension solvency within the Yukon Hospital Corporation, as well as half-a-million dollars at Yukon College; more than half-a-million dollars for the learning commons and electrical upgrade renovation; and \$1.4 million for the Art and Margaret Fry Recreation Centre in Dawson City. The list goes on and on. All of these things being put in the budget were not put in it before.

To ask if we have numbers for a carbon-pricing mechanism from Ottawa in the budget, once again — and we have gone over this time and time again — this is revenue neutral. That money is going to be coming back in. We have departments — Energy, Mines and Resources or my Department of Finance. All of these public servants are

working diligently, as the previous government did, on carbon-pricing mechanisms for the Yukon Territory.

We didn't see in their budget money for their departments when they were working on the carbon-pricing mechanism because that is an internal cost taken by the departments.

Mr. Hassard: Once again, no answer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When asked questions on his budget, it seems the Premier has two answers. It's either, "Don't talk to me; talk to the Financial Advisory Panel" or "It's Ottawa". Well, he is the Premier. This is his budget, so I have to ask him because he is the one who is responsible for it.

Will the Premier commit today that he will not go further than \$216 million in debt? That is a very simple question, Mr. Speaker — yes or no, unlike yesterday's answer.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I believe I am answering the member opposite's question when it comes to carbon-pricing mechanisms, when it comes to our plan to get ourselves out of the financial crisis that we've found ourselves in. I look forward to continuing this debate during Committee of the Whole as far as getting down into the real numbers, but there are certain things that we have to accomplish here in the Legislative Assembly as far as long-range plans, long-range costs and the cost of operating government. I think we have been very good with the media in sharing that information. If the members opposite would like to come and have more conversations about the forward progression of this budget, the next budgets and our plan, I think we have been very forthcoming in that.

There are things that we can't answer necessarily because we don't have the numbers coming in — those will be coming — but our plan is to get to a situation for the Yukon where we will be in a good financial situation, out of debt, and with a plan to maintain a pathway forward so that our future generations will not bear the burdens of the trajectory right now that we find ourselves in. That's our plan — to get ourselves out of that negative trajectory that is currently with us. We hope that the opposition will help us in that pursuit when we get into the Financial Advisory Panel this summer, and I look forward to that time.

Question re: Carbon tax

Ms. Van Bibber: The Official Opposition has obtained documents that state the government has not done any analysis on the impacts of the carbon tax on the cost of operating schools. In Alberta, it has been reported that the carbon tax is going to increase the cost of operating schools by \$8 million to \$12 million.

Since this government hasn't done any analysis on the impacts of the carbon tax on our schools, does that mean that this budget is underestimating the cost of government and that the deficits could be even larger?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the federal carbon-pricing mechanism is revenue neutral. The money that is going to be taken from the pump is going to be given back to Yukoners. If the member opposite would like to share the information that she has received, then we will definitely commit to responding

to this information. But again, at the same time, we've been doing the due diligence since the pan-Canadian framework. We have in our annex that we want to make sure that the carbon-pricing mechanism works the way that it's supposed to work and it's going to identify areas where we can do our reductions, but not penalize people or governments in those areas where they cannot reduce their emissions.

We're confident that once we hear back from the federal government what their intent is, then we will use that information to move forward. We'll be happy to work with the opposition in formulating those plans. We'll be happy to work with the private sector as well to make sure that every penny that is collected from this revenue-neutral carbon-pricing mechanism goes back into those areas where we're seeing a conscientious effort to reduce those emissions, whether it be schools or placer miners or anybody in between.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I do appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Ms. Van Bibber: I appreciate the Premier's answer. Is he then saying that the carbon tax scheme will have zero impact on the cost of government operations?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the details of how we're going to give back this rebated money — you know, we're not there yet. We do have time. We have time to make sure that we take a comprehensive analysis.

This is a great use of the Legislative Assembly — opposition bringing forth concerns of particular sectors, whether it be government or private sector — where they're concerned that the money is not going to come back in the proper way, I guess, for lack of a better term. We're looking for solutions from the opposition as well as far as how that money is going to be rebated.

Again, we can't move forward until we know what Ottawa is going to do as far as setting the parameters of their tax. So once again, I think the Yukon Party is waiting for us to get that information back. Once we do get that information back from Ottawa, we will share it with the opposition and we will be looking forward to their suggestions as to how we make sure that the carbon-pricing mechanism from the federal government does what it's supposed to do — target those areas where we can do our reductions and not penalize businesses or, in this case, schools in those areas where they cannot necessarily make any alternatives.

So there's more to come on this, but once again, we're waiting for Ottawa for any more information.

Ms. Van Bibber: If the carbon tax does increase the cost of operating our schools, then the government is going to be faced with some tough decisions. If the cost of operating schools in Alberta increases, how can it still not happen here in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question from the opposition, but again, to think that this is only going to affect the Yukon and we're the only jurisdiction that is going to feel the effects of a carbon-pricing mechanism is just simply not true. All over Canada we see that there are jurisdictions that already have a provincial mechanism for carbon pricing. We do not. In that pursuit, we have the ability to make sure that

however this is going to be collected and returned, we do that with a Yukon-made solution to a carbon-pricing mechanism.

To say that we don't think that it's going to affect — I mean it's going to affect us just like it's going to affect any other jurisdiction in Canada. It's the proper thing to do and it gives businesses on an international basis the impetus to actually start putting technology toward renewable resources and away from fossil fuels. This is the goal. This is the point. We should be embracing that — this is a good thing. There is money to be made in the technology sector because of this transformation.

I would assume that the opposition would like to move forward in areas where we can actually increase our own-source revenue as far as innovation and technologies. I'm looking forward to a time where Yukon can say that we are off fossil fuels. Again, carbon-pricing mechanism on an international and a national basis is exactly how we're going to do that.

Question re: Minimum wage

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, right now Yukon has the lowest minimum wage in the north at \$11.32 per hour. As I told the minister last week, it's more than one dollar below the minimum wage in both the NWT and Nunavut. Everyone knows that \$11.32 is not enough to meet the basic needs in Yukon. It's a poverty wage, Mr. Speaker. That's why we see so many working people at the food bank very month and that is just not acceptable. A government committed to fighting poverty would take action immediately, but when I asked the minister what he is planning to do, he said he was satisfied with the recent 25-cent inflation adjustment to the minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister truly believe that a 25-cent inflation adjustment to the minimum wage will lift any Yukon worker out of poverty?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member opposite for the question.

I think when I answered this question last week, my response was not to say that this was the only solution. I think I described that there were many approaches that we were taking as a government. I think the question as it came last week was, "Would we consider raising it to a \$15 minimum wage?" — more like the concept of a living wage — and my response was, "No, we're not considering that as a government".

Mr. Speaker, I have gone back, following the question from the member opposite last week, and asked the department to do some analysis with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics to try to get a sense of what the cost of living is against the minimum wage. But to try to get to the point of what the member opposite is asking, it's about what programs are we doing around dealing with people and their conditions. I think we have several programs — a Housing First program, programs around mental wellness, et cetera — so I think the question should be directed away from minimum wage to ask us about how we're working with Yukoners to make sure that everyone is cared for.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The problem here is that we're speaking about working people who are earning \$11.32 an hour. They will not be taken care of by programs offered by government that target very specific problems. The minister continues to repeat that Yukon's minimum wage is fifth in the country and that is good enough for him, but by doing so, the minister is putting Yukon on the same foot as New Brunswick, for instance, where the average house price is less than half of what it is in the Yukon.

The minister has to know that Yukon's cost of living is not comparable to other parts of the country. Yukon's living wage for a family of four with both parents working is \$19 per hour each. That's an \$8 gap with the minimum wage as we currently have it.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister satisfied with the status quo when there is an \$8 gap between the minimum wage and a living wage?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the member opposite has started to do some of the very analysis that I have requested and I will try to share it. For example, the highest minimum wage in the country is with Nunavut. Their minimum wage is \$13 an hour. I wonder if we took a look at what the cost of housing is in Nunavut and the cost of food and services is in Nunavut compared to a \$13 minimum wage — how that would compare. I will do that analysis and I hope to share it with the member opposite. I actually think we would look somewhat favourable in that light, but let's do the numbers and figure it out.

How I'm trying to respond to the member opposite is that we are satisfied with the minimum wage. We are working on other fronts to address the issue of poverty in the territory and that's how we're working on it. I don't follow the argument that if we don't raise the minimum wage, we're not going to work to care for Yukoners.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister is not in a position to teach anyone about poverty or tell people living in poverty about their experience. He is the minister responsible for Yukon's \$11.32-an-hour minimum wage. That's a poverty wage, Mr. Speaker. The minister knows it and he has the power to make changes.

No later than next year, Alberta's minimum wage will be \$15 per hour. Fifteen dollars per hour in Yukon is still below the living wage, but it would be a good first step to lift people out of poverty — yet, last week the minister showed us how low his government has set the bar on minimum wage when he said — and I quote: "I would like to acknowledge that it is not the lowest in the country ..."

Well, that's quite a visionary statement, Mr. Speaker. The minister also said that Yukon will review the minimum wage when we drop to the sixth place in the country. Well, good news for workers and bad news for the minister who seems to prefer the status quo. This will happen in just a few months when British Columbia raises its minimum wage to \$11.35 an hour this September.

Will the minister tell Yukon workers earning poverty wages to hang tight for another five months or will he take immediate action?

Speaker: Order. The member's time has elapsed. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I will go back to try to check a few facts. One of them I think is that when I last checked, British Columbia is raising its minimum wage to \$11.25 so I will have a look to try to see whether I have that number correct or not. I also note that British Columbia is in election right now so let's see where they land and what they go to.

If you would like a different quote, here is a quote: Yukon has the fifth highest minimum wage in the country. Our minimum wage is tied to inflation so that it continues to rise with inflation. We are working to address the issue of poverty here in the territory, but not with this tool.

Question re: Whistle Bend continuing care facility

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier told this House that the previous government had only budgeted \$2 million for the Whistle Bend continuing care facility's operating costs. However, on April 21, 2016, and again on April 25, the former Minister of Health and Social Services told this House that the government had budgeted \$28 million per year for the facility and that those costs were included in the long-term fiscal plan.

I have to assume the Premier would not intentionally mislead the House, so changing \$28 million to \$2 million must have been a rounding error on his part.

Regarding the Premier's debt that he's planning to plunge the territory into, it will be future generations of Yukoners who have to pay the bill.

Will the Premier tell us today when his high-debt plan will see the territory get out of debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite would have to appreciate that I would have to go through reams of Hansard to find that number because it hasn't been ever put in a main estimate.

Yes, in the Legislative Assembly there might have been a number given, but, again, a number in the Legislative Assembly given by a minister is one thing. Having a number actually in the mains is a whole other thing, and so we didn't see that.

As we see a scattershot from the member opposite as far as the overall planning, that gives me a good opportunity to come up and talk about current long-term plans reflecting the real cost of government.

For operation and maintenance expenditures, an example would be the current long-term plan that reflects a more fulsome budget of approximately \$36 million to operate the Whistle Bend continuing care facility when it is completed.

The prior 2016-17 long-term plan forecasts net O&M expenditures of \$1 billion for 2018-19, with a current 2017-18 long-term plan forecast of \$1.061 billion in net O&M expenditures. The prior 2016-17 long-term forecasts for O&M expenditures was \$1.032 billion for 2019-20, while the current 2017-19 long-term plan forecasts \$1.079 billion for O&M.

My question for the previous government is: What programs and services that Yukoners depend on every day

would they plan to cut based upon these forecasts in their future? When were you going to inform Yukoners of these cuts if you were forming government?

Mr. Cathers: That was a nice attempt by the Premier, but I would refer the media to my remarks during second reading yesterday in explaining how the Liberals appear to have arrived at these numbers.

I would in fact point out to the Premier that O&M costs were in the budget, booked in future fiscal years.

Earlier today I asked the Premier to reverse his course on his high-debt plan. The Premier's plan is to go from almost \$100 million in the bank to \$216 million in debt. It seems the Premier's only plan is to throw the Yukon's economic bus into reverse and drive it off a cliff.

Can the Premier tell us today whether or not he will stop his spending spree at \$216 million in debt, or whether he plans to run up future debts for future generations of Yukoners to pay?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The members opposite know this. We're showing a forecast based upon a current trajectory that we're left with, with the Yukon Party government. We can debate who got us here, but there are questions that have been left from the Yukon Party — capital expenditures, prior long-term planned forecasted net capital of \$175 million in 2018-19, and 2019-20, while the current long-term plans forecast \$220 million in net capital expenditures.

What we see from the previous government is capital — that was assumed to be drastically reduced in the previous government's last budget — reduced to \$175 million net spending on an annual basis in 2019-20 from their forecasts. The new plan has \$220 million setting net capital spending assumptions straight across the map. My question again to the opposition would be: What were you planning? Were you planning to leave federal infrastructure dollars on the table when the communities need this infrastructure? What capital were you planning to cut? Were you planning on leaving local contractors in the lurch of massive cuts in the capital plan?

Again, these were the questions that we were left with from the previous government. It would have been interesting to see how they would have gyrated right now, if they were in the government talking to us about how they would plan the future knowing full well the shortcomings in their forecasts.

Mr. Cathers: Again, yesterday I pointed out at great length where the Liberal forecast has gotten this wrong. It clearly appears to be a case of overprojection or a plan of reckless spending. We know what the numbers were and the red ink we see in this budget is dramatically different.

The Premier's plan to leave future generations of Yukoners holding the bill for his spending raises lots of important questions — namely, does he ever intend to get out of debt? How does he intend to pay for the debt and the debt-servicing costs? If the Premier doesn't have a plan to get out of the debt he is incurring, he should have an answer to this question: Is the Premier's plan to raise government revenue or is it to reduce government spending?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Of course we have a plan to get out of the debt that we're left with from the Yukon Party, and it

involves the Financial Advisory Panel, but it also involves us having a new approach to fiscal responsibilities and fiscal expedience when it comes to the Department of Finance.

Again, to recap, the previous government tabled a surplus budget in 2016-17. However, before the election, the government chose to implement millions of dollars of unbudgeted spending before leaving the office. They chose not to account for these things. Some examples we already talked about: the collective bargaining agreement; the new staffing of teachers; pension solvency payments; the new Thomson Centre beds; McDonald Lodge; increase to home care supports; and a contribution to the MacBride Museum for expansion. So that ship has sailed. All of that money was not accounted for. The result is an \$8-million deficit.

This fiscal year, our government is tabling a surplus and we believe that we are facing a structural deficit beyond this fiscal year based upon the accounting methods of the last Yukon Party government. So we are going to have a sustainable forecast and we want to do that based upon taking a whole-government approach and taking a look at a non-partisan exercise of the Financial Advisory Panel, and we'll let them show us a suite of opportunities moving forward. This government will show that leadership that is desperately needed in the Yukon right now.

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Kent: Yesterday, I asked the Premier if he has tasked the Financial Advisory Panel with a plan to bring Yukon out of debt. Unfortunately, we didn't receive an answer to that question and he hasn't presented a mandate letter or terms of reference for the panel itself. He did, however, say that the panel will be looking at all options.

My question is a simple one for the Premier: Do these options include layoffs in the public service?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I guess that would be a question for the opposition — when we take a look at the way that they were doing their forecasts for future years. But again, I'll answer the question.

When it comes to the Financial Advisory Panel, they are going to take a look at all options. They're going to put everything out there. Of course, we know what the options are. There's a full suite of them. We will pick the solutions as a whole-Yukon approach to moving forward. So the Financial Advisory Panel will give a suite of options, but it will be up to this government to determine the pathway forward.

Terms of reference — sure. You want terms of reference? We'll give you the terms of reference. If there's any other information that the opposition needs as far as the Financial Advisory Panel — we're open and accountable. We want to give that information.

The opposition asked yesterday as well if we would be producing the results of the panel, unobscured. Of course we will be. We are not putting any blinders on the Financial Advisory Panel. We're getting them to do their work and to showcase all of the options out there.

There are going to be some options out there for which, of course, we would not want to go down that route. But we

want to see what a non-partisan board is going to tell us for all the options and we will pick the option that makes the most sense for Yukoners, moving forward.

Mr. Kent: It sounds to me like the Premier hasn't ruled out layoffs. That is very interesting. I am sure it will be interesting to the government employees' union as well. If the options he has asked the Financial Advisory Panel to consider include layoffs, it would be interesting to know where he would consider these. Is everything on the table? Are there some departments or positions that would be protected from the Premier's layoffs?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Of course nobody wants to do any layoffs. I love how the member opposite likes to put words into our mouths. We never said that. Those are his words, not ours. If we take a look at the forecasting from the previous government, we were wondering what programs and services they would cut. If you take a look at the forecast expenditures, there is a narrative here. I am looking forward to talking more, based on our conversations in Committee of the Whole, to get down to these numbers — prior long-term forecasts of operation and maintenance from the previous government — and the real problem that would have been facing the Yukon Party government moving forward based upon their own forecasts. What programs and services were they going to cut based upon their own numbers?

It is interesting that the member opposite is now accusing us of somehow in the future making layoffs when what we are trying to do is be fiscally responsible for the decisions we make. If we make pertinent fiscal decisions, then the hope and prayer — and of course we would love to move forward with absolutely no layoffs, no changes to programs and services, but actually a fiscal model that doesn't have political decisions being made coming in at the ninth hour like we have seen in previous government.

Mr. Kent: This is a very interesting development here today where the Premier has not ruled out layoffs in the public service and will not commit to where those layoffs may come or which ones may be protected.

The massive new debt that the Premier is getting us into is a scary thing. It means our children and grandchildren are going to have to pay for the reckless spending of this Premier. For the options the panel is considering, what reductions in services is the government considering? Perhaps that will be answered in the terms of reference, but again we don't have that information available for us, so I hope the Premier will answer that question on the floor of the House here today.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Nobody believes the narrative from the Yukon Party as they try to put words into our mouths. Nobody over here wants to do any layoffs. For the record, no we do not want to contemplate any layoffs. That would not be a great situation.

The current long-term plans reflect the real cost of government for the first time. Operation and maintenance expenditures — as an example — would be current and long-term plans now reflecting the fulsome budget of approximately \$36 million for the Whistle Bend care facility. The prior 2016-17 long-term plan forecasted net O&M

expenditures of \$1 billion for 2018-19 with the current 2017-18 long-term plan forecasting \$1.061 billion in net O&M expenditures for 2017-18. The prior 2016-17 long-term plans forecasted net O&M expenditures of \$1.032 billion for 2019-20. The current plan for 2017-18 long-term plans forecast is \$1.079 billion. My question back to the member opposite: What programs and services that Yukoners depend on every day were you planning to cut based upon your own numbers? When were you going to inform Yukoners of those cuts?

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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, May 3, 2017. They are Motion No. 17, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, Motion No. 20, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre, and Motion No. 23, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 4

Clerk: Motion No. 4, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Speaker: It is moved by the Hon. Premier:

THAT pursuant to section 18 of the of the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*, the Legislative Assembly reappoint David Phillip Jones, QC, as a member of the Conflict of Interest Commission for a three-year period.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm pleased to move the motion for the reappointment of David Phillip Jones, QC as our Conflict of Interest Commissioner for a three-year period.

This is no surprise to the members of the Legislative Assembly that Mr. Jones was first appointed as Yukon's conflicts commissioner back in 2002. This House has subsequently reappointed him to this position in 2005, 2008, 2011 and 2014. The established practice of this Assembly is for the Members' Services Board to consider the appointment of all House officers and then to make recommendations to all members.

Mr. Speaker, on February 23 of this year, the Members' Services Board met and agreed to recommend Mr. Jones' reappointment to the Assembly. The *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act* recognizes that the appointment of the commissioner requires the solid support of the Members of the Legislative Assembly here today. Accordingly, the resolution presented today requires a

recorded vote, supported by at least two-thirds of the members here represented.

Mr. Jones brings a great deal of expertise and experience to the position of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. He is a leading Canadian expert in administrative law. He co-authored the *Principles of Administrative Law* and is co-editor of the *Administrative Law Reports*. Mr. Jones earned his law degree at Oxford University as a Rhodes scholar. For 16 years he was a full-time law professor at McGill University and then also the University of Alberta. Since then, he has been in private practice in Edmonton. His firm does considerable work in the areas of administrative law, including actions involving House officers of the Alberta Legislative Assembly as well.

A significant part of Mr. Jones' practice involves acting as a neutral arbitrator, either as a sole arbitrator or chairing boards of arbitration in both labour and commerce matters.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to serving this House, Mr. Jones is the Conflict of Interest Commissioner for the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly. Mr. Jones has served members of this Legislative Assembly ably since his original appointment in 2002. I am pleased to join with my colleagues on the Members' Services Board in recommending the reappointment of David and I would like to ask all members to support this motion.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As Official Opposition House Leader, I will respond and respond briefly to the motion put forward by the Premier. I thank him for bringing this motion forward. I thank the Members' Services Board as well. Of course we'll be supporting the reappointment of Mr. Jones as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner here in the Yukon. He has been very responsive to all members of the House throughout his time as conflicts commissioner. I know he makes regular appearances in person here to meet with members if they have specific concerns.

Again, we thank him for his work and look forward to supporting him in continuing that work over the next three years.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Premier for his outline of the process and the decision of the Members' Services Board and of course the New Democratic Party will support the reappointment of the conflicts commissioner.

Speaker: Does the Hon. Premier wish to conclude debate with any comments?

Hon. Mr. Silver: No, I will just thank the members opposite. Of course, we don't have to call division but we need to have our recorded vote. I look forward to that recorded vote. Thank you for the opposition's comments today.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker: As the Hon. Premier has set out, but I will put it on the record: Before putting the question, the Chair shall draw all members' attention to section 18(4) of the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*, which says as follows: "In order to take effect, a resolution of the Legislative Assembly for the appointment or removal of a Member of the commission must be supported in a recorded vote by at least two-thirds of the Members present for the vote".

In order to ensure that the requirements of section 18 of the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act* are met, the Chair will now call for a recorded division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried by the required support of two-thirds of the Members of the Legislative Assembly present for the vote, and that David Phillip Jones, QC, has been now reappointed as Conflict of Interest Commissioner for a three-year period.

Motion No. 4 agreed to

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 201, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, Mr. Kent.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I know I have about 28 minutes or so to conclude my remarks. Yesterday, of course, when I started shortly after 5:00, I had the opportunity to thank a number of individuals, including those constituents in Copperbelt South, and I did get into some generalities as well about my reaction to the budget. I am going to continue on with some of those generalities, get into some constituency-

specific issues and, as time permits, speak a little bit about my critic roles in Energy, Mines and Resources, Economic Development and Community Services before I wrap up.

The first thing I wanted to talk about is a motion that we started to debate last Wednesday — a private member's motion on the carbon tax and potential exemptions. I wanted to reference a comment made by the Minister of Tourism and Culture yesterday in her response to the budget. I'll quote her from Hansard, where she was talking about the carbon-pricing mechanism that will be coming to Yukon. She said — and I quote: "For example, a tourism business that pays more for fuel will also see a corresponding rebate. Therefore, the prices of products and services offered should remain unchanged." She goes on to further say, "By 2018, all Canadian jurisdictions will have carbon-pricing plans in place, giving no jurisdiction a perceived competitive advantage." She said, "That's something that's very important to keep in mind — that this is Canada-wide and that this is a federal carbon-pricing program."

Mr. Speaker, that begs a couple of questions for me. Perhaps when we get into Tourism departmental debate, she can have an opportunity to clarify that, or if we do get the carbon tax motion back to the floor of this House, she may have an opportunity to respond there. I have a couple of questions for her with respect to that. Is she expecting companies to carry the risk and wait for their annual rebate or monthly rebate, or will that rebate be instant? This is going to be pretty tough for a gas station or an airline that sells or consumes an awful lot of fuel. Again, we will look to an answer from the minister on that.

Of course, with respect to the other jurisdictions, one of our main jurisdictions when it comes to competing for visitors is Alaska. Alaska, of course, will not have a carbon-pricing plan in place, so I would be interested to hear how we will compete with the State of Alaska for visitors when the numbers from this tax on tourism come in. Again, I will look forward to hearing back from the minister during debate when it comes to the carbon tax.

Just to follow up on Question Period today, we are left with more questions on this side of the House, unfortunately, than we got answers from the Premier. Specifically, I'll reference my question on layoffs. I'll take the chance and the opportunity to review the Blues and take a look at the Premier's response. It sounded to me like the Financial Advisory Panel would be looking at potential layoffs and potential service reductions in the government. Again, we will look to explore that further with the Premier.

Perhaps when he gets up to close second reading debate of the budget, he will have a chance to get further briefings from department officials and give us an answer. With respect to that, I will get a chance to review the Blues from Question Period today and see exactly where we are at with layoffs in the public service coming out of the Financial Advisory Panel's work.

I am going to turn my attention to some specific constituency issues that I would like to deal with for residents of Copperbelt South. Some of those issues are located right in

the riding and some are broader government budget commitments where we would certainly be looking to get some answers. I will put some of those questions on the record here today.

Recently the government, through Highways and Public Works, conducted some consultations on the Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway specific to improvements at the intersection of the south Klondike Highway and the Alaska Highway — or the Carcross Cut-off as many of us know that area to be called. I would like to get — if they are not already published on the department's website — the results of those consultation meetings that took place out at The Cut Off Restaurant and get a sense for what some of the responses from area residents has been. I have heard from a number of constituents both in my riding and in the Minister of Community Services' riding about concerns with access — not only access off the highway, but the frontage roads as well as the potential gating of the access into the fire hall. I thank the Minister of Community Services. I know he followed up with my constituent on his concerns with that. Of course we will be looking for some further responses. I note that the budget itself recognizes an amount for the Alaska Highway, but I will also be interested to hear whether or not improvements at that intersection are included in this budget.

Something that came up at the doorsteps and again with yesterday's earthquake here in Whitehorse — this week marks a terrifying one-year anniversary for many Canadians. That is of course the Fort McMurray fires and what happened in Fort McMurray last year at this time. Many Yukoners will recall the images on our television screens of the mass evacuation and what was happening there. In that immediate aftermath, firesmarting and protecting people's homes against wildfire is something that certainly came up. I am hoping to have the opportunity or have the appropriate critics given the opportunity to explore what the FireSmart plans are for this year — if there are any significant opportunities — whether through commercial harvest and building larger fire breaks and what individual Yukoners can do to FireSmart their properties and protect themselves from any potential wildfire.

As we enter Emergency Preparedness Week next week, this is something that I know will be very important to my constituents. It is something that did come up on the doorstep given the fact that most of my constituents live in a rural residential or country residential setting — trying to get a sense of what we can do to protect our homes and protect area residents from the potential threat of wildfire is important to our constituents.

With respect to improvements to the Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway, the work was completed last fall on passing lanes and deceleration and acceleration lanes near the Pioneer RV Park in my riding of Copperbelt South. There was also a multi-use trail put in. At the time, I know HPW officials mentioned that paving of that trail would be put off to a future budget year. I will be interested to talk to the Minister of Highways and Public Works or perhaps hear from him on whether or not that paving will be done this year.

Bicycle safety is something that is extremely important to constituents. Many of the constituents in my riding cycle to work along the highway. I'll recognize the work of HPW officials in sweeping the highway very early this year so those cyclists can get out as early as possible, whether it's their preferred method of commuting to work or they are training for events like the Kluane Chilkat International Bike Relay. It's an important area and there are an awful lot of cyclists who use that area.

Something that did come up at the doorsteps last year was the paving of that multi-use trail, so I hope to get a response from the minister on whether or not that will be done in this current budget or future budgets as presented in the longer term plan.

Something that also came up — the Minister of Highways and Public Works will be familiar with this as I did send him a letter shortly after his appointment to his portfolio — and that's signage on the highways for commercial businesses. There is specific signage for the McCrae industrial area and I would note also in the Porter Creek North riding for the MacDonald Road industrial area as well as the Kulan industrial area, but one area that it is missing is the Mount Sima industrial area.

There are a number of businesses that are located there — everything from a brewery to assay labs, construction companies, heavy construction companies and road companies and those types of contractors. I'm just wondering if there is an opportunity to put in some similar highway signage to what exists at McCrae. I know that some of the businesses — the Winterlong Brewing Co. in particular has requested specific tourism-oriented directional signage or that blue signage. I know that the policy suggests that not be allowed within the city limits, so I'll explore with the minister whether or not he would consider a policy change when it comes to that particular kind of signage. I know it's not only for me, but my colleague, the Member for Kluane, has had similar concerns raised by constituents in Haines Junction as well. I have heard them as well from business owners in the Tagish area of Yukon — the community there. There are a number of businesses that would be looking at this. In fact, the former member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, Kevin Barr, asked, I believe, about that during debate when we had an opportunity to talk.

One of the issues that has come up by some of my constituents is with respect to children with diabetes and the purchase of constant glucose monitoring machines for them. I did reach out to the Minister of Health and Social Services. I thank her for the response. It certainly wasn't the response that I was hoping for, or the parents of these children were hoping for. There are some young constituents in my riding who I had the opportunity to meet during the campaign who have diabetes and require constant monitoring of their glucose levels. There were some pretty scary incidents described to me by parents where they thought their child might not make it, so again whether it's through debate questions or written questions — I'll follow up with the minister and hope that we can get her, as she gets more comfortable in her position, to

take another look at this request, especially for the young kids who don't have the opportunity or perhaps the skills to mention to their parents when their blood sugar is getting too low or too high.

I had the opportunity to meet with a number of parents. They showed me the technology and it's very interesting to see it at work. We'll look to follow up with the minister on that.

Mr. Speaker, Copperbelt South contains a number of contractors — small, medium and larger contractors. This is for the Minister of Highways and Public Works — we would look to get a sense of some of the important budget numbers for the smaller contractors. One of the important programs is the rural roads program. We were informed yesterday by one of the small contractors that there has been \$1 million taken out of that program. This is really the bread and butter for some of the smaller operators and we would certainly like to explore with the minister what led the minister to make that budgeting choice to remove that, because it really represents a shift throughout the contracting community, where some of those smaller jobs that some of the smaller contractors have traditionally done are no longer available.

The same of course applies on the vertical infrastructure, or the building construction — we'll look to see what's in this budget for some of the small and medium contractors. There are some land availability concerns, particularly in Whitehorse, for some of the private sector builds, but we'll see where we land once we get into some details.

I'm hoping that the Minister of Highways and Public Works and the Minister of Community Services can provide a more detailed list as to what projects are being considered with respect to some of the line items, particularly with the clean water and waste-water fund, and then the highway projects and the other building projects scattered throughout the budget — which ones are being done. Perhaps we can get a list of the capital maintenance projects as well. That will give us a better sense so that we can communicate to our constituents who are contractors as to whether or not there'll be work for them here this summer. Perhaps they may have to take advantage of the Canada free trade act that was recently signed and look beyond our borders for work if it doesn't exist here.

When I was Highways and Public Works minister, one of the things that we tried to stay on top of — and I believe it's in the contracting directive — was the tender forecast system.

I haven't been on there since the budget was introduced, but I'm hoping that particular tool is better utilized by department staff and we get a better sense on when some of these projects might be tendered. Again, this helps us as MLAs in communicating with our constituents or other interested Yukoners who come in and talk to us about contracting issues with the Yukon government. We will look forward to these contracts rolling out as soon as possible and we will look forward to next March when the government committed to seasonally dependent contracts being tendered prior to the end of that month. That will certainly be a big help to the local contracting community.

The other thing that jumped out at me generally and from a constituency issue in the budget is the \$4 million — I believe that is the number — that will be put into Education staffing in our schools. With Golden Horn Elementary School in my riding, that's the one that I'm obviously concerned about, but all members will be concerned with the schools in their communities or in their specific ridings. I hope to get a little bit more detail from the Minister of Education on the staffing allocation model and where those resources will be deployed. Are they educational assistants? Are they learning assistants? Is it going to be additional support for English-language learners? Those are some of the questions that we hope to explore further with ministers once we get further into Committee of the Whole and departmental debate.

Specific to my critic roles — with Energy, Mines and Resources, I have the mines, the oil, gas and energy side of things. We will be exploring with the minister his mandate letter and what the Premier has asked him to do on the energy side of things. I'm particularly interested in the retrofit program. I know that they're not at the \$30-million commitment level that they made during the campaign, so we will look to see when they anticipate being there and exactly what the number is contained within this budget. There may be some areas where those dollars aren't readily apparent, but we will look to the minister to provide some direction for us as opposition MLAs to the budget and where we can find them.

I will also be interested in the success of the microgeneration program. It was one of the early programs that I was able to institute when I took over Energy, Mines and Resources. I thank the MLA for Lake Laberge for his work previous to me in getting that program ready for deliver. I know that no matter where we travel — again, in my riding or other ridings — there are individuals who have taken advantage of that — mostly for solar panels, I believe, on their homes. There is the up-to-\$5,000 rebate. Hopefully, we will be able to get some statistics from the minister with respect to that.

On the independent power production policy — work was progressing as we entered the election cycle last year. We are looking to get a sense for when that work will be done. I note that there is a private sector company looking at windmills on Haeckel Hill. I'm sure they will be interested in taking advantage of that. One of the officials from Energy, Mines and Resources, I believe, was quoted in the paper saying that they will be entering into negotiations for a power-purchase agreement. We will look to get some details there.

I know that one of the Liberal campaign commitments was that the IPP no longer allow LNG or liquefied natural gas to be considered as an energy source. So we'll explore that a little bit further with the minister and get a sense of what that means for some of the mining companies. This may not be the case currently, but some of the previous management at Wellgreen was hoping to partner with the community of Burwash Landing and potentially Destruction Bay and sell excess power from their LNG generations into the community. Some of the mining companies would have relied

on that additional revenue. I have talked to others that have considered similar things for areas around Faro or other areas that were close to the grid as well to generate the power they needed and sell the excess, but, of course, they were going to use liquefied natural gas. So we'll just confirm with the minister that's off the table and perhaps get a sense for any discussions that he has had with those companies.

On the mining side of things, there are a number of areas that we'll look to explore with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, particularly when it comes to assessment of abandoned mines. I noticed a significant decrease in the amount that is budgeted for that. Of course, 90-plus percent of that money comes from Ottawa. It is down, I think, about \$10 million from where we were a couple years ago, so I am kind of interested. You can't tell from the budget, but hopefully the minister is able to give us a breakdown of which type 2 sites will receive work and the amounts that they'll get. I know there were some management changes contemplated when it comes to assessment of abandoned mines last year. The Government of Canada was taking over the remediation management piece and we — by "we", I mean the Yukon government — would be managing the care and maintenance aspects of it. We'll hopefully get a few more details from the minister on that work and where we're progressing there.

Something that is very important to the mining industry — it was obviously important prior to the election and I'm sure it remains important — is the regulatory improvements. We'll look to get a sense for what is happening in the Strategic Initiatives branch.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Kent: Pardon me — five minutes left? I had better pick up the pace here a little bit then.

So again, regulatory improvements — get a sense for those. The Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining — I note that there was some talk of support for Yukon College and the trades there, so we'll get a sense, hopefully, from either the Minister of EMR or the Minister of Education as to what plans there are for CNIM for this year. They have a tremendous new facility that Yukon and Canada partnered on. We certainly want to see that utilized. Especially now is the opportunity to train, as well as to look in the coming years at the projects that are coming down the pipe.

Roads and energy investments are also important to the mining industry, so we'll get a sense from either the Minister of EMR or the Minister of HPW on that.

Oil and gas — I know the Kandik and Eagle Plains basins received some attention last year. The minister alluded to that in the local media. We'll get a sense, hopefully, from him on the progress. There were some First Nation consultations that were underway. We hope to get a sense of when the 60-day public consultation period will start as well.

I will also look to explore with the minister some of the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing work and the recommendations that they made. One of those recommendations was for an economic analysis. I believe the minister has the document he alluded to, either in debate or in Question Period, that talked about the

benefits but not about the risks. Reading the select committee's report, there is plenty of talk about the risks and that is why we ask the department to do the benefits analysis. I hope to get a chance to explore that with him a little bit too.

Quickly, to talk about Economic Development again, we will look to the mandate letter and talk about the redundant fibre and the new options, and potentially what that might mean with some of the trade disputes that we are having — that Canada is potentially having with the United States — and if that has any effect on what the minister's thinking is with respect to that.

We will also look to discuss support for industry and other opportunities. I would have gone into more detail had my time not been running short. When it comes to Community Services, taking a look at the mandate letter for the minister — we will have a go-through there.

One of the things that I should mention that has been mentioned to me by various sporting organizations is that sport didn't receive a very prominent role in the mandate letter for the minister. Hopefully we get a chance to talk about that for a little bit and get a sense for what his vision is on sports. The mandate letter had a very noticeable lack — especially noticed by members of the local sporting community — of what the Premier expects the minister to do when it comes to sport and amateur sport in particular.

With the Community Services minister I would like to see a project list when it comes to the clean water and waste-water fund. I know there is a fairly substantial number identified in the line item. We talked about some of the other opportunities as well, but I see my time is running short. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks. I look forward to getting into Committee of the Whole with members opposite.

Ms. Hanson: I thank all of the members so far who have contributed to the discussion around and about the budget that was tabled in this House last week.

Before commenting directly on the budget speech, I was reflecting on some of the comments made by government members on who they are when one peels away their label of government member or minister — what motivates them to serve or to seek political office. It was interesting to note that I share Maritime roots with three of the Yukon government's front bench. My mother came from a tiny dot — a point, not even a village — in Prince Edward Island. My father was a first-generation Swedish/Finnish mix. He served in the RCAF, training pilots and later as an air traffic controller and as a pilot. It was also noted that several of us in the House share the experience of having strong maternal figures — mothers who were nurses — and also that a number of us were raised by moms who were single parents. In my case, my mom was pregnant with her sixth child when my father was killed while working. I was almost eight. I am — I guess I was — the eldest. All the research that talks about early childhood experiences having a lasting effect — well, my personal experience reinforces that this is the truth.

The slogan "Question authority" for me isn't a button worn in a protest. It is a learned truth. A small example —

when my mother had my youngest brother, the federal survivors benefit for widows provided benefits for five, not six kids, because he wasn't born. She was pregnant and it was only five months after my father was killed that the youngest was born — so impeccable logic from a bureaucratic point of view, but neither just nor compassionate. To this day, those who know me know that I do not accept at face value any assumptions that this is the way it is, or has to be or must be. On a personal and political level, I believe we must always ask why and to what end.

Equally, when I reviewed the Budget Address presented by the Finance minister, I looked for measures that will go beyond window dressing, that will deliver on commitments made during the election campaign and that, above all, will help make Yukon a place where no one is left behind.

Having worked in provincial, municipal and federal public services for over 30 years, I understand deeply and respect the role of a professional public service. It's why I questioned the previous government on their failure to take seriously the issues identified in the audit of the public service staffing, or when the highest position in Yukon's public service — the Public Service Commissioner position, a position that's intended to set the tone for all of Yukon's public service — was shuffled aside. Or when the employee assistance program contract was yanked from a local agency and handed to a national HR giant, Morneau Shepell, the current Finance minister — and many more examples that show a lack of respect for the public service.

Actions are louder than words. I look to this new government to demonstrate by its actions, not by its words, because in the context of a budget that impacts every single Yukon citizen, talk is cheap and actions can be cheapened if the talk behind actions is for show and not grounded in a commitment.

Before I speak briefly about the areas in the budget that appear too positive and appear to contribute to a Yukon where no one is left behind, I thought I would share an anecdote that I found in Hansard. It is from a time in this Legislative Assembly when there had been yet another government change. The Speaker was Tony Penikett and I believe the year was 1994, but I stand to be corrected.

I think he quite correctly described it as an "apt apocryphal story" and it was about a newly elected and I will call it a Liberal government: "In this case, the incoming first minister was wise enough to ask for some advice from his predecessor. The outgoing first minister responded by giving the new man three sealed envelopes. 'Put them in the safe', advised the outgoing minister, 'and whenever you have a crisis, open an envelope'. Well, for a few days the new man enjoyed his honeymoon, but when he started to make decisions, he began to annoy people, even some of his own supporters. In this mythical story, two of the government's first decisions involved resolutions to shelve their election promises and to freeze hiring. Predictably, many of their supporters who expected jobs began to desert the cause. Groups who believed they would benefit from promised new government programs started to grumble. Public employees

who felt betrayed wrote nasty letters to the editor.” Even the Liberal cheerleaders at the local daily felt bound to report some of this dissatisfaction.

“Feeling somewhat tired and emotional, the new leader went to his safe. He tore open the first envelope and read the note inside. It said: ‘Blame the previous administration’. Quick as a fox, the leader called a press conference and blamed the previous administration. Sure enough, the crisis passed. Thinking he had struck a vein of pure gold, the leader continued to blame the previous administration. He blamed it for everything.

“For a while it worked. One by one, other problems arose and rapidly mushroomed into full-grown crises. This time, there were demonstrations and protest marches. Local newspapers began to editorialize against the government in their headlines. Former friends even cursed the government leader in public. Badly shaken, the first minister went to the safe again and opened the second envelope. It said, ‘Blame Ottawa’. With the envelope in hand, the desperate man rushed down to a Chamber of Commerce lunch and gave a rip-roaring speech, blaming Ottawa for everything from the weather to the world metal prices. The business lobby gave him a standing ovation and social peace returned to the land for a few months.

“As sure as snow in winter, another crisis arrived at the leader’s door. Now, he faced angry words in caucus and stormy silences in Cabinet. He even heard rumours of a leadership challenge. Nervous and overwrought, the politician dragged himself back to the safe and clutched the third envelope. He took a deep breath and broke open the seal. Inside, the message read, ‘Prepare three envelopes’.”

The story is apocryphal, but it is a story that sort of tells us about the choices we make and where they can sometimes lead us.

Mr. Speaker, my preference, as the MLA for Whitehorse Centre, would be to see the commitments made by the Liberals in their platform reflected in this first budget — again, transforming words to action. Even though many people have said to me that the Liberal platform read like NDP light with vague nods to the Yukon Party, I was pleased to see the commitments to increase the number of front-line community mental health workers. We agree with the notion of a strategic approach to an economy. We would only hope that this government is open to moving beyond the status quo — that the newly minted expert panel is not simply a cover or a protracted public relations exercise — an exercise in public consultation that we have seen from the previous government where decisions have already been made. That would go contrary to what the kinds of commitments we have heard this government make to open government.

I mentioned I worked for many years for government. That, Mr. Chair, has given me a history and a perspective on the cycles of government commitments and broken commitments and promises. I recall well the big, bold promises of the federal Liberal government and the red book in the early 1990s. I also recall the complex and lasting impact of the cuts that followed — cuts that were attributed to the

necessity of austerity. Words were used repeatedly by Liberal then-Minister of Finance, Mr. Martin, including the infamous two-percent cap placed on First Nation program dollars. Those cuts initiated by Minister Martin — later to be Prime Minister Martin — set the stage for further cuts by the Harper Conservatives.

Mr. Speaker, my experience tells me to look beneath the language of a promise. I have, over the years, seen governments use process, fora, conferences, summits and meetings as substitutes for hard decision-making requiring deep discussion and compromise. I hope that this is not the pattern that will be set by this government in its first set out with this expert panel.

The Premier, the Finance minister, has reiterated time and again that this is a government that will make decisions based on evidence and yet, with no evidence to back the decision, the new government chose to cut the corporate tax rate by 20 percent. The fact of the matter is that the only thing that corporate tax cuts do is reduce government revenues. They do not stimulate investments or job creation.

You know, Mr. Chair, one needs only to recall the frustration expressed by former Conservative Finance minister Jim Flaherty, who, prior to his untimely death and after years of Conservative corporate tax cuts aimed at stimulating the Canadian economy, stated quite plaintively that corporations were sitting on excess of \$650 billion and not investing in job creation in Canada or in research and development. I hope that members in this House will recall those words.

If not Mr. Flaherty, recall the speech given by Stephen Poloz, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, who said much of the same in his speech to the Chamber of Commerce at the gala last summer. It was a Debbie Downer of a speech. He didn’t hold out much in terms of optimism for any quick resurgence in the economy, nationally or internationally, but he was really clear that those tax cuts had not worked.

If decisions are to be evidence-based, why did the government not wait until they had received the advice of the expert Financial Advisory Panel to see if tax cuts were one of the tools that would assist? At a minimum, we would have expected the government to have read the admonitions contained in the Standard & Poor’s Yukon ratings, which found that in general — and I quote: “The Yukon Party tax cuts had not stimulated Yukon’s economy and that is to our collective detriment. The cuts have weakened the ability of government to finance Yukon’s priorities and chart a new direction.” It is not so much the actual amount of each tax cut; it is the cumulative impact, and that cumulative impact needs also to be assessed against the backdrop of an ideologically driven legislative framework that, as Standard & Poor’s identified, has entrapped Yukon governments. I’m quoting here from the S&P: “The territory’s ability to increase revenue is somewhat constrained as a result of the *Taxpayer Protection Act*, which stipulates the Yukon government cannot introduce a new tax or increase an existing one, in particular personal income, corporate income or fuel taxes, without a referendum. This requirement would be more of a

negative credit factor if the territory relied more heavily on own-source revenue.”

So here, Mr. Chair, the government is getting caught in an ideological trap, unless they have the courage to spurn the *Taxpayer Protection Act*, which was put in place by the Yukon Party in the mid-1990s.

A clear sign that this new government believes in the future of Yukon would be shucking the shackles of the *Taxpayer Protection Act* because, until they do, their flexibility as government will continue to be constrained by self-imposed restraints. I say that as Standard & Poor’s points out — and I quote: “Although transfers from the federal government provide a stable and predictable revenue source, we believe Yukon’s budgetary flexibility is weak...” The modifiable — the things that the Government of Yukon can do on its own, the amount of the budget flexibility it has — revenues typically account for a relatively small percentage of operating revenues. It hasn’t changed over the years. You would have thought that post-devolution, when we had provincial-like responsibilities and authorities, the government would have grown its revenues. We have shrunk our revenues. There is something wrong with that, and further cutting the ability to generate revenues further decreases the flexibility of government.

Contrary to what the Member for Mountainview may hope or perhaps believe — because it really is a neo-liberal mantra — the private sector is not unfortunately the backbone of Yukon’s economy. Again, as Standard & Poor’s put it, “... public administration, health care and social assistance, and educational services...” remain the foundation of Yukon’s economy constituting a significant proportion of its economy. The expert Financial Advisory Panel may, if not constrained by the terms of reference from this government, offer new insights for moving the new Yukon government further along the continuum of self-government as a territorial entity. We can only hope so. We can call on civil society to pay close attention to this initiative.

The budget is at times disappointing because of the apparently conscious decision not to address inequality. For example, if the government was looking to tax as a method of addressing inequality, they might have, and still might consider — here’s an option for the government — the fact that all Yukoners — including pensioners, the working poor and lower income people earning up to \$44,700 — annually pay a tax rate of 6.4 percent on that taxable income. Compare that to Nunavut’s lowest bracket at four percent, BC at 5.06 percent, and Northwest Territories at 5.9 percent. I realize that the Minister of Community Services doesn’t believe that Yukon should move toward a \$15 per hour minimum wage as a stepping stone toward a living wage, but we can hope that the government is prepared to look at all the evidence prior to making decisions that affect the ability of this government to equitably serve its citizens.

We will have an opportunity to delve into each of the departments in more depth. However, I do want to note a concern that the budget speech and the budget itself appear to have adopted some of the aspects of the federal Liberal

approach to promise and defer. There has been blowback at the national level when Canadians realized that promises made are not necessarily promises kept. The NDP will expect clear and substantive action on the promises made by the Yukon Liberal government.

For example, as promised, we will be asking when and by how much will the government increase the small business investment tax credit. When will it implement the five-year funding plan for tech innovation, given that two-thirds of the first year of its mandate is almost past? When and under what terms does the government intend to, as promised, accelerate completion of the fibre optic line? When — that is, in what year — will it commit to allocation of the \$30-million per year toward energy retrofits? This is a steep climb from the \$200,000 announced this year.

Will it introduce tax credits or incentives for local food processors? When? When will it publicly set out, what, if any, commitments it will make to the Vimy independent seniors housing project?

Mr. Chair, there is so much more. We heard the Member for Porter Creek Centre read a motion yesterday urging his own government to act on daycare — a motion that reflected a portion of the depth of what we had tabled in the Legislature the week before. Regardless of the words we use about the need for daycare, the question most Yukon parents with little kids ask is: When will I be able to access quality, affordable daycare for my child? The question that workers in daycares ask is: What kind of training is necessary and how can I access it without having to work full-time and try to get an education at the same time in order to qualify to go to the next rung in terms of recognition of my training?

Mr. Chair, in addition to the issues that face us as Yukoners, each one of us represents our own ridings. The riding of Whitehorse Centre, as I have discussed many times in this House, is a diverse community. The Downtown Residents Association has evolved into an active organization reflecting the hopes and concerns of people who are both downtown residents and those who live and work in Marwell. One of the continued concerns is that the DRA is the apparent lack of coordination of planning between the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon government. It’s not so much the lack of planning with the City of Whitehorse, Mr. Chair. The City of Whitehorse has an amazing amount of planning activities involving downtown residents.

Going back, an example I would give is that, in 2010, the city planners involved downtown residents in what we called the “downtown south charrettes” to talk about what our vision was for south Whitehorse. That plan excited a lot of people and involved a really interesting cross-section of the population. If you look at south Whitehorse, you’ll understand what I mean in terms of the demographics. One of the key areas was in the area of Taylor, Jeckell and Drury streets, where there is a lot of Yukon Housing or social housing and a very dilapidated playground at the end of the street at the base of the clay cliffs. As a result of the planning exercise and the charrettes, the community was finally thrilled that there was

going to be a playground. There was actually a playground for their kids.

Then, out of the blue, the Yukon government dropped St. Elias group home at the end of Hoge Street — no community consultation, no discussion with the DRA or with the neighbours in the area — and the end result is that the downtown playground is still not built. It's not likely to be built in that area.

That downtown south plan also included a lot of discussion about the vacant space along Fifth Avenue and Rogers Street. There were many plans developed. There were shadow models developed for proposed housing developments — the mix that would be there, a nice eclectic mix we need to have a vibrant downtown — mixes of shops and residential properties. Again, it's 2017 and there is nothing on Fifth and Rogers. There is another announced planning exercise, but Fifth and Rogers is still vacant.

The territorial government, through its decisions about how and where it changes the attitude toward licensing and offsales, has had a significant impact on downtown Whitehorse. We've seen neighbourhoods in downtown Whitehorse reacting in anger to what they have had to experience and had to protest in order to get some of these operators out. There are real concerns about how many offsales you need to concentrate in downtown Whitehorse? What's the impact of putting in ostensibly a private liquor store around the corner from Whitehorse Elementary and across the street from the new Sally Ann? Why?

You can say it's legit because they have a business attached to it. Well, it's on a different street address in a different building. Somewhere there must be a connection. I don't raise it to disparage the particular business, because they're just doing simply what the law provides for, but it does raise the question about the importance of social responsibility by government when it looks at the impact of decisions. I have heard the government members, particularly the minister, speak of a whole-government approach. If we're talking about community wellness, I think this is an area that we're going to have to look at very carefully.

Mr. Chair, in addition to the other areas that we will certainly want to talk about — our concerns — I raised the issue about the \$30 million that was the commitment to energy retrofit and other measures that would address climate change. I am puzzled and concerned about a government that speaks of — and I heard the Premier speak very clearly this afternoon about making that transition off of fossil fuels and making the transition to a renewable energy future. When I look at the budget I see that, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, we're proposing to double our expenditures in Energy, Mines and Resources in the oil and gas sector and I'm wondering, why remove over \$3 million? I look at the figures and it's puzzling to me. Why are we investing in an area that we should be divesting ourselves of? That's a contradiction that we'll be looking to try to plumb the depths of and understand the rationale that the minister and the government is pursuing here, because you cannot invest in oil and gas and still say you are committed to renewable energy.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist — and I think you'll find that most Yukoners will quickly parse out that you can't say that you are investing in some kinds of fossil fuels and not other kinds of fossil fuels. It's not going to wash.

A final comment — and one we will pursue through the budget debate — is the absence of any consideration or attention to any issues that address Yukoners living with disabilities. The opportunities to work with individuals and families to help Yukoners living with disabilities to participate in all aspects of public and community life are significant, not the least of which is the adoption as a guiding principle of the idea that, as a society, Yukon gains when it supports individuals with disabilities to determine their own experience, be it health, employment, housing or education.

Mr. Chair, there are many promises made in the budget speech and in the budget — promises that say, "Trust us," and we say, from the NDP caucus, that we're going to do so. But we will look to the government when they say, "We're going to do X, or Y, or Z, but we're not going to put any money against that. We're not going to tell you how much money we're committing to these ideas and to these promises" and they tell us to trust them — we want to. We want to believe that the Yukon Liberal government realizes that it will be judged, as the bard of the Yukon, Robert Service, put it, by the powerfully simple credo: "A promise made is a debt unpaid."

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you for this opportunity. I rise today to discuss the 2017-18 Yukon government budget. I will share some of the important investments we're making in Yukon people, places, and programs across the territory. I will also give a bit of a summary in regard to the collaborative approaches and how we intend to reach our targets.

The Yukon government will continue to advance the lives of Yukoners and we're doing so in a planned and calculated fashion as expressed in some of the opening comments from the Yukon Liberal Party and the budget presentation.

The Yukon, as we know, is a diverse place with diverse economies. We have multiple levels of government and we need to start working together with all levels of government, as expressed earlier by a few folks that own-source revenue generation in the Yukon requires calculated and collaborative efforts with Yukon First Nations, with corporate sectors and with mining sectors. There are processes that are impacting how and what we do with our economy and so legislatively, some things will have to change, and that process will reveal itself in time.

The private sector and First Nations are huge stakeholders in our environment and the social fabric of our communities, and they will be participants in addressing the needs of Yukoners and their own people, given that 25 percent of the Yukon is controlled by the 11 self-governing First Nations in Yukon. They are significant contributors to the economy, significant investors in this economy and significant land owners, and we're going to find solutions in collaborative partnerships. We're going to find the solutions that we need in terms of cooperation and seeking a process of reconciliation on all fronts.

The diversity of perspectives, expertise and knowledge is not in this House alone; it's not on the shoulders of this government alone. It's really important that we expand as a government. Coming from the First Nation community and having worked in that public sector government, we are always looking for alternatives. Given that the resources we have within our respective communities and with our respective governments as First Nation communities, we know this to be fact — insufficient resources — so they are always trying and attempting to seek solutions. A good case in point is the riding of Vuntut Gwitchin — the success of an isolated aboriginal community. It's thriving. Why? Because they are always seeking solutions to make their community a better place.

The better place they're looking for is: How do we tap into impact benefits agreements, to own-source revenue generation that doesn't limit or restrict? That's an honest fact. They cannot tap into revenue generation from partnerships with mining sectors without getting taxed on it, or without getting that yanked away if they make revenue after it's taken off the government base. We have to fix those things. That's part of our relationship in terms of fixing the economy of the Yukon.

I want to make a point here because I have heard some comments around where the wealth generation is going to be stimulated. How are we going to seek solutions and resolution to some of the challenges we're confronted with in this budget? It will come from those collaborative partnerships; it will come from creative solutions, creative partnerships, and private sector partnerships.

The wealth is within — not the whole responsibility of the government, but by breaking down some of the silos we've been confronted with for generations. We want to break those silos down. We want to look at input from our communities. Rural Yukon is an incredible part and fabric of our community. We need to not only consider, but include all rural communities in the budget-planning process. Due to the development of the Financial Advisory Panel, we will be including public engagement to ensure that the input of all communities is included in our future budget planning.

I have to say that in my 20 years working in the private sector and working with First Nation governments, not once have we — I refer to "we" as an MLA from Vuntut Gwitchin and as a former negotiator for Vuntut Gwitchin — ever been given an opportunity to say, "Do you have a solution? Can you come forth with some recommended options?" We want to be able to create some opportunities and look at building programs and services that meet the needs of the community, that are owned by the community.

I am going to refer to a project in Dawson City. The Dawson City's development association, through partnership with the municipality and the First Nation — Chief Isaac Inc. — and through private sector investments was able to build a state-of-the-art, energy-efficient, eight-unit complex to end and address some of the hard-to-house, some of the challenges in that community. There is no reason you could not take that template, go to other communities with it and use it as a

model. There are solutions that are already tried and true and that we can take and build out.

We are pleased to introduce the panel. I know this will support our government in making evidence-based decisions that best reflect the needs of Yukoners. We have skilled and experienced individuals on it who have been born and raised in the Yukon with a lot of experience. We have academia representatives with economic experts who have the experience and knowledge that can help to lend its expertise to this government as a whole and the bureaucracy of our government in working at finding the solutions.

I am going to focus a little bit on young people and youth programming. I heard some comments yesterday that the Aboriginal Sport Circle was getting a bunch of money, so why are only select groups of individuals in Yukon receiving a certain amount of money. Today again — well, why are communities not getting sport funding? They are suggesting that perhaps only the Aboriginal Sport Circle is receiving funding. That is not acceptable. We have to look at providing equality of services to all residents of Yukon. All youth matter. All children in Yukon matter. There are opportunities to look at supporting youth programming. We are building up future leaders. We are investing in our future. I can say that this is matched with the early childcare development strategy. We will support our children and we will build a strong future for them.

This year I am pleased to speak now as an MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, as the Minister of Environment, Health and Social Services, and Yukon Housing Corporation. I am pleased that we as government have looked at some of the priority pressures in my community that have been far overlooked by the previous government. The contaminated site on which the health centre is situated is not acceptable. I am happy to see that there is funding in the budget for that. Just imagine for a minute that you have a fuel spill site sitting there, knowing that it has been there for years and years — 20 or 30 years — and you have a health centre sitting on top of it.

You have residents of the community coming into the health centre for health care and it's situated on a contaminated site. You have nurses in this facility. That's not acceptable. I'm happy to see that we are looking at advancing that to a feasibility process and engaging the community. The remediation of the contaminated site is a key priority.

I'm excited and I'm extremely proud to say that this government is looking at \$325,000 to support the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle. As an athlete myself and as a coach having supported our indigenous youth to go and attend the North American Indigenous Games, as a volunteer — many, many hours in years of support from our community and our sector to address the community members, the citizens of this Yukon, the children of this Yukon who are marginalized and perhaps have never been given an opportunity to participate in a competitive environment. This government is prepared to do that — provide the support, build capacity in our communities, showcase our culture, showcase the value that our communities bring — the children bring — to the economy and to the wealth of our nation.

The early childhood strategy ties into that. It's building our youth and building our future. We have heard this quite a few times — well, this budget, this government — the planning is going to diminish or somehow not consider the future for our grandchildren and their grandchildren. I can say that, seven generations from now, that's where I want to look. I want to look at what this government is doing to provide the supports and the stability for seven generations from now, and that's part of the business planning model that we've attached to our budgets and our budget presentations. The strategic thinking and the evidence-based decisions are really about taking a business approach, a strategic approach and a business approach in how we're going to address that.

Under the Health file, the Premier's Budget Address highlighted a number of key departmental initiatives. In this budget we're following through on our commitment to helping Yukoners live healthy, happier lives. Investing in a system of health and social services that best reflects the needs of Yukoners is a priority for this government.

Just this morning, I spent time with the elders, with the older adults at Macaulay Lodge. I spoke to them. I listened to them. There are many, many people in there I knew or who knew someone whom I knew. It is very interesting, and I do believe that's the sector of our society that we're not perhaps spending enough time with. I learned a lot in my one hour with them. I learned that they're passionate about what happens with Yukon. They're passionate about supports. They're passionate about providing and lending their many, many years of wisdom and experience.

There was a young lady of 99 hoping that she can live long enough to get into the Whistle Bend facility — as a joke, but in all seriousness, they're looking for the future. They are looking to find a collaborative care facility that will provide them all the services they need. The questions they were asking are: What is the facility going to provide for us? Will we have a doctor? Will we have a pharmacist come in? Is someone going to come and check our eyes? What about those who have mobility challenges, how are they going to get downtown to get what they need? There were some questions they were asking about the whole-of-life care, the collaborative care that the previous government didn't really consider, that we're now looking at: How are you going to staff 250 positions in that facility in the next 18 months? That was the question these older adults were asking this morning — so there is a lot of wisdom is what I wanted to say. Taking the time to sit and have tea with them and hearing them — they have answers and they want to be heard. I was happy that I did that because that really gave me, I guess, a reality check that a lot of the folks who are there come from our rural Yukon communities.

So what does it mean to be healthy and happy and age in place? That means they want to be home. They want to be home in Old Crow. I asked one of the old men, "How are you?" He said, "I'm okay, but I want to be home." He wants to be home in his own community. "Although they provide good care for me here, I want to be home," he said. The message that I took away from that is what can we do and

how can we engage with that sector of our society? They will find and give us the answers we need, so a valuable lesson this morning in terms of collaborative care and aging-in-place models from the very wise elders I met with this morning.

Creating a system that is coordinated and seamless in delivering health and social services to Yukoners is our mandate and our vision. To achieve this, the department is working closely to better coordinate their efforts. We are also reaching out to communities and First Nations to build collaborative systems that everyone can be a part of. That means, I guess, part of the response to some of the previous questions around infrastructure building in the communities and responsibilities. Aging well in place in our communities means that we need to work with the municipalities, work with the communities, and work with the First Nations to find those solutions there in the communities. That means perhaps fiscal partnerships and alternative management measures so that all of the responsibilities don't fall on this government.

Addictions and wellness — many Yukoners have been affected by mental health and addiction issues. Whether they have had an illness or an addiction themselves, they have been impacted in some way. Ensuring that all Yukoners have access to the support they need to lead healthy lives is a priority.

In the budget, we have identified 11 new positions for the communities — mental wellness assistance for addictions awareness. We're looking at a people-centred approach to wellness, making sure that as much as possible, people get the care and services they need in their own communities.

Today I'm proud to announce that we will be enhancing the mental wellness and addiction support workers. I made that public today and spoke to the media about that, but that will have to be driven by the communities as well. They will have input in terms of what their respective needs are, working closely with First Nations and other community partners to develop very specific locally tailored options that will support priorities identified in each community.

We've looked at the proposal that is in the budget for \$150,000 to look at pre- and post-care land-based treatment options. We need to find the solutions and the communities will have input into that. It's no longer about what we can do for Whitehorse, but what we can do for Yukon. The Member for Kluane made this point known: How are you going to get out to the communities and the very isolated places and provide them the services? How can we keep folks there and listen and hear them? I aim to get out and I have gone out to meet with members and sectors of our society. In fact, I met with the chief and council members of Burwash Landing to talk about the health centre and about the education facilities. Although it's not my responsibility, it happened to be on the agenda and I heard what they had to say. We share the information as a government and as departments to try to find solutions we need and look at collaboration within as well.

The Yukon will receive \$5.2 million from the federal government over the next 10 years for a health initiative strategy. We have the mental wellness strategy that Yukoners

participated in and designed. The implementation of that will take effect through this process — through the \$5.2 million.

We're actively working with the federal government to identify guidelines and investment areas for the new fund. How do we align that with the priorities? How do we align it with the Yukon priorities and the needs of Yukoners? The work is currently underway and I will be sure to keep Yukoners, the opposition parties and members of this House informed and participating in that process, because the solutions really come from everyone and we need to all participate in putting an implementation strategy together.

The innovation around mental wellness and addictions with the new Sarah Steele Building — the recommendation and support was driven by the Yukon and driven by Yukon people. Now we have to look at, how effective is the programming? How effective is the programming for women and for men? Is there a program for children and is there a mental wellness program? It's a new initiative and these are things we need to check on periodically to make sure we are on target and we aim to do that.

It's quite an impressive facility. It's a beautiful facility. It provides for a patient-centred treatment program for all sectors and we do have community members accessing that facility quite regularly. It's full all the time. The partnerships in terms of our diverse and talented health sector and public sector is appreciated.

I want to just acknowledge that also, because we heard yesterday that perhaps we don't value the input of public servants. We do value the input of public servants. They are the drivers of this government. As politicians, we provide the mandate, we provide the direction and they are the people on the ground. They absolutely need to be respected, appreciated and acknowledged, and I do that. I'm doing that now and I'm sure all of my colleagues feel the same way. The process in which we work and deliver our mandates is not done without consideration of the advice from the great staff that we have around us.

The fetal alcohol spectrum disorder plan for the Yukon — we are looking at a 10-year strategy, or a strategy around how do we look at fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, which is a serious lifelong disability affecting individuals in communities across the Yukon. To be effective in addressing this, we all need to be on the same page and have a clear idea of how we are going to make a difference and support each other in the process. We'll work to enhance support for women to have healthy pregnancies and to improve the lives of those living with FASD.

Government and community partnerships have resulted in many community-based initiatives in the area of FASD prevention, assessment, diagnosis and support. The plan will build upon the good work that is already happening in our communities as we continue to work together to develop a coordinated approach and response to FASD. We are taking action on maternal and prenatal supports delivered in our communities, including supports for pregnant women at risk of using alcohol. We're looking at enhancing supports and interventions for individuals with FASD. Health and Social

Services will work with First Nation communities and municipalities to develop options to better coordinate supports for individuals.

With regard to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, I understand there was a question asked in regard to the new Emergency department. I went on a tour of the facility and I'm really happy to say that they are on target and on budget. The objective is to help improve quality and efficiency of services and to help meet the challenges of increased patient volume.

The support for two collaborative care clinics in Whitehorse is also on our radar, and we will continue to work with the Yukon Medical Association to build further opportunities to develop collaborative care models in Yukon.

Over the past few years, the challenges of access to hearing services due to long waiting lists have been repeatedly discussed in this House, and I'm happy to say we are hiring a second audiologist and there will no longer be a waiting list for hearing services in the Yukon.

Electronic health initiatives will be fully implemented this year. This initiative continues to improve patient safety, quality of care, appropriateness of care by providing more complete and fast-tracked access to patient information.

My department has worked collaboratively with physicians, pharmacists, First Nations and other community organizations to develop a more comprehensive system for Yukoners. In accordance with the privacy legislation, the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act*, relevant information between health care providers will be more comprehensive and timely in the provision of health care. In addition to these advancements, we will be modernizing technologies for our social assistance and disability services programs across the Yukon. The new integrated system will increase efficiencies that will lead to more time spent with clients and increased support for vulnerable Yukoners.

We are looking at our health care system and an aging population. We are working to develop good, people-centred care options for Yukoners. Not only have we made investments in enhanced home care supports, we have also reached an agreement with the federal government for an additional \$6.2 million for enhanced home care services over the next 10 years. We will continue to collaborate with First Nation governments and communities as we develop options for aging in place and create a place where people age well and are happy in their own homes and in their own communities. To relieve immediate needs for long-term care beds, we have permanently opened four beds at McDonald Lodge in Dawson City and 10 beds at the Thomson Centre here in Whitehorse. These additions, along with providing funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation to open four additional observation beds, have provided some immediate relief to the bed pressure that the Whitehorse General Hospital has experienced over the past several years. Although we know there is always more work to do, these are just a few of the highlights I wanted to provide from Health and Social Services and demonstrate that we are here to provide excellent core support for Yukoners and residents of Yukon.

A crucial part of supporting families in the Yukon is supporting the land, being good stewards of the land and protecting the environment on which our communities rely for subsistence, recreation and land-based activities. The department works together with First Nations and the Inuvialuit, given that we have a transboundary agreement and a number of other partners to maintain and help the sustainability and prosperity of Yukon's environment. Making sure that the environment that we live and work in is healthy and sustainable is at the core of everything that we do. We cannot thrive if we live in an environment that is not healthy. We are working on effective implementation and management of our land claim agreements and our land processes. We are looking at collaborative approaches on land-use process through working with our fish and wildlife management boards, our renewable resources councils and our communities and seeking necessary solutions to some of the pressures that we have been confronted with. That is part of the work that we are obligated to do on a daily basis.

Department of Environment focuses on people through our programs and services. Yukoners understand the health benefits of being outdoors and being active. I know that first-hand, because I lived in Old Crow and, when I have time, I'm at home. This is how the people live there. They're on the land; they're thriving on the land and they rely on the environment to provide for an offset of their economic pressures.

The landscape and unique wildlife viewing opportunities in our vast Yukon — the Minister of Tourism and Culture expressed the need for winter tourism expanding opportunities in the Yukon. With the untouched resource there and to utilize it, what we have to do is protect the environment to allow for the great potential in tourism and other opportunities to explore.

The number of hunting and fishing licences as well as camping permits purchased each year continues to increase. That's a good demonstration that people are thriving and they love being outside — they love being outdoors — and hunting and fishing. The hunting and fishing also needs to be somewhat regulated and controlled to some extent. The Department of Environment knows how important it is for people to have healthy and respectful interactions with the environment, both for safety and for wildlife-viewing opportunities. The ecosystems and ecotourism is important.

We're looking to explore what Yukon nature has to offer. We're looking at numerous events and opportunities in the Yukon and supporting the Celebration of Swans and the sheep viewing in Kluane Park and elsewhere. Those are things that we clearly have to protect, and also look at partnerships with our communities in designing the necessary management measures to ensure that they're there for all time.

We talk a lot about economy and building resources, but we also have to protect what we have, in terms of sustaining our environment. Occupancy in our campgrounds has grown significantly. We've seen excessive use of our campgrounds — that means we need to put more resources into building up those campgrounds and making sure their facilities are kept

updated, recent and modern so we can get our citizens and our families and our children out exploring and enjoying the vast Yukon and the facilities.

We're currently investing \$300,000 in upgrading these campgrounds and improvements in park infrastructure, making sure they continue to provide safe, enjoyable, pleasing and accessible camping experiences, so \$33,000 will go into support for park management. We're looking at partnerships to support proactive awareness and effective responses to wildlife conflict. There's \$60,000 in the budget to support the development of a trapping industry — which includes the \$60,000. We're looking at \$700,000, which will go toward keeping the Yukon Wildlife Preserve operating. We have \$30,000 identified for an environmental awareness fund aimed at educating Yukon people.

Currently, this year, we will continue to offer fishing licences and annual resident permits online, which is new, and \$150,000 will help to expand that e-service.

I expressed in the e-health process that we are also looking at putting things online for easier access for Yukon citizens, eliminating wasted time and energy processing everything through a paper process and then having to do the data entry. That eliminates a lot of work and a lot of money and utilizes our public servants to do the good work that they are obligated to do and interact with our citizens of Yukon.

In the 2017-18 budget, more than \$7 million will support remediation of 12 contaminated sites and assessment work at five old and 27 active solid-waste facilities across the Yukon. The sites include highway maintenance camps, the nursing station in Old Crow that I mentioned earlier, a visitor information centre and an administration building in Dawson City, the Salvation Army Centre of Hope, the former Motorways facility at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre — where that's now located — and the Marwell tar pit area.

We have also budgeted \$75,000 in transfer payments to Yukon College to support climate change research. The Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs — we are working with them on projects on the climate change preparedness northern program. This four-year agreement will provide a total of \$1.7 million on recoverable funds beginning with a \$500,000 contribution in 2017-18.

I'm going to venture to say that strong First Nation relations are really important in all of this. Strong government-to-government partnerships, environmental management and stewardship are cornerstones of reconciliation. We work together on planning and management of protected areas and species and we value the input of the mandated boards and councils that I highlighted previously. It takes both governments. It takes all of government and it takes all of Yukon to work together for responsible management of our shared resources to ensure we have sustainability for future generations.

This year, more than \$1.1 million of recoverable funds from Canada will allow us to continue our role in supporting the implementation of our *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* in Yukon.

We also have an additional \$258,000 in transfer payments that will go to the Wildlife Management Advisory Council for the North Slope.

We have identified \$67,000 for transfer payments that support the work of a number of First Nation governments on community involvement and participation in groundwater monitoring.

Environment responsible economy — it's a combination of all of that. The department provides a key role in supporting a diverse economy so that Yukoners can have good jobs that can grow and be sustainable. To do this, we must work together as integral partners with industry, with First Nations and with the private sector. Our economy is not sustainable if the ecosystem it relies on is not.

The government's priority for Yukon Housing is to implement the housing action plan, tying that to and working in collaboration with Health and Social Services on the mental wellness strategy and the anti-poverty strategy, and looking at the responsibilities of the Housing Corporation. Addressing Housing First in our communities means aging well in place and building aging-care facilities in Yukon. Looking at our hospitals in our communities — how do we do that? How do we meet the goals of Yukon? How do we meet the goals with all of our governments, all of our government departments and this whole-of-government collaboration?

The municipal matching grant is a very significant portion of all of that. Putting that out there with our communities — they will find the solutions and address their needs. We have also looked at social housing complexes in our communities. First Nation housing partnerships are a significant component to that. We ventured into — with the Da Daghay Development Corporation — a 42-unit affordable housing unit in Whistle Bend. That's addressing and eliminating poverty in housing in Yukon, in Whitehorse, and hopefully provides opportunities. The collaboration is really important.

Stakeholders, strong economy, health communities, environmental stewardship — we look forward to future opportunities in providing more details on the budget — highlighting key activities in all of the areas that I mentioned. The budget reflects Yukon needs and Yukon priorities, and we will do this through sound, evidence-based decision-making.

Thank you.

Ms. Van Bibber: I'm honoured today to stand and provide remarks on the 2017-18 budget. But first I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family — especially my husband Pat, for all of his support during my campaign. No matter what I decide to take on, he is always encouraging and helping me — also, my children Stuart and Ann-Marie, who are there cheering me on always. To my campaign manager and team — words are not enough to say how wonderful you all are and you know who you are — thank you.

To my constituents of Porter Creek North, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for entrusting me to be your voice on your behalf. Our riding is diverse and much larger than I thought. I commit to each of you to advocate your

concerns and ideas to the best of my ability. It is my first run at an elected position, and although many in the Yukon thought I was a politician, it wasn't true. This is a new learning curve for me and I'm still trying to find my stride. I would like to thank the Yukon Party team for helping me adjust to this new adventure.

I met a great number of you during the election campaign in the fall, and I hope to have the chance to meet and get to know many more. Please know that our office doors are always open. I will bring up more constituent issues and concerns as we debate further in the Spring Sitting.

I would like to begin with observations and comments on the financial position of and future projection for this Liberal government. The Premier said in his budget speech, "We are determined to ensure strong, sound public finances for Yukoners". This is a wonderful commitment. However, with the direction in which this government is showing itself to be headed, public finances will be neither strong nor sound. I am wary of this new direction the Yukon government is taking.

I have always been quite proud that the Yukon often held a high, if not the best, position in our country for their stable control of finances and balanced budgets. Looking at projections of future years of this government, I am concerned that if our government does not distance itself from the path our federal government is taking, we, along with future generations, will be clawing our way to get out of debt.

I am pleased to see the government's commitment to upholding their promise to lower the corporate tax rate. I am also looking forward to seeing if they will uphold their commitment to eliminate the corporate tax rate for small businesses.

It will be interesting to delve into the details on highway funding and I would like to touch on an issue within my riding of Porter Creek North — to ensure the government is willing to hear concerns of my constituents with regard to safety and ongoing close calls on our highway. I have spoken with a number of constituents who are happy to see some of the work planned for the Whitehorse corridor project by the previous government. Specifically, there were plans to upgrade the stretch of highway between Crestview and Rabbit's Foot Canyon, with much focus on safety. I do see this part of our Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway as a priority for upgrades. From turning lanes and slip lanes to a focus on pedestrian traffic and crosswalk upgrades, I am sure that my fellow Porter Creek members would agree that this area needs work to tackle potential safety issues.

Education is one of the main focuses within any budget. It is the mainstay of our society, as it educates our children and lays the foundation for the communities. With proper education, we will produce literate and healthy Yukoners. It gives educators a platform to provide steady, good programs to students. It also gives students a good, steady foundation from which to apply for steady employment or to go further with their education dreams.

As with any large department, there are many components that ensure our education system works for all — whether a student, teacher, neighbourhood or community. The

infrastructure includes school buildings — bricks and mortar — and everything from books and desks to classroom supplies. For those brick and mortar buildings, there is a tremendous cost to maintain and operate each school building. A huge list — including but not limited to utilities, groundwork and cleaning — has to be taken into account. I was a little disappointed in the amount of funding dedicated toward education for new initiatives. Critical funding areas or programming would be of great benefit to our children. I was happy to see funding of \$422,000 for emphasizing skills and experiential learning. I'm left to wonder what this funding will cover in detail and, as I said, we'll find out as we go further down this questioning.

I'm curious as to whether the reviews will be undertaken by the department to determine the level of success these changes will have on students. Additionally, I would like to know that students do, in fact, have an option to choose not to partake in an experiential learning program, but rather increase their academic load if they so choose.

I would assume this would affect the projected cost of these programming changes. In my role as critic for both Education and Aboriginal Relations, I'm happy to see this government continuing support for the joint education action plan. Strengthening First Nation roots and closing the education gap has been a priority of the previous government.

Human resources are also an integral part of the education system. There's always concern that our teaching staff is well-trained and well-equipped to handle any changes that are given them within the school year. Personal development days and training days ensure all staff are adequately prepared. There can be many stressors for our educators in our modern times. Whether it's a few extra minutes each day or a shorter Christmas holiday period to ensure the number of teaching days are upheld for a complete school year, educators are expected to adjust their schedules to accommodate.

The public school system was put in place to guarantee each child, no matter their status in life, would be given a good basic education. The mandatory age of 16 years before a child can leave the school, usually to work to help the family or they're just not into school — we're constantly trying to invigorate and change the school's style and teaching methods to ensure as many children make their way as far as they can within the public system. This gives everyone a chance for employment and basic literacy skills. As our knowledge of why children learn differently or why any number of challenges face our youth — the Education department and educators try to accommodate and help. There is a far better understanding and recognition in this last decade than ever before.

There are many areas of education that I have not even touched on today — advanced education, Yukon College, trades apprenticeship, foreign students, grants, training allowance, residences, rural students, busing, francophone and First Nation input and job security. So many things have to be considered and included to ensure our small jurisdiction is all-inclusive.

The need to have a well-educated population is a given. It will ensure our children have the best possible launch, as well as make our communities richer for having them. While I was chancellor of Yukon College, it gave me great pleasure to arrive at this time of the year for convocation day or grad day, because it was a huge event, both for the student who worked and studied in their relevant field to arrive at that milestone, and also for their families so that they could celebrate their achievements. It was an honour to be there to witness such pride and relief.

As you may or may not know, the chancellor title is only that — a title. Yukon College is one of the few colleges in all of Canada to have such a position. Having had the opportunity to hold that honour, it gave me great pleasure to address the students and present them with their diplomas or certificates. We do have a little college that can, so kudos for any help that goes their way to becoming a whole-learning facility.

As I look at the budget, I see many areas where questions will arise. We will also be asking so that Yukoners can see what the thought was behind the decision — such as tourism, and the fact that once the knowledge gets out that a carbon tax will be added to our dollar, we will not be a choice destination for travellers. I don't believe we have considered all the implications or even how to implement this federal tax. I believe there will have to be another group of employees added to the Department of Finance just to administer this tax.

To redistribute wealth, this scheme is not a wise one. It will not do anything to change our need to keep the lights on and keep warm. To say we must change our heating systems, our way of travel and our way of doing business will be another huge tax on people's monies. There are many who are just getting by now, and additional money being drained for immediate output to pay for a carbon tax will be very hard.

Each time we drive our local highways, especially during our warmer months, we see repairs and maintenance on the highways and byways. It appears that these will be scaled back as some major bridge work happens. I worry again about our tourism folk who hope to have a good road to travel and not be worried about potholes and huge heaves. I also understand that our environment is precious.

I, for one, love to be on the land camping, boating and enjoying traditional pursuits. I would hope that people who live in urban areas get out and see the magnitude and the size of this territory. It is precious, but with correct planning and care I believe it is our responsibility to ensure we also have an economy for our future generations.

As a First Nation northern elder, I understand much, but not everything, that happens in our communities. I know someone in every town or village in Yukon and I am proud to be welcomed by them. I am also proud of my heritage — Gwich'in and Irish — and I walk comfortably in both worlds.

I am also aware of both things rural and urban, having lived in both. Small-town concerns are just as all-consuming as large towns. Being someone who has been in the public eye for a number of years through various positions and jobs, I have had the opportunity to listen to many, many Yukoners.

I urge this government to listen to the concerns of the Official Opposition, and indeed all Yukoners, when making decisions that will affect Yukon.

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, it's indeed an honour and a privilege to rise in this House today to provide my unconditional support for this 2017-18 budget.

First, I would like to thank all of the good people who put their trust in me to be the voice for Mayo-Tatchun: my beautiful and loving wife of 29 years, Melody; my favourite son Frank; and my beautiful and talented daughter Nicole; my campaign team who worked tirelessly to help me; and all the voters in Mayo-Tatchun to whom I owe my gratitude and sincere thanks. Mahsi' cho and thank you to them.

I would also like to acknowledge Corey Bellmore-Mayer, who ran for the Yukon Party, and Jim Tredger, the former MLA for Mayo-Tatchun. Campaigns are hard work and involve spending a lot of time away from your family, and I know it was no different for them than it was for me. I know they both worked hard and it's not an easy thing to do. I commend them for their efforts.

I need to do a special thank you to a man from Mayo named Wilf Tuck. He and his wife, Hilda, are probably known to many of you. They are former Mr. and Mrs. Yukon. But without Wilf's generosity and support, I wouldn't be standing here today. He was absolutely critical to my success.

When it comes to thanking people, I would be remiss in not mentioning the following individuals who worked very hard to help me in my campaign as well as helping many others. My sincere and heartfelt thanks go to Monica Nordling, Laura Cabbott, David Morrison, Devin Bailey, Valerie Royle and the rest of the territorial campaign team. Last, but certainly not least, I owe my thanks and gratitude to my door-knocking mentor and master of critique, Conal Slobodin. Thank you, Conal.

Mr. Speaker, the pledge I made door after door was that I would work hard, and I have done my best so far. Our team has worked very long and hard to produce this budget. I would like to thank all of the departments, but especially Finance, for the tremendous amount of time and effort that they put in to helping us with this budget. This is indeed a budget for all Yukon. Capital spending has been allocated to every community and every community will see some real benefits. For the good folks in Mayo-Tatchun, I'm very happy to see \$2.9 million in YG funding to continue working on municipal infrastructure and maximizing the federal clean water and waste-water funding.

The Village of Carmacks will see a \$986,000 contribution from our government for construction of four accessible seniors housing units in Carmacks. Pelly Crossing will see a new generator for Fort Selkirk, support for the public library and \$24,000 in funding for groundwater monitoring. Pelly will also be receiving \$102,000 to support recreation programs in the community.

Keno City continues to have their water delivered from Mayo to provide for local and community business needs after their well was contaminated at a cost of \$25,000 per year.

Recreational program funding — \$17,924 has also been allocated to Keno. The residents of Stewart Crossing will be pleased to know that \$2.48 million in Yukon government funding will be provided for replacement of the Highways and Public Works living quarters for the staff in Stewart Crossing.

As we are all aware, capital funding is only part of the story when it comes to investing in our communities. There are many social, wellness and other challenges that cannot be fixed by capital spending. My community of Mayo was impacted in the 1980s by two sexual predators. One of them was the principal at the school. Our community will never get over the havoc that was wreaked on our young men. We lost seven over the five years after these predators left our community. Countless other lives have been totally destroyed by the actions of these people. I am very happy to see that our government is going to be providing mental wellness workers for our community. They should have been there 15 years ago. They should have been there 30 years ago. I am glad that we finally have a government that has recognized that we need some help.

There is \$95,000 provided to assist rural communities with dog population management. As a former mayor in a small community, I can assure you that dog management is an issue in every community in this territory, and I am happy to see that our government is going to take some steps to try and deal with that.

The regional economic development fund has seen a very significant increase from \$400,000 to \$800,000. This is going to assist all of our communities, especially in Mayo-Tatchun, to deal with some of the economic challenges that are facing us. It will help us to prepare for the positive and negative impacts that are coming as the major resource extraction companies are lining up to work in Yukon, and especially in Mayo-Tatchun. Five out of 10 of the world's largest mining companies will be doing major exploration programs in 2017-18. For the most part, this will be in the Mayo-Tatchun riding.

I am very happy to say that our government is providing \$1.5 million for the First Nation housing program. I have three communities and three First Nations in my riding, and I can tell you that, based on my observations and the lifelong experience of living with those communities, every one of those communities needs help with their housing. I am very proud that in light of that — knowing that all of these communities are looking for housing — our government decided not to look at things through a Liberal lens and say, "Oh, Don, you're a Liberal, an MLA for Mayo-Tatchun. We are going to look after your housing needs." Instead, the bulk of the money for this year's housing is going to Ross River because the people there need it, not because it's a riding that is held by the Liberals.

There is \$1.5 million in funding going toward the innovative renewable energy initiative. I am very proud of my First Nation in Mayo — the Na Cho Nyäk Dun — for the solar panels that they have added to their government building. They are leading the way in terms of innovative technologies to help us get off of fossil fuels in this territory. I

am very excited that our government has chosen to partner with First Nations in this territory.

We're going to see \$150,000 to plan land-based healing programs. I know from personal experience that these programs work. I had the pleasure of being a cook at one of these healing programs and I saw the people come out.

Also in my 34 years working in the fire program here in this territory, many of the people who are brought out to assist us in fighting fires are these socially challenged individuals with alcohol and drug abuse problems. They would come out there shaky and hardly able to work and not even able to eat their meals, and three days later you wouldn't recognize these individuals. From being out on the land, from working, from getting good food, working hard, being in that environment — it changed them into a much better version of who they can be. Land-based healing is extremely important to every community in this territory.

I have already mentioned \$2.4 million to support the staff housing in Ross River and it is because the need was the greatest there. I am really encouraged and hopeful that this is the way the government will make its decisions going forward. It won't be about who has a Liberal MLA or who has an NDP MLA. It will be about where people need these things the most and we will try to deal with it that way.

I'm happy to see \$4.5 million for Watson Lake's municipal infrastructure. Being a rural MLA, I'm certainly aware of how difficult it can be to advance the needs of the rural municipalities when you have this big wonderful beast called Whitehorse here that just seems to suck up a lot of the funding out of every year's budget.

I'm extremely happy that there are 11 new full-time addiction and mental wellness workers. You have heard part of my story about Mayo and I can assure you that Mayo is not alone and it's really sad. Pelly Crossing and Carmacks — there are many individuals there who need our help and these counsellors are going to be key in helping to improve the lives of these young people. We've lost far too many of them.

I'm happy to see that there is \$130,000 going toward developing a heritage management plan for historic sites. This is going to benefit all three of the First Nations in my riding and all First Nations in the territory. They all have heritage management plans under their final agreements and I'm happy to see that our government is finally going to partner with them to get some work done.

I'm very happy to see \$650,000 to purchase four new ambulances and \$771,000 toward enhancement and home care. My colleague, Minister Frost, talked about aging in place and how people want to be home in their communities. It's no different when they're sick. When people are sick, they want to be around people who love them, whom they love, and who will care for them. They don't want to be in a facility surrounded by strangers, regardless of how high quality that care is. They want to be surrounded by their loved ones in their time of need.

The \$1.6 million to support the implementation of e-health programs I think is another way that is going to contribute to allowing those of us who want to stay in our

community to be able to stay there, but not be penalized by having a lesser standard of health care because we choose to live in a quieter, more peaceful, gentler community.

I'm very happy to see \$9.4 million in affordable housing. Every community in this Yukon has an issue with affordable housing and this is a good step to start to address it. I'm very happy about the \$8 million being spent on the Sarah Steele alcohol and drug detox centre. There will be clients coming to that facility from all five of my communities in the territory over time, I'm sure, and it is going to be of benefit to all Yukon.

I'm happy to see that our government is investing \$57 million in transportation infrastructure. That will fill a few of those potholes. The emergency department expansion and an MRI at the Whitehorse General Hospital will see an investment of \$22 million from this government. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is something that benefits the residents of this entire territory. This is a budget for all Yukon residents. It's not based on which ridings had Liberal MLAs, but rather on which ridings had the most pressing needs. I'm pleased to support a Liberal budget that responds to people, not parties.

I've heard much today about balanced budgets from members opposite. Mr. Speaker, budgets are not balanced by creative bookkeeping, which is a method that seems to be favoured by the Yukon Party. No favours are provided to Yukoners when they're saddled with \$36 million a year in operation and maintenance costs for just one facility. There have been numbers thrown around about a \$216-million deficit. If you take \$36 million a year and times that by five, that deficit goes from \$216 million to \$36 million. The \$180 million is the responsibility of the former government; it is not the responsibility of this government.

No budget will ever meet the needs of all people in a one-year time frame. I'm convinced that our Liberal government will meet the needs of many Yukon residents over our term and that we will show Yukon residents that the words "all communities matter" is not just a platform commitment, but rather this new government's philosophy toward creating vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities where people can prosper.

Our government's work to rebuild relationships with First Nations is an important step toward reconciliation for our economy and for all Yukon people. That trust has to be restored to allow new partnerships to be formed with our government and all Yukon First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, previous Government Leader Mr. Pasloski's favourite method of dealing with First Nations was one-on-one. It was a tried and true method over many generations — divide and conquer. He never wanted to sit down with all the First Nations and address all their needs at once, so it was always easy to do a one-off with an individual First Nation and buy their support for an election, but it was something that never worked for all First Nations.

The era of implementation by litigation, I hope, has finally come to an end. I, like all Yukoners, am very tired of watching our government use our tax dollars to go to court

against our friends, family and neighbours. It makes no sense, Mr. Speaker.

Our government will have a truly respectful government-to-government relationship with First Nation leadership. Part of that has been exhibited already by my colleagues, ministers and the Deputy Premier coming out to meet with the leadership in my communities. We're not sending our directors, managers and mid-level bureaucrats out to meet with First Nation leadership. The First Nation leadership is meeting with our leadership. That's how you show respect.

Our government's first budget, which we've heard from the members opposite they so want us to own contained a huge undocumented O&M commitment of \$180 million for five years. I guess we own that, but we certainly didn't cut the cheque on it. To simply do these large capital projects without accounting for the O&M cost is simply irresponsible. Talking about saddling future generations — my children and my grandchildren — with debt — don't start putting the blame on us. That damage has already been done with the previous budget.

I have heard repeatedly, Mr. Speaker, from members opposite. We were responsible for six months of the government costs in 2016-17. The math I was taught in Mayo suggests that if there are 12 months in a year and eight of them have been used, there are only four remaining and I will only accept responsibility for those four months.

We have been accused of dragging our heels. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have been working very hard for the constituents of Mayo-Tatchun. I have opened 26 casework files dealing with issues from every one of the five communities that make up the Mayo-Tatchun riding. As a member of four out of the five standing committees, I'm pleased to say that all four of these committees are now active and doing the good work of government. Our government chose to do a one-day Sitting on January 12. One of the key priorities was to appoint members to get these committees working.

The Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments had its first meetings after many, many years of sitting idle under the previous government. The primary purpose — the mandate — of the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments is to ensure that any regulations, either existing or proposed, are reviewed to ensure that they are in fact *intra vires* within the jurisdiction of the regulators. This provides an important oversight into all regulations proposed for implementation to ensure that they are appropriate for Yukon residents.

I am also happy to be a member on the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. This committee has already met three times and identified numerous priorities to be worked on. Fixed Sitting dates for this Assembly is one of the priority items. This committee is charged with reviewing parliamentary procedures and practices in the Legislative Assembly. I also sit on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which has also had several meetings since I was appointed. The primary role of this committee is to ensure that government is accountable for

its spending. We do that with the help of the able members opposite.

The Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees has had two meetings, and a third is scheduled for later this week. This committee's mandate is to review nominations and make recommendations on appointments to major government boards and committees. One of the priorities that this group is working on is to update and revise the list of major boards and committees to ensure relevance and to reflect the current reality as much has changed over the past few years. Much has changed since the original list was incorporated in Standing Order 45(3.2).

There has been much discussion in this House in the last couple of days about the true numbers in the budget and whether or not the government is left in a surplus or a deficit. There can only be one true set of numbers, and I agree with the numbers presented by our Premier in this budget.

In closing, I would like to leave you with the words of former US President John F. Kennedy: "... the great enemy of truth is very often not the lie — deliberate, contrived, and dishonest — but the myth — persistent, persuasive and unrealistic."

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you for the opportunity to reply to the 2017-18 budget speech today. The 2017-18 budget speech tells a story of a government that is ready to make tough decisions and have the courageous conversations needed to steer Yukon into calmer waters. This journey will first bring us to multiple sets of rapids. This government and Yukoners did not need to test their resilience by tackling these rapids. There was a calmer channel, but our line has been chosen by the Official Opposition. We will tie down and challenge these rough waters as Yukoners do. We will study our risks and challenges. We will look for opportunities within the rocks and eddies, and we will guide this government to safer and calmer waters. We will ensure that future journeys are well planned and that all risks and opportunities are well discussed and planned for before choosing our line.

In this political arena, it would be very naïve to think that all parties could agree on everything — or even most things. We all have different political philosophies and this leads to different perspectives and ways of dealing with things. But when it comes to the numbers, it is difficult to not all see the same picture. I'm not saying that there will not be attempts to describe the numbers in different ways. There will be, and there already have been attempts to do just that.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the departments of Energy, Mines and Resources, and Economic Development, as well as those at the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation, for their commitment to the 2017 budget and their commitment to provide Yukoners with the real picture.

Shortly into this mandate, our team began to build a new 2017-18 budget. At that time, our Premier, in a true show of leadership, stated that we would take the time to get this budget completed with the utmost of respect to Yukoners. No matter how bad things looked, we would provide the numbers

that showed the true cost of what it takes to run the Yukon government. We would not shy away from the overwhelming cost that had not been discussed over the last years. On the contrary, we would deal with things as we were elected to do — in an open and transparent fashion.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their commitment to this budget process and for choosing to undertake this work with respect for Yukoners as the paramount focus. We need to discuss the tax strategy put forth during the campaign. We are following through on the commitment to reduce the general corporate tax rate from 15 to 12 percent. Unfortunately, in this fiscal year, there will be a one-percent reduction of the small business tax rather than the full elimination previously promised. In the summer of 2016, Yukoners were told that the Yukon government had a surplus of \$9.4 million, and now we find that, in 2016-17, we've revised the budget with an \$8,269,000 deficit.

Once our new government received the accurate information, we had a decision to make — a decision that needed to balance sustainable economic growth with the needs of our people and their well-being, all the while promoting healthy, vibrant communities. The question was: Do we eliminate the small business tax, as we had stated during the election, now that we had this new data and numbers, which we didn't have access to at the time? This stay-the-course decision would have been the least problematic from a political standpoint, Mr. Speaker, but would it be the right thing to do?

Do we make the easy political decision or do we now analyze our current situation with our new reality in mind? I think we have answered that question. As all MLAs here understand, sometimes you must do the less popular thing because it's the right thing to do.

We understand that this leaves a two-percent small business tax on the table to be addressed in future years, and we will work toward this commitment, but not without fully understanding the implications of the actions before doing so.

The Loyal Opposition and the Third Party must be champing at the bit to ask me about fibre and redundancy. Certainly, we've had a couple of questions — at least that question — over the last day. This new government is committed to the Yukon fibre redundancy project. We are continuing to investigate all options for this project. This includes an analysis of potential routes, financing and ownership models.

Shortly after taking office, I was provided with a class D report based on the Dempster fibre route and the estimated cost for this project of potentially \$75 million. This new government will not make a financial decision of this size with only partial information. I know yesterday that there was a comment from the interim Leader of the Official Opposition, and I think the comment was: "There was a lot of money spent on this already. It was good to go." I think that is what he said. What I have is a class D estimate from Ledcor. It has a variance of 30 percent either way off the costing. I have a tremendous amount of respect for the interim leader and I will

tell you why: he is an extremely successful private business person.

So I'm not going to debate with him today, but I think he and I both know it was definitely not ready to go. Yukon Development Corporation will have an opportunity to speak about that when they come to Committee.

For the Stewart-Keno line — I will just put this in comparison — the previous government spend \$4.1 million on engineering reports so they could prepare to build out and then have a capex of quite similar — about \$75 million. When we see the \$80,000, approximately — I think the cost of this contribution from the Yukon government toward a report — and then it's good to go to build a \$75-million piece of infrastructure taking into consideration that the Mackenzie Valley line was estimated at \$95 million but now has ballooned to over \$200 million. I can't; I'm not taking that risk. There have been a lot of risks taken. They haven't really paid off well, so I'm going to look at all options when it comes to fibre. I'm excited to be questioned by the Official Opposition and by the Third Party. Let's dig into this. It has to be a public conversation. My colleague continues to work with me daily. This one is a tough backpack to slap on, but you know what, we need to do it. We said we would do it and it will get done.

Within the departments we have tasked the civil service to continue to gather information so we can make an informed decision, and we have tasked the civil service to investigate multiple funding sources so we can achieve redundancy. We have committed to Yukoners that this will get done as I said, and it will.

Also, through our Technology and Telecommunications Development Directorate, we will continue to work — and I just want to answer this question because I think the interim leader asked me yesterday and I owe him an answer to this — with Bell Mobility to ensure that the last of our communities — no, it was the Member for Kluane, I believe — have access to the fourth generation service, which will promote innovation and connectivity for individuals and businesses across the territory.

I know the interim leader knows the Economic Development budget inside out. There was a fourth year of funding. When we go to Committee of the Whole, we will have an opportunity to talk about that.

Further to this, we have almost doubled the funding support offered through the regional economic development fund from \$405,000 to \$800,000. This funding will help build capacity and develop diversified economies in our communities by working with First Nations, local governments, communities and organizations to identify opportunities in support of economic planning.

Now, I want to be taken to task on that increase, because when you look at the economic picture that we're forecasting, a good question by anybody in the opposition would be: Why would you double the budget of the regional economic development programming? Well, I will tell you why. First of all, not only have there been some big capital projects that have pretty significant O&M pieces attached to them that we

have to talk about, but in some of the programs, there has been out-year commitments made. So when you look at the overall budget of Economic Development, as compared to other departments, it's really not that substantial. But I think there's a belief inside this Legislative Assembly that it can be a catalyst for economic growth. It can trigger certain things. The private sector is going to do their thing; government spending is going to do its thing — but there is still an opportunity there.

When I look at CDF — I apologize because I might be off a little bit, but it's about \$2.9 million a year. When the previous government has already spent into your mandate, you don't have that amount of money. So then you have to go back to CDF applicants and explain to them that the money has already been committed previously. There have been substantial commitments made there — multi-year funding agreements.

When I looked at the envelope and the toolbox that I had to work with the department to spur economic growth at a time when we have the lowest GDP in the country — we are at the bottom as we walk in and tools are limited based on previous commitments, so what do you do? Well, where can I get flexibility to work with diversification in the economy? The NDP asked me this yesterday. What are you going to do? Partially, that's where we look to. I'm happy to say that when we look at where the interest is, we are looking at communities like Watson Lake, Mayo, Haines Junction and Old Crow. That's where the interest is right now. How can we use these funds? Faro, Teslin — how do we diversify our economy and support things in the communities? I will make that commitment. I say with 100-percent sincerity that, with the people across the way, we need to continue to work together. We are going to have challenging conversations. It will get heated and we will go home grumpy some days, but we need to make sure that we work on some of the diversification projects in these communities.

Our government is committed to reducing its resilience on diesel to power our energy needs. We will move to renewable and sustainable clean energy options. By implementing the \$1.5 million innovative renewable energy initiative, we will support energy projects that create opportunities for First Nations and communities.

This initiative supports the economic reconciliation with First Nations by allowing First Nations and communities to develop solutions that reflect their unique needs and priorities. What I like about this is that, as the board of Yukon Development Corporation builds the terms of reference that they are comfortable with, they will table that with me because it's new. If you look at the original order-in-council of what the mandate was of the Yukon Development Corporation, it was quite limited — and potentially for good reasons. The direction that I have from that board — that board has some good experience when it comes to the business sector, with members from Watson Lake, Whitehorse and Haines Junction on the Yukon Energy Corporation. So these two boards working together and conversing — what I am getting is: "Give us a bit of time and we will build you

proper criteria in terms of reference. We will table that for you. We will come up with some options." I am excited to be being able to look at that. That is where, as the NDP asked me, we will have those discussions about where we can inject some dollars. We have to lever dollars from other sources and then use these as initial commitment dollars.

I haven't heard the question yet from the Official Opposition about next generation hydro. I want to talk about next generation hydro. There has been over \$4 million spent on next generation hydro. We have some good data and good reports but zero social licence. I have made a commitment, and I have been asked about this, "What are you going to do?" Certainly on this one, you are right — as the interim leader said — that there is a lot of money spent. That doesn't mean that we are going to try to build a major hydro project, but what I am going to do is communicate with all off the list of top candidates. We are going to see if there is any interest now that there has been a bit more of an approach to reconciliation. I am not sure. Some communities — I think when I was in Mayo there was some sensitivity around Fraser Falls. I made a commitment to hold on that. Certainly, when I have spoken with Selkirk First Nation, there are some concerns as well. But we are still going to ask because I think it is appropriate to go back and have those discussions.

The Liberal government will continue to support the development of the mineral resource sector in an environmentally sustainable way by increasing the funding for the Yukon mineral exploration program by \$830,000 to a total of \$1.6 million. We encourage exploration and private sector investment in our economy. Under this program, we have implemented a new model specific to placer exploration. Several have noted the decrease in the budget of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, as the previous minister did. He is going to have some tough questions for me on that, but I am ready to answer those questions. I will outline a few of the areas that have been allocated less funding.

First, as a result of the reduction in the scope of the oil and gas action plan, we have decreased that for the 2017-18 budget by \$410,000. To the Leader of the Third Party — certainly if you look at the numbers on the oil and gas action plan, we have decreased that for a series of reasons. I think that most people in the Legislative Assembly can see that we are having challenges in the north and we are having a big cleanup in the south. We will have a side conversation. I can come and talk to you about it, but most of those dollars, we are trying to clean up.

The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has also put out that she wants to have a discussion about this and it's important about the cost of that — how much it really costs, what's happening with security, will it be covered, and things such as that.

As well, there's a five-percent decrease in funds required for the development of land just issued, and that's looking at capacity. We need land. Some of it is focused primarily on Whitehorse, yet there are some other communities that we will focus on. Maybe I'll just wait until a different time. The

Member for Watson Lake, respectfully — I did commit to her and I'm going to get you some information about what's happening in Watson Lake concerning land development.

I know I'm not going to have enough time, probably, but there are so many things that I got to listen to. Lots of it was focused on the departments that I have responsibility for. I'm going to do my best and go through some of these interesting points.

It's not really about getting into conversations that tend to be a little challenging, but I think part of what we're supposed to do here is set the record straight, so I'm going to try to talk to a few points that each person across the way touched on — some of them today, some yesterday.

We have talked about fibre. I'm going to start with something here. I think the Member for Lake Laberge yesterday — and this was an interesting one — it's important because they still have an obligation to stick to the budget reply, yet it's important to understand. I'm going to build some context about how decisions were made over the last number of years. I think that's an important piece. This is an interesting piece, because this story, this narrative — there are three or four people — three of us at least within the Legislative Assembly — who are all part of this, so it's an interesting one. It's really based on facts.

When the Member for Lake Laberge mentioned yesterday — here's the previous government. What we would do is we would table a platform and we would follow through on everything that we did and everything we promised got done, and that's how things were governed and we put \$250 million in surplus. We did that.

First, we all have to come to the understanding — and it was touched on today — look at our own-source revenue inside this government. The members across the way agree on this one. I know the Member for Lake Laberge agrees with me on this. We have to expand our private business sector. The Leader of the Third Party touched on this today. We're really not where we need to be. It's mostly a transfer payment. So when you think about \$250 million and you're walking in with a quarter-of-a-billion dollars — yes, it was allocated by the previous government, but you're dealing with a transfer payment, which we all are putting in that piece.

There are a lot of things that were stated by the member, but I want to talk about those commitments when it comes to the platform. I have to speak from my own personal experience on this. I think that's the only fair way to do it.

I remember in 2011 how, at that particular time, the Yukon Party — I remember I was working at Yukon College at the time, and I remember walking down and seeing this press conference. During the press conference, there was an announcement that Yukon College would become a university. That was it; it was done.

What we've learned as we've gone along is that's a big task. There is legislation. There is a tremendous amount of cost. You have to do an analysis of your HR requirements. How many people do you have with PhDs? All of these things — but it was interesting. Three people walked in, sat down, and announced this. The interesting thing was we didn't

know. I didn't know. I worked for the college. I didn't know. I was voted on as the staff representative on the board of governors. During that time, it was interesting — what a task to take on. What a feat to just roll in and say we are going to become a university.

Why am I telling the story? Because it gives a real indication of how decisions were made. The member opposite said everything got done. Sure, the announcement got done. The interesting thing is that the House Leader was the minister at the time. As I sit here today in this role and I think about what he was tasked with, I feel for him because that was an extremely unfair position. I can remember that I was sitting at the end of a major board table and the Member for Porter Creek North who, a year after that became — she just spoke about it — she's the chancellor.

I can still remember sitting at that big boardroom table we had and he walked in and sat at the end. We all were waiting patiently. What is the plan? What is the cost? Where is the money coming from? You have an existing budget. There was no plan. There was no plan. There was no idea of the cost. There was no legislative strategy. There was no idea. All there was, was a press conference. I can't let that one go. Today, I just read through the whole 2011 budget — all 55 pages of it. I can go on and on and on, and certainly we can talk about this, but that's not what we want to do. I think I got some good lessons today from the Leader of the Third Party about that. I think it's important to set the record straight on a number of these points.

I will say this — I don't want to be too direct, but the Member for Porter Creek North was chancellor the year later — understands extremely what was going on inside that organization. Our figurehead attended many board meetings. The individual right over there was Minister of Education. There was no plan — no analysis of financial commitment, yet their colleague up there is saying, "Hey, this is how we did it. We made a plan and this is —"

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Minister of Economic Development, please avoid pointing. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I apologize. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Anyway, I think that's important to just give us an idea of how things had played out.

I think it's important, too, to talk about the seniors centre. The Member for Kluane mentioned the seniors centre yesterday and that there was a commitment to a seniors centre.

Once again, speaking from personal experience, I spent the last year and a half before this working in Haines Junction. I've been at community meetings where there were comments made. There was an announcement for a seniors centre. There was some early work done there, absolutely — phase 2.

I have to say, let's set the record straight. It is one thing to come in and say that, yes, we are building this — but I will stand in this Legislative Assembly and I will apologize at a

future point — I just need to see a budget that has that listed because, in my previous job, I looked to see if there was a number in a budget for that, because I wanted to see the impact. The elders from Champagne and Aishihik were wondering if there was going to be an opportunity. I had to create a budget for my political masters there, and they said, make sure you take into consideration — if you do a capital expenditure for our elders — no, there is something else, but there is nothing else. We had to start making some additional plans.

I apologize for this. I know that these are tough conversations, but let us set the record straight.

It is one thing to say it was never there. Let us talk about seniors. I think part of our challenge when we talk about seniors is that we have a \$150-million building that my colleague is trying to get on track. The minister down the way is trying to make sure there is a proper HR strategy in place, and working with her staff, who are probably doing double-time on this thing, and we are trying to figure out how to pay for it.

If people across the way say we are not doing anything for seniors — that is not really correct. It is probably the biggest part of our budget at this point in time.

Yesterday I found it interesting that there were a lot of mixed messages. It's interesting. During Question Period, what happens is — and I am trying to get direction. I want the direction from the Loyal Opposition.

At one point, we go into Question Period and there are a lot of conversations about, "Look at what you're doing. Look at what you're doing. You caused this. You Liberals — you came in here and in six months you have created this problem." That's fair. I have to say, standing outside this Legislative Assembly, when I looked at the Yukon Party, I would think that I may not get along on the policies, but the financial stewardship — you have that down. That might not be accurate. I don't think it's accurate. I'm standing over here now and I'm building budgets and I'm telling you — that's not accurate.

As we stood here yesterday and looked and listened, there were definitely mixed messages. First, the interim leader stated there were some okay parts about the Financial Advisory Panel, but the terms of reference had to change. Then the Member for Kluane stated that, no, it's the wrong thing to do. I look forward to some remarks from our Premier. So he said that, no, you should just go to the Finance people. So it's interesting — I wonder where some of these concepts came from. But anyway, you should just go to the Finance people — you shouldn't do it. Then the Official Opposition House Leader said, that's pretty good; it's interesting; it's a good option. Then we had the Official Opposition House Leader saying, actually — and then he did a nice tribute to somebody and talked about the stewardship of the Finance department when he was there and how effective some of that leadership was. Then we back up. I think the Member for Kluane said that the doors were ready to be shut down when he rolled in, in 2002. So there were differing opinions — three

different people giving three different opinions about where to go on this advisory panel.

I don't know — I read the paper on Monday after the weekend. I didn't think the competition was starting already, but it's starting I guess. There are different processes coming out.

Also, the Member for Watson Lake — one thing I found really interesting in the comments was that there was mention of, "stop spending when the money is gone". She did not last year. The money was gone — that's what a deficit is — and you kept spending. Think about this from a financial standpoint — post-devolution — tons of dollars, tons of dollars being transferred. If you take a look at what the budget was previous to devolution — post-devolution, the transfer starts coming in. What happens? More capital, more capital, more capital — not that we didn't need capital, but capital was coming. It spurred economic activity.

There were some phenomenal years — absolutely. Under Premier Fentie, there were some phenomenal years of economic growth and I commend him for that. I remember having the opportunity to work with Minister Lang on some stuff when I was at the city. There was big growth and then we hired more people. So now we're getting to this point — our O&M as it stands right behind the capital. It keeps growing, growing, growing. But we don't see this big increase in our transfer payment and no increase, remember, in our own-source revenue.

We hit this point where one-quarter of a billion dollars gets spent and then this year, we walk into — it's a first deficit, a small deficit — a very small deficit; I agree. We walk into this deficit. So think about what we would have to do. No government services have been cut. We have increased the government services through Health and Social Services. We have essentially the same envelope of services. We're walking in with a deficit and now we at least have the ability to say, look, through tons of work, lots of work from the civil service — I appreciate everything they did and the nights they put in — and now we come back and see a surplus. I haven't seen a government do that, and I commend our team for being able to do that. My friends across the way know — and I say this — it's funny. You're lucky. You are lucky. I wish I had the opportunity to be in a Cabinet with a quarter of a billion dollars, because what an opportunity to serve Yukoners — versus walking in when you have a deficit. You know, maybe they did some good rainy day stuff. I'm not going to take away from them on that.

I was a little concerned yesterday, because I don't want to belabour it too much, but I don't want to see us get into dog-whistle politics. There are certainly some statements that were made about this or that or funding or that and I hope that's not what it was. Maybe it wasn't, but certainly that was the sense I got and that doesn't help anybody. Certainly with what's going on in the world, we don't need to go there.

The Member for Porter Creek North — I just want to touch on a couple of things. You had mentioned about the twinning of the highway. Certainly on that one, I do urge you to talk to some of the business community in Porter Creek

North. I had an opportunity to do that just last night. There is some concern. Some people are really afraid of the impact of the twinning. I will give you the names of those people and you can follow up with them. They are people who live in Porter Creek and they're concerned about how that's going to affect their business. For further information on that, there might be an opportunity to chat with them as well.

The Member for Copperbelt South had talked about a few things. I know we're going to have some good discussions about land. Certainly I think it will be good, because I am going to look for some direction. He knows this file. He spent more time on this file than I did when it comes to land allocation and land development in conjunction, but what I will commit to is that with the city — they were really waiting to see what the plan of allocation was, so we're trying to expedite those conversations so that we can help the city with their planning and to work on that. Certainly I will take that guidance from the member for the Third Party — the south planning process happened when I was on city council in 2009 to 2012. I know that file well. I think I do. You're right; it's a good wake-up call for me to make sure I'm focused on what's going to happen.

Fifth and Rogers — the Downtown Residents Association sent me a letter. We have replied to that, but I think I need to sit with my officials and cross-reference that city plan. There's a lot of time and effort put into it. It is a good process. It is a strong process.

The Minister of Education will speak to the allocation of teachers. I know that was brought up by the Member for Copperbelt South. He probably has a really good understanding. I remember the allocation formula was sort of defined in many ways during his tenure. I could be off and it could have been the other minister, but I think a lot of that happened at that time.

As for the contractors and whether or not they are going to leave — I know we touched on how they may use the CFTA. I think the most alarming thing is that — there are times when it will be a tough task, but when I look at how we've allocated our budget and we have the capital expenditures and are trying to keep it steady — \$220 million — as we roll out the out-years. I urge everybody in the Legislative Assembly — I know the other members know already — to take a look at that. Really take a look at that reduction in the out-years — a \$45-million reduction. I know that contractors are happy that it's not the route we are going down where we would see that huge drop, which would have caused a tremendous amount of grief for them. They certainly would have been leaving if that had happened — and to use the CFTA, as he said.

IPP is going to be a big conversation. You are right. There is one group right now that wants to start right now and I have tasked our people. There were a couple of things that didn't happen. Some of the players were not at the table. I think it's important that the president of the Yukon Development Corporation is part of those discussions, as well as Energy, Mines and Resources. I have asked that the president of the Yukon Development Corporation becomes

part of those discussions, taking into consideration — as have the funds that will go from there. Inevitably, that's the owner of Yukon Energy. So I look forward to that. We are tasked with it. There are some big conversations that have to happen. You know the file well. As we go through that file, we are going to have to figure out — questions become pricing, and there are all the players. There is ATCO and, of course, there was an existing project that the previous government had worked on. It was a good project and that has to do with Burwash — the project with the Kluane First Nation. It's concerning their wind project. We need that IPP. It's going to be one of the biggest tasks that I have to look at.

In closing — it has been brought up over and over again by everyone across the way. They say that we will get into Committee and ask the questions. You know what? I am ready for Committee and to sit beside my government officials. There is nothing in this budget that I'm not willing to stand behind. The more they ask questions and the more they dig, they will see decisions that we saw before. Not a multitude of new programs, not a big stimulus spend — none of that. This is a budget based on the costs of government.

Speaker: Member for Takhini-Kopper King, do you wish to start today? I guess we have about five minutes or so. Do you wish to start?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Go ahead.

Ms. White: I haven't ever been given the choice before whether to start. Normally we go right to 5:30 and then you cut debate, so I was ready for that.

I want to thank everyone for the opportunity to be here. It's a fascinating time. We talked about it in the debate — about contracting — and we had some good conversations there. It's interesting to hear how history has started to re-tell itself. It's interesting. I learned when I travelled that what I learned as a Canadian kid in school was different from what my friends in New Zealand learned and the friends I met in Poland and the friends from the United Kingdom, because when history was retold, it depended on whose perspective it was coming from. There were different heroes in all the stories. Sometimes you would have to wonder how that happened and what perspective was maybe closer to what actually happened.

It has been fascinating to listen — and really interesting. I can tell you from over on this side, where I've been for a couple of years — and maybe I've shifted down the desks a bit — but it's fascinating to hear how history is being retold. Stay true to your course and understand that we come from different values. Ultimately our big common value is the belief that we want to make the territory better than it is right now. We want to move toward a better future for people, we want to make sure that no one is left behind, and we're going to have different ideas on how that can happen. You will have your perspective, I will have my perspective, and the Official Opposition will have their perspective. Sometimes, when the planets align, we'll meet in the middle and something will

move forward and everyone will have something nice to say about it. It happened once, I think, previously. I look forward to more times of that.

I am so fortunate to have been re-elected. That was the third election I ran in. I lost my first one in 2006, but I got punted to the fire in that one. I had no idea what I was doing. I was 28. I was referred to as a youth, and it was hard. It was hard and it was an eye-opening experience because I got to see how politics could affect people. I got to see that it could be a really good, positive thing, and I got to see people who were destroyed by it. I got to hear stories that I couldn't believe they would tell some random person who knocked on their door. They would share things.

Now you've all been on that journey with me, with us, and you've been invited into people's homes in a way you never thought was possible. That is what, in 2006, made me say that I would do it three times. Interestingly enough, by the time the election was called in 2011, Todd had passed away, Boyd was around, Ken was across the country, and it was, "Okay, I'm ready for my second time" because I thought that by the time I'm 40, maybe then I'll be considered an adult.

So 2011 happened and I was in 35. I was the oldest candidate in my riding, and I had no idea about the outcome. I put my head down and I talked to people, because that's what I really love to do and that's what I wanted to do. I listened to stories. I learned more things, and I probably got more fired up than I thought I could be and, to my amazement, I won. Then in 2016, it was my job to lose.

I love my job. I hate my job some days, and you guys are new so you might not be fully exhausted yet, but let me tell you — year three, Fall Sitting, week 75,000 — is what it's going to feel like — and you're going to be tired and you're not going to want to go to the grocery store or gas station and you're going to be really looking forward to that last day, but knowing that in that entire time, when we come in and put that energy into this job, it's because we're trying to do our best for both sides — from government side, from opposition side.

I know when the Yukon Party was government, they felt the same way. I disagreed. I disagreed almost all the time, which was hard because I'm a natural cheerleader, so it was hard to be like, "No, I don't like that." I'm hoping that there are more things that I can be supportive of with this new government, so I wish you luck. But know always that, if we come from a different point of view, it's because we're coming at it from different perspectives.

I'm not going to talk about all the things that are listed in the budget, because there are some great things — absolutely. You've picked some priorities that you are focused on and you're looking at how you are going to get toward that. I am not going to try to revisit — we talked about this. You did not inherit the financial resources that you were told were going to be there. To hear it retold on both sides, it's fascinating, because somehow the dollars and the cents are there or they're not there, and how it happened and when it happened is irrelevant because, right now, you have to work with that budget and you have to move forward.

That is what I'm going to focus on: how we can look at those things and sometimes where I see those gaps.

The very first thing I'm going to mention before I forget about it is the Child Development Centre. The Child Development Centre is one of the most phenomenal tools that we have in the community for children with learning disabilities, for children who will have a harder time functioning in society. The sooner we identify those kids and we give them the tools to work within their abilities — not their disabilities — the better off it will be.

But right now the Child Development Centre acts like a school year. That means that these kids, for a number of months a year, are encouraged, supported and led down the way they have to go. Then summer happens and those same kids are left without those resources. If you talk to the staff of the Child Development Centre, they want to run 12 months a year. They want to offer those programs to children. I think one thing we need to look at is how to expand that. How do we make sure that families are involved in that conversation? How do we make sure that no Yukon family has to leave the territory because the help that they need for their child is not available 12 months of the year?

That is something that is not mentioned in the budget and it's not talked about how we would deal with that — and that is one thing that I would like to put forward. That is an aspect of when we talk about raising strong Yukoners who can contribute to society, understanding that success is going to look different for everybody, part of that is starting young. Part of that is starting with children. Look at the budget —

Speaker: Order, please. Thank you to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. We look forward to the continuation of your comments at a later date.

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

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 201 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled May 2, 2017:

34-2-12

Report on Subsistence, Travel & Accommodations of Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly 2016-2017
(Speaker Clarke)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 8

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, May 3, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

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

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| Ted Adel | Copperbelt North |
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Yukon Party

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| Brad Cathers | Lake Laberge | Patti McLeod | Watson Lake |
| Wade Istchenko | Kluane | Geraldine Van Bibber | Porter Creek North |

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, May 3, 2017 — 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 remembrance of Jean Graham

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly, it gives me great pleasure today to rise and pay tribute to Jean Graham.

Alma Jean Graham was born in Mayerthorpe, Alberta on July 8, 1926. She was the eldest of six children born to Bert and Hazel Whitney. In 1945, Jean married Gordon Graham and had four children before her 25th birthday: Donna, Russell, Douglas and Gloria. After she and Gordon moved to the Yukon in 1952, she had three more children — Darrell, Sharon and Kenneth.

Jean was a resourceful homemaker and the centre of the family's home life, while Gordon's domain was the garage. Family was paramount in her world and she was happiest when surrounded by any one of her seven children, 16 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren, their spouses, ex-spouses, her siblings and their families. She welcomed her first great-great grandson five years ago.

She tirelessly attended and supported their schools, sports and artistic activities well into her 80s and even became a cub master of the first Porter Creek cub pack when no one else was available for the position. Jean was an avid sportsperson herself and was an accomplished curler until her eyesight failed. When I moved to Whitehorse, Jean invited me to curl on her team at several bonspiels. We had such fun. I still have a gold pan trophy from winning the A event at the old Takhini Curling Club, and Gloria was on that team as well.

She also played competitive fastball with her daughter and daughter-in-law well into her 40s. Again, I remember Jean and her family at Minto Park in Dawson City on Discovery Day weekend playing ball and cheering her team on.

Jean was Yukon's federal returning officer for 25 years and she also ran numerous municipal and First Nation elections around the territory.

She loved to travel and thought nothing of driving to Dawson City, Beaver Creek or Watson Lake to run an election or to visit family members in Hudson Hope, Fort McMurray, Nelson or Vancouver. When she was 83, she bragged about being the navigator for a young fellow driving to Vancouver for the first time, even though she was legally blind at that time. Despite her loss of sight, just hearing your voice, Jean

knew who you were and would launch into a story — usually about those grandkids.

Her network of friends and acquaintances was legendary. She had friends or family in every town in the territory and was always happy to make new friends wherever she went.

As a teenager, I knew Doug and Gloria. It seemed Mrs. Graham was everyone's mom. Jean passed on her love of life and her positive attitude to family members and friends alike. Her cheerful disposition and ready sense of humour will be missed.

I would like the House to join me in welcoming her family in the gallery: Donna and Ken Jones, Doug and Mayvor Graham, Marney Paradis, Richard Graham, Laura, Kanoa, Zarek, Christina Loughrey-Coxford.

Applause

In recognition of Mental Health Week

Hon. Ms. Frost: I rise in the House today to acknowledge this week as national Mental Health Week, which runs from May 1 to 7. I would like to also acknowledge the Mental Health Association of Yukon board members — Kim Solonick who is the vice-chair, Nathan Schultz the secretary, Darcy Tkachuk, executive director Tiffany Tasane, and Tamara Perzan whose really great work as Ms. Congeniality for Rendezvous — have worked tirelessly over the last number of years to advocate and do work to break down some of the barriers. I want to acknowledge you today for your dedication to make our society a better place.

I have just come back from part of the walk with many of the individuals in the gallery today who were out to support mental health week and Mental Health Association of Yukon's third annual walk — "Steps to positive mental health". I'm pleased that some of my colleagues were able to join the walk today. Canadians have been recognizing Mental Health Week for the past 66 years since it was introduced in 1951 by the Canadian Mental Health Association. Since then, Mental Health Week has been an annual initiative with intention to raise awareness on mental health issues, promote positive mental health and reduce associated stigmas.

May 7 also marks National Child and Youth Mental Health Day. This national campaign is in its 10th year and aims to engage young people and caring adults in the lives of children and youth.

Mental health is about much more than an absence of mental disorders. It is a fundamental part of health. Without mental health, there is no health at all. Mental Health Week encourages us all to take a moment to assess our own mental health and well-being. Mental health and well-being can be described in many different ways. Yukon captures the essence in just one word: "flourishing". To flourish is to be able to cope with life's difficulties, believe in others, feel you have a place in the world and enjoy life. Flourishing means you feel you have something to share with others. People who are flourishing generally have a sense of purpose and develop warm and trusting relationships and feel satisfied and interested in their lives.

We have just celebrated the first anniversary of the mental wellness strategy that aims to seamlessly provide mental health, trauma and substance use services to Yukoners in a collaborative manner. We also aim to work with Yukon First Nations to implement this strategy. The first two years of the strategy implementation focus on two important priority areas: child, youth and family-focused initiatives and building capacity in communities and increasing access to services throughout the territory.

I would like to conclude by expressing my gratitude and appreciation to all the organizations and individuals who have worked tirelessly toward improving mental health and ending the stigma. That was the message today: ending the stigma associated with mental health and mental wellness.

I call on each and every Yukoner to take steps to reduce the stigma so that we are all able to seek the care and resources we need without judgment and while being treated respectfully and equally, as all Yukoners deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. McLeod: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to tribute an area of our health care system that has been a silent epidemic that affects a large proportion of our population and has more recently become a topic that is tackled broadly — its importance being advocated across generations and communities.

This year marks the 66th annual Mental Health Week, championed by the Canadian Mental Health Association, and supported, in part, by the Mental Health Commission of Canada and countless organizations across the country. These groups are continuing their #GetLoud campaign, in which they encourage all Canadians to not just take this week to reflect upon their mental health, but to get loud about it.

The more we talk about the stigma around mental health, the closer we are to ending it. This week we raise our voices in support of mental wellness.

The importance of mental health issues and illnesses being diagnosed and treated as soon as possible is paramount. Mental illness can affect any person in our community at any time. In the Yukon, Statistics Canada shows that an estimated 65 percent of Yukoners reported very good or excellent mental health in 2013-14 as compared to 71 percent nationally. From these stats alone, one can see that mental health is a problem that needs addressing in Yukon.

I am pleased to hear that the Liberal government will continue with the implementation of the Yukon mental wellness strategy. This strategy was developed as a 10-year plan to address mental wellness in Yukon and provides the overall direction for system response and improvement. I appreciate the work of our mental health professionals and the work they do in providing treatment and support throughout our communities. I encourage all Yukoners to work together and #GetLoud to end the stigma around mental health.

Thank you.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to add our voice to the important topic of

mental health and wellness. We appreciate that Canada recognizes the first week in May as Mental Health Awareness Week. Together we have come a long way in our efforts to destigmatize mental health and wellness, but we have much further to go. We don't question physical ailments, but how often do we question how someone is feeling?

On September 8, 2016, Kids Help Phone released a report that revealed that one in five teens in Canada had seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months. They also learned that although teens would search the Internet and social media about suicide, they rarely, if ever, spoke to anyone about it. Mental health must be considered on the same level as physical health. When you face a medical emergency, everyone knows to call 911, but what number do you call for a mental health emergency? Toll-free numbers are great, but how effective are they if you can't easily remember them in a time of crisis?

After reading the Kids Help Phone release, Canadian poet Shane Koyczan offered up a solution: have a three-digit phone number like 911. Not only would this help those in crisis, it would assist bystanders who might be able to effectively help if they had a number they could remember and call. He wrote this poem in response — it's called *152*:

One in five

today one in five
wondered if being alive
was worth the cost
of another day
wondering if 2 in 10
wondered when
there was finally going to be
a 911 for mental health

4 in 20 wondered if the wealth spent on the self-decided
salaries of politicians
who claim the children are our future
could pay for it

maybe 1 of the 8
of the 8 in 40
quit wondering
and started making plans

maybe 3 of the 16
of the 16 in 80
feel like unrecycled cans
that are just easier to throw away

Maybe one fifth of 160
is easier to say than 32
because 32 is starting to sound like a lot

a toll free number is not enough
give us a number
everyone knows by heart

so the next time we see someone's world falling apart
we can do more than just stand there

because the scars we can't see
require different care than the ones left there by crime or
by accident
sometimes there's no hint
to tell you where it hurts
it just hurts

sometimes our minds are red alerts
you can't see
even when you look us in the eye
sometimes we cry for what others would consider no
reason
sometimes the treason we commit
is against ourselves

it's hard enough
trying to find who we are
amid the overcrowded shelves of pills
meant to manage how we function

sometimes the junction box is broken
and we miss the connections
that others seem to make with ease

imagine
if you threw away the 1
of the 1 in 5 keys
that could open the door
to the room the world forgot we were locked in

if kindness makes us friends
let compassion make us kin
don't let us get lost in the numbers again

illness is illness

sometimes the cost to heal it
is an ear willing to listen
sometimes a shoulder
volunteering to be a crutch

people are not a price to be weighed against your budget

1 in 5
is 2 much.

In recognition of Yukon Young Authors' Conference and Yukon Writers' Festival

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today on behalf of all of my colleagues here in the Legislature to recognize Live Words, the 2017 edition of the Yukon Writers' Festival that is taking place this week all around the territory.

I would like to begin this tribute with the words of Tagish Elder Angela Sidney: "Reading makes you wise". Here I go:

"Hutaats'edezi k'ē uts'in huts'inye". My thanks to the Native Language Centre, Mary Allison and, in particular, Elder Anne Ranigler, who helped me with that pronunciation — all faults are mine and all tributes to them.

I would like to also acknowledge that the member opposite, in her tribute, used a poem and I appreciate that as a poignant way of raising awareness around mental wellness.

We are already aware of the richness of Yukon's cultural scene that includes visual and performing arts as well as arts and crafts. That richness extends to literature and the spoken word as well.

Mr. Speaker, since 1990, the Yukon Writers' Festival has been inspiring and connecting Yukoners — readers and writers alike — to some of this country's best-known authors. This year, Yukon Public Libraries, through the Department of Community Services and the Department of Education, are partnering with other local groups, including Brave New Words to present some of today's more interesting local and national writers. This event supports the well-being of Yukoners and provides opportunities for people of all ages to develop an appetite for lifelong learning. The festival is a unique opportunity to interact with the authors at the various events. We know this is a popular event that draws a couple of hundred people from the communities across the territory each year.

Montreal author Kathleen Winter began her career writing scripts for *Sesame Street*. Since then she has gone on to write a number of award-winning novels and short stories, and her work has appeared in literary journals across Canada. Yukoner Kelly Milner has brought her work in journalism and wildlife management together in a media company, Shot in the Dark Productions, that tells stories and explores issues and ideas important to northerners.

Yukoners will know Kelly as the creator of the short film *Shift*, which showcased the mountain bike trail-building youth of Carcross and which won the Banff Mountain Film Festival People's Choice Award last year.

Author Jamie Bastedo is a biologist turned storyteller and lives in Yellowknife. He has written 12 award-winning books celebrating the north, including two teen climate-change thrillers. His latest book, *Cut Off*, tells the story of a teenage addicted to cyber games and finds healing in the northern wilderness.

As a guest of Brave New Words, Sheri-D Wilson will be joined by local musicians, local youth slam poets and high school students at a poetry salon in the Old Fire Hall this Friday. She's an advocate for social change and explores challenging topics, including social justice, lost languages, bullying, violence against women, and the Earth.

J.B. MacKinnon is based in Vancouver and is the co-author of *The 100-Mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating*. He has won numerous awards, including the international Green Prize for Sustainable Literature. In his latest book, *The Once and Future World*, he says: "Nature isn't gone. It's waiting." He calls for an age of rewilding the planet where animals can roam again.

A reading and reception hosted by Yukon Public Libraries is being held tonight at 7:00 p.m. at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, and all five guest authors participating in this year's festival will be there. This will be a great opportunity for fans to meet them and discuss their works in a beautiful setting.

This week, the Department of Community Services has been hosting Vancouver-based author J.B. MacKinnon as he travels to libraries in Dawson City, Faro and Pelly Crossing. On Thursday night he will be at the Teslin library at 6:30 p.m. to read from his book, *The Once and Future World*. On Saturday evening, guest writers and musicians will perform at the Haines Junction library at 7:00 p.m. Fostering a love of literature among our young Yukoners is one of the great strengths of this festival. The Young Authors' Conference is sponsored by the Department of Education and will be held tomorrow and Friday at F.H. Collins Secondary School.

We give a warm Yukon welcome to all of these authors and thank them for sharing their expertise and inspiration with our writers. It is always our hope that they receive as much inspiration from this beautiful territory as we all do here. Reading makes you wise.

In recognition of World Press Freedom Day

Ms. Hanson: Today I rise on behalf of all members of this Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to World Press Freedom Day 2017. This international day to recognize the importance of press freedom was proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1993 following a recommendation adopted at the 26th Session of UNESCO's General Conference in 1991. It has been celebrated every year since.

On this day we honour journalists imprisoned or killed in the line of duty, and we take stock of press freedom around the world. There is an awful lot to take stock of. State censorship, governments imprisoning critics, Internet crackdowns and surveillance are all on the rise, which, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, has led to an upsurge of killings and imprisonment of journalists around the world. The Committee to Protect Journalist's *Attacks on the Press* report released last month tracked its highest number of jailed journalists around the world yet — 259. Over 1,200 journalists have been killed on the job in the past 25 years — from Mexico to Russia to Iraq and Syria. Daily, we hear news stories of reporters and media staff being incarcerated and killed around the world for trying to shine light on injustices.

It is important for us to pause and to consider how we support press freedom here today in Yukon and in Canada. Canada guarantees freedom of the press under our *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. However, circumstances faced by journalists in the last year say otherwise with respect to the exercise of those rights. Last year, the *World Press Freedom Index* ranked Canada as number 18 globally. This year it may not come as much of a surprise to know that we have since fallen to number 22, just below Samoa and ahead of the Czech Republic and Namibia. Several members of the

Canadian press have been under police surveillance in Quebec in an attempt to uncover internal leaks. A *Vice News* reporter is currently fighting a court order compelling him to hand over communications with his source to the RCMP. Another journalist for *The Independent* is facing up to 10 years in prison for his coverage of protests against a hydroelectric project in Labrador.

Journalists in this country are not currently protected by any shield law, and legislation, like the controversial Bill C-51, uses national security as an excuse to chill free speech and expression.

As legislators, we have within our power to call upon the federal government to fulfill the commitment made to Canadians to repeal Bill C-51. The recent passage of Bill S-231, journalistic sources protection act, a press shield law by the Senate is a good start. We can and should encourage the federal government to support it in Parliament. Freedom of the press matters not just because it's guaranteed in our *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* — in fact, an increase in the free press is associated with an increase in the rule of law and an improved international economic risk-taking.

Maintaining freedom of the press improves public trust in government, a relationship policy-makers — that's all of us here in this House — must always consider.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to break a bit of protocol here. When presidents of the United States no longer serve their term, they are still called "president", but in the Legislative Assembly, when you are no longer in the Legislative Assembly, we no longer call you "honourable". There's a man in the gallery who deserves to still be considered honourable: Doug Graham. To those of you who have worked with him in the Legislative Assembly and also for those who are new, we have used you as an example on this side of the House as to the type of minister to emulate. You always knew your work; you were passionate about your job. In the Legislative Assembly, you were fair but you were pretty tough to argue with — that's for sure. We want to recognize you being here today in the gallery. You're a true mentor to a lot of politicians in the Yukon, so thank you for your service.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would just like to acknowledge some of the great Community Services staff. This is part of our libraries crew, led by director Aimee Ellis. I don't know everybody's name and I apologize, but it's lovely to have you here and thank you for the work you're doing.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the Yukon Law Foundation annual report, which is tabled pursuant to section 83(1) of the *Legal Profession Act*.

I also have for tabling the Yukon Judicial Council annual report, which is tabled pursuant to section 37(1) of the *Territorial Court Act*.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT, recognizing the Minister of Highways and Public Works told this House on April 26, 2017 that he had spoken to hundreds of contractors, this House do issue an order for the return of a list of all consultations and the date they took place, that the minister has undertaken with contractors since December 3, 2016.

I also give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of a list of all consultations and correspondence between the Government of Yukon and Government of Canada regarding the Yukon Resource Gateway project since December 3, 2016.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct and make public an analysis of the economic impacts of the carbon tax scheme that it has signed on to with Ottawa on Yukon's mining sector.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct and make public an analysis of the economic impacts of the carbon tax scheme it has signed on to with Ottawa on Yukon's tourism sector.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to include the financial and economic impacts of the carbon tax scheme it has signed on to with Ottawa in budget forecasts.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to initiate a review of the medical travel program to ensure it is meeting the needs of all Yukoners.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct and make public an analysis of the economic impacts of the carbon tax scheme it has agreed to with Ottawa on Yukon's outfitting industry.

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: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday when the Premier was asked whether he has tasked his Financial Advisory Panel to come up with a plan to get the Yukon out of the mountain of debt he was throwing us into, the Premier said this panel will come up with options. Yesterday we asked him in this House if those options would include layoffs of government employees. Surprisingly, the Premier didn't definitively rule that out as an option that might be considered by the panel.

If the Premier's panel is going to consider layoffs, will he consider adding a labour representative to sit on the panel?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There will be no layoffs.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased that the Premier has chosen to actually give a definitive answer to that question.

Yesterday, the Premier gave a very interesting answer when asked what his Financial Advisory Panel would be looking at. He said — and I quote: "Of course, we know what the options are".

He goes on to say, "If there's any other information that the opposition needs as far as the Financial Advisory Panel — we're open and accountable. We want to give that information".

Mr. Speaker, considering the Premier apparently knows what options the panel is looking at, and in the interest of being open and accountable, will the Premier tell this House today what those options are?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I will do is reiterate why we find it important to have a Financial Advisory Panel moving forward.

We're in a current fiscal situation as a result of years of spending without planning. Without fully counting the costs of new building, the Yukon Party's inability to own up to the facts of these things is very truly concerning. Again, we've listed items that have never been accounted for before, such as \$4 million in pension solvency within the Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon College and \$2.6 million for cost overruns in the hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City. We have also listed for the last fiscal year election-year expenses spent by the government not listed in last year's budget — severance packages for MLAs for example — over \$600,000 and costs for the royal visit. The member opposite,

the Leader of the Official Opposition suggested that we had the choice not to approve these amounts. Well, that's incorrect. That money had already been spent. It just wasn't accounted for.

Money had been spent on a collective bargaining agreement not accounted for; new hires in education spent but not accounted for; MacBride Museum, for example as well. Dollars were simply not accounted for in the 2016-17 budget. Thus we are paying for them now.

Again, we are putting forth this panel for good reason and that reason is to get us on a track that's going to get us out of this current fiscal situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: I have to remind the Premier — he knows full well that his government has authorized over \$8.2 million in new spending in the 2016-17 fiscal year — and of course to remind the member — as he knows — that for 14 years, the previous government received a clean bill of health from the Auditor General of Canada who approved Public Accounts as materially representing an accurate picture of the government's finances. This Premier had the rare luxury — the unprecedented luxury — of having \$100 million in the bank when he took office as Premier.

It was good earlier in Question Period to actually get an answer from the Premier, but one big concern we have with the Financial Advisory Panel is that the Premier didn't see fit to put a single member of the public service or any retired public servants on the panel. Since we're on a roll today, will the Premier commit that he will not go any further into debt than the \$216-million debt he is currently projecting?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really do appreciate the question from the member opposite. We will stand up for the spending that we have put forward — absolutely. We will talk about this in Committee of the Whole, we'll go over it line by line and we will stand by these numbers. Kudos to the NDP for holding us to task for our priorities and what we put in the budget and what we didn't put in the budget. But again, will the Yukon Party stand up for their contribution to the situation we're in? I don't think so. I don't think they will.

We've also identified future year predictions that have never been accounted for before — \$36 million for Whistle Bend, no money allocated for the federal government's component of paving the runway in Dawson. The Yukon Party promised that and that was not in the budget, that wasn't planned for. There's no money for fibre optic redundancy, no plan for Shakwak — these are where we are because of these concerns. The lack of planning by the Yukon Party has taken us to where we are today.

The numbers that we put in the long-term plans reflect a budget that show the real cost of governing. There is no denying where we are today. There is no denying where we are today. It's the situation we are in and we must work together to consider the future.

We will work with Yukoners to make difficult decisions moving forward. We will establish the Financial Advisory Panel to reach out to Yukoners to understand what matters to

them most when we're planning the future. We have asked this panel to consider how to change the trajectory of government spending and how we can prudently meet the needs of Yukoners.

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Istchenko: I have a question for the Premier. Regarding the Premier's Financial Advisory Panel, we've asked a number of questions on, of course, what options it will be looking at to reduce the Premier's debt. The Premier said he would be more than happy to provide us with that information, so will he tell us if the panel is looking at an option such as a privatization of public infrastructure?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We talked about the Financial Advisory Panel, who is on the panel and what they're tasked to do moving forward. We're excited to get down to that work. We had some great meetings internally with all of our departments talking about what our concerns are and we've had great meetings internally with the department, with the members who are on the Financial Advisory Panel, and we look forward to getting the terms of reference out to Yukoners and making sure that they're comfortable with how and when we are going to meet with Yukoners. I would reach out again to the members opposite. We need your help. As far as community work, you know your communities better than anybody else does in the Legislative Assembly — so making sure that any considerations on a community basis — it has to come from you. If you don't participate, well then, that would be to the detriment of your own communities.

We're looking forward to that process, Mr. Speaker, and more information to come.

Mr. Istchenko: I'm not sure why the Premier wouldn't just answer the question. I assume he knows what he has asked the panel to look at. He said he has been in conversations with them. In fact, he quoted in this House — saying that he knows what options the panel is looking at. Is one of the options he has asked the panel to look at privatization of public infrastructure?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Have I asked the panel to look into that? No, I haven't. In response to some questions about how the panel will meaningfully engage with Yukoners and organizations, given the tight timelines, there was a good consideration and good concern brought up by the Yukon Party yesterday, so thank you for that concern.

We are currently reaching out to representative samples of Yukoners to determine how they will be meaningfully engaged with the panel. This work will inform the panel to engage with Yukon residents, governments, businesses and organizations.

If the member opposite wants us to talk about privatization, we will add that to the list of concerns brought to us by the Member for Kluane. Thank you for that input.

In response to questions about making the panel's terms of reference public, I have already said that I have written each of the panelists confirming their appointment to the advisory panel and provided some direction to them. We will

make those letters available to the members opposite so you know exactly what we did and did not ask for.

Mr. Istchenko: Much like yesterday when we saw the Premier refuse to say whether or not his Financial Advisory Panel is looking at the options that include layoffs, we are getting a non-answer on whether or not his panel is looking at the privatization of public infrastructure. He just mentioned the word “businesses”.

Is one of the options that the panel is looking at whether or not the government should allow development of our oil and gas resources through hydraulic fracturing?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I can understand why the member opposite isn’t used to hearing answers during Question Period in the Legislative Assembly, but we just did answer those questions. We answered your question about privatization that you put forward.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: I’m sorry — it’s hard to even hear myself talk with the House Leader talking over me off-mic.

We answered both the questions that the member opposite asked. I would suggest that, as opposed to just reading the question again in the Legislative Assembly, he listen to the answers. We have answered his questions. There is more information to come. Again, if the member opposite wants us to consider privatization, then he should probably give us a list of the things he wants us to privatize.

Question re: Post-traumatic stress disorder support

Ms. Hanson: In the 2016 campaign, this government promised to introduce presumptive PTSD, or PTSI, legislation for first responders. This would guarantee that a PTSD diagnosis would be assumed to be work-related for first responders. Currently, the onus is on the worker to prove that their diagnosis is work-related. I’m sure the minister agrees that this is an unfair burden on someone already struggling with PTSD.

We are pleased to see this commitment reiterated in the minister’s mandate letter, as the Yukon NDP tabled a similar bill in the previous Legislature. However, when we tabled our bill, many workers’ advocates pointed out that this kind of presumptive legislation shouldn’t only apply to first responders, but rather to any worker exposed to a traumatic event.

Mr. Speaker, as they begin to develop PTSD-presumptive legislation, has this government considered expanding its provisions to all workers covered by workers’ compensation?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question. This is a high-priority area for our government, and we have done considerable work on this over the last couple of months, since coming into office. Yes, the *Workers’ Compensation Act* will be amended to include presumptive coverage for post-traumatic stress disorder for first responders.

Yes, we agree, this is absolutely a first step in moving forward. The presumption replaces the need to decide a claim on a balance of probability for workers. I’ve had many

discussions. We have our staff working very hard on this and we will be introducing this legislation in the Fall Sitting.

It was really great to be at the event on Friday, where we had first responders speak directly to me, as minister, around the importance of this as being a first step, and we will be considering other options as we move forward.

Ms. Hanson: We’ve all seen the impacts of limiting presumptive PTSD legislation only to first responders in other jurisdictions. Ontario, for instance, has presumptive PTSD legislation for first responders, yet their legislation doesn’t cover nurses or correctional officers, who are clearly subject to traumatic events that can lead to PTSD. These workers still have to prove that their PTSD diagnosis is work-related because the presumptive legislation applies to first responders only. This is an unfair burden on someone already struggling with PTSD.

Mr. Speaker, since the minister does agree that any worker exposed to a PTSD-inducing event should be covered by presumptive legislation, why is she limiting it to first responders only?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you again for the follow-up question. Again, this is a very important issue for our government. Right now we have this matter before our legislative committee and we will be going out to consultation on this soon. We will be asking for feedback from the public, from organizations that are directly impacted, and we will be defining what we consider a first responder through that consultation process.

So I really encourage Yukoners to participate fully in the consultation and to make your voices heard, because we want to hear them.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased that the minister agrees that it’s important, but here’s an opportunity for this government to do what it says it would do, which is to make decisions based on evidence — and we have evidence of best practices elsewhere, Mr. Speaker.

The Manitoba government is leading the way when it comes to presumptive legislation. Since January 1, 2016, all workers’ compensation board-covered workers in that province benefit from PTSD presumptive legislation. The goal of this measure is to reduce the stigma around mental illness and to recognize that PTSD-triggering events can take place in any workplace. It just makes sense, Mr. Speaker.

Take for example the postal worker who could be first on-site, assisting the victims of a violent car crash. If PTSD presumptive legislation doesn’t cover all workers, it means that the paramedics who assist the victims will be covered, but the postal worker, who assisted the very same victims, will not. Will the minister at least commit to reviewing Manitoba’s PTSD presumptive legislation, which covers all workers?

Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and thank you to the Leader of the Third Party for bringing this to the floor of the Legislative Assembly and thank you for her and her team’s work in the 33rd Legislative Assembly for fighting, alongside with the Liberal Party for post-traumatic stress disorder being presumptive legislation. This is a huge

first step and I agree — it is a first step. We need to do the analysis piece. There is much more that we can do and I agree with the member opposite that Manitoba is the leading standard in Canada and I would like to see this continue and passed.

We need to do our due diligence on this side, so we are implementing the post-traumatic stress disorder legislation in the fall and we're going to take a look at the analysis piece. We need to do a lot more as far as breaking down a stoic culture as well, having special management teams, and working together with psychiatric people who are in the industry and the actual firefighters and the EMS workers to get to know the community better. There is so much that we can do from the period of today until the legislation and also then we need the analysis piece of this step to provide this very important legislation for our initial responders.

I'm not disagreeing with anything the member opposite is saying as far as the impact, but again we want to get some more evidence and we want to move forward on this jurisdiction's bold move forward when it comes to post-traumatic stress disorder legislation in the Yukon.

Question re: Privatization of health care services

Mr. Kent: I have some follow-up questions for the Premier with respect to his Financial Advisory Panel. We still have not received the terms of reference or the mandate letters that the Premier referred to earlier in Question Period today, so that begs more questions for us about the mandate that he has given to this panel.

Can the Premier inform the House regarding the options that they are looking at? Is allowing some privatization of our health care system one of those options that they are considering?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I'll add that to the list. If the member opposite wants us to privatize the health care system, then I'll add that to the list for him. We have been very clear as to why we're in the financial situation that we're in right now and why we are moving to a Financial Advisory Panel.

We had heard criticisms that somehow we don't trust our own Finance department to do this. It was a cooperative effort between the political wing of this new government and the Finance department that came to the decision that we need the Financial Advisory Panel. We're also improving the business management of our Finance department as well — lots of great steps moving forward.

If the member opposite wants us to consider privatizing health care, then he'll have his opportunity to speak to the panel as we engage the opposition and others.

Mr. Kent: So the Premier hasn't ruled out the privatization of health care as one of the options that his panel is considering. It usually takes a day. It took him a day to rule out layoffs unequivocally on the floor, so perhaps tomorrow he will rule out privatizing the health care system.

Here's another question for the Premier. Again, Mr. Speaker, that's our job as the Official Opposition — to ask questions of the government, to hold them to account.

Since the Premier has bragged about taxing visitors with his carbon tax, perhaps this is something that he has asked the panel to consider. Has the Premier tasked the panel with considering charging tolls on some of the roads or bridges in the Yukon Territory?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe in the media scrum yesterday, I was very unequivocal when it comes to layoffs, and I believe in the Legislative Assembly I also said nobody is considering layoffs. Those are your words, not mine. I believe that was also put forth.

So again, the opposition is reading the questions from their staff, but they're not listening to the answers. If the member opposite now wants us to consider tolls to highways and bridges — that is, again, a very bizarre request. We can talk to the Member for Lake Laberge if he wants to talk about privatizing the energy sector as well. I mean, all of these things, we could consider — absolutely, if that's what you want to put on the table; that's what you're putting on the table today — because this Financial Advisory Panel will come out and they will seek answers to these questions from businesses and from Yukon communities. So we've added that the Yukon Party wants us to consider toll bridges. They want us to consider privatization. Okay. So we'll add all those things to the list.

Mr. Kent: Again, we're not getting any answers from the Premier. He has not provided the mandate letters that he has provided to the panel. So again, we're left to ask questions on the floor of the Legislature here in Question Period about what the panel is considering.

These aren't requests that we're making of the Premier to give to the panel. We're trying to get to the bottom of what the mandate letters are that he has not provided to members of this House.

Again, Mr. Speaker, he hasn't ruled out the creation of toll roads. If he was to provide us with the mandate letters, maybe we would see that.

What about out-sourcing of Highways and Public Works' road crews? Would that be an option that the Premier has asked the panel to consider?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question and all of the suggestions coming from the Yukon Party as far as what they would do. I guess I'm not really sure what exactly the intent of these questions is, but we've already said we will give you everything that you've asked for as far as those letters to the panel. I'm sorry, but there are other things happening in this government. We're very busy answering ATIPP requests and the like from the opposition.

We've committed to giving this information. The last item that the Yukon Party wants us to consider — we will also advise to the financial panel these requests from the Yukon Party. Thank you for participating in the advisory panel discussions so early in the mandate.

Question re: Mineral staking

Ms. McLeod: We are now in a situation where about 50 percent of the territory is off-limits to staking. Regarding the government's recent announcement that it will extend the

staking ban for another year, this is an important issue that will have significant implications for my riding.

It was reported in the *Yukon News* that the minister may have breached the confidentiality agreements associated with these negotiations. Did the minister's breach of the confidentiality agreements have any negative repercussions on the negotiations?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Before I start to answer the question, is there an accusation that has been made from the Member for Watson Lake? Would you like to substantiate that? I guess we'll get into answering the question.

Absolutely — we have now extended the moratorium on staking in the Watson Lake mining district. We're now looking at April 30, 2018. Certainly mining activity will continue to happen. There is a tremendous amount of activity happening actually in your riding and I would hope you would know that. We have one mine right now just outside of the Town of Watson Lake that's moving through the regulatory process.

Just today I had phone calls from two other companies that are excited about what is happening. There are actually some requests from the Kaska Nation as well as private business to work with the Yukon government.

As we look at the staking and continue that conversation — but looking at some other new infrastructure in Watson Lake — I think we have things going in the right direction to diversify the economy there. I know that didn't happen over the last five years or maybe 15 years, but I am committed to working with you on it. Certainly I think we're going to see some really strong mining activity in the Watson Lake area.

Ms. McLeod: So just going a little bit further with regard to the extension of the staking ban, I believe that in other areas some relief from assessment work was provided. I'm wondering if mining claim holders in the area will be provided with relief from assessment so that they don't lose claims. Is the minister able to provide us with details on how this relief will be provided and perhaps when the decision was or will be made?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: To the Member for Watson Lake, I will look into that. As you asked the question, my understanding in the current circumstance is there are a tremendous number of claim holders in the Watson Lake mining area. They will continue to do their advanced exploration.

What we're not going to have the ability to do — and it affects the prospectors, and that's where my tough conversations have to happen. What we're seeing are prospectors not having the opportunity to look into new ground. We found some great ground over the last couple of years in that area. What we have to look at is: (1) focusing on making sure we keep the conversation going, and (2) continuing to support companies that are doing exploration and are having good relationships with the Kaska — and then, for the more advanced projects, making sure that they have the supports to look at going through the regulatory regime.

On that note, I will make the commitment to you that I'll look into the first part of your question. If I've missed

something there, I'll make sure I work with the officials at Energy, Mines and Resources to get the answer to you on that.

Ms. McLeod: Previously the Premier stated that he's in favour of government compensation for individuals whose placer and quartz mining claims are negatively affected by government decisions. Can the minister tell us if their budget projections account for potential buyouts of claim holders?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, there's not. In this year's budget, there are not any monies put aside. I really don't see any processes that are underway right now where that conversation is going to happen.

In the Dawson area, where we've had some challenges — another situation that was inherited — what we've done is to reach out to an individual who previously worked with the department, is respected throughout the industry and is supported by the Klondike Placer Miners' Association, the municipality and the First Nation to go in and start having a discussion.

On those particular projects, we're still working through it. Other than that, I don't see any other hot topics. You can maybe educate me on it. I don't see any other hot topics right now where we're going to be in a situation to have that discussion.

First and foremost, I want to work through these situations, if possible, and come to some remedy, if possible, that doesn't have legal ramifications in those conversations. I would like to thank the member opposite for all those questions today.

Question re: Ross River infrastructure

Mr. Hassard: Today I would like to talk a little bit about Ross River. After breaking their promise to provide emergency housing to this community — and for a government that has said all communities matter — it doesn't appear that they've placed much priority on the community of Ross River.

Mr. Speaker, as most people here know, it's only a 4.5-hour drive to Ross River, so I'm curious: Can the minister explain why this government was able to get an engineer to inspect and get the Elijah Smith school open yesterday, but is unable to do the same thing for Ross River?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question from the Leader of the Official Opposition, during our first visit to Ross River when the issue was brought to our attention, we immediately travelled to Ross River — myself and my colleagues. The Leader of the Official Opposition was present and given the opportunity to speak to the community and seek and hear their input.

The extension was there to participate in finding the solutions and engage in that process. Our team has been in regular contact with the community and with the chief and council. We have worked. We have an advanced team of health professionals working with the Ross River Dena Council and multiple trips to the community with the technical staff from Yukon Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services.

The community since January has been actively involved in seeking and finding solutions. As early as last week, we met with the new consultant from the Ross River Dena Council. We have given them housing units to accommodate the pressures that they're currently confronted with as they transition out of some of their houses that need retrofits.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the response from the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation, although the question was about the situation with the school. However, I will move on.

I know the previous government had committed to the community of Ross River to see a new lagoon built as the community has had concerns over the past couple of years about the sewage pit leaking.

I know that after a lengthy Water Board process, the new lagoon has been approved, but, as the season draws shorter, can the government please tell my constituents when they can see the construction of the new lagoon begin?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for the question. I will do my best to come up with a response.

Last week in this Legislature, we were asked about many water and waste-water projects that we are undertaking and the department was just about there when we hit an earthquake. In fact, part of the department that works on this had to close down their building, so there has been a slight delay. I will get some information for the Leader of the Official Opposition.

We did visit Ross River. We did look at the sewage pit area and we did have a conversation with chief and council about it. I will get him some specific details to his very specific question.

Mr. Hassard: I thank the minister for that response and I can certainly appreciate the difficulty that the department is having with the recent closure of their offices.

When the minister is speaking to those officials later, could he also please find out — I know he mentioned earlier in this Legislature that there was a possibility of continuing engineering that might need to take place before the bridge repairs can be completed on the Ross River bridge. Can the minister please tell us when this tender for finishing the repairs to the Ross River bridge may take place?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There was some additional engineering work that was required. When we had a look, there were some concerns about the anchor points, so we had to go back and do a little bit more engineering. That work has been completed. We also made a commitment to chief and council that before the tender package goes out we will have a direct conversation with them. That conversation is underway right now.

It's difficult for me to give an exact sense of when the bridge will be completed or a date because it's going to go to an RFP process. We're still hopeful and confident that it will be this year. I will do my best to keep the members opposite informed.

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. 17

Clerk: Motion No. 17, standing in the name of Mr. Hutton.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun:

THAT this House supports the efforts of the Vuntut Gwitchin people and the Gwich'in people of the Northwest Territories and Alaska in lobbying the United States Congress for the protection of the sacred calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd in order to preserve the health of the herd and the well-being of northern communities.

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, today's motion is a very straightforward one that I hope all members will support. It is on a topic that this Legislature has discussed and debated several times over the years. It is back on the radar, so to speak, because of the results of the presidential election in November 2016. With President Obama in the White House for the last eight years, the calving grounds were under less threat. That changed in November. The Yukon government strongly supports protecting the Porcupine caribou herd calving grounds in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. A portion of the herd's most sensitive habitat in Yukon is protected from industrial development by Ivvavik National Park. The Yukon government stands with its First Nation and Inuvialuit partners in advocating for the protection of the calving grounds in Alaska.

Porcupine caribou are culturally important and provide an essential food source for many First Nation and Inuvialuit people. In November 2016 the barren-ground caribou were assessed as "threatened" by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. The next step is for the federal environment minister to determine whether to formally list the caribou as "threatened" under the *Species at Risk Act*. If listed as "threatened", there is a requirement to develop a recovery strategy and potentially identify critical habitat. Because of significant work with user groups and the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, including the ongoing application of the herd's harvest management plan and implementation plan, Yukon is in a good position to address these requirements.

Significant declines in barren-ground caribou populations across North America recently led to an assessment of "threatened" by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada in November 2016. The Porcupine caribou herd is the only large barren-ground caribou herd currently increasing in size in Canada. There is renewed interest by the United States government in opening ANWR to oil drilling

and development. The area has been closed to development, including drilling, since 1980. In January 2017, Alaskan Senator Murkowski introduced Senate Bill S.49, which is a first step to removing the existing legislative prohibition on oil and gas activity in ANWR. Senator Murkowski met with President Trump on March 17 to push her ANWR agenda. After her meeting, she told *Bloomberg News*: “What was very clear was a recognition that what Alaska has to offer is considerable, important, and we need to be working to undo much of what the Obama administration did in terms of locking up these resources”.

Yukon government’s relations with Alaska have a number of areas of mutual interest. However, the protection of the northernmost part of ANWR, south of Kaktovik, Alaska — also referred to as the “1002 lands” — is currently an area of disagreement. For many years, Yukon government has provided financial assistance to Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation to support its advocacy efforts to protect ANWR. A \$50,000 contribution agreement is currently in place with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation to support 2017-18 activities.

A Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation delegation was in Washington, DC, March 12 to 15, 2017, advocating for the protection of ANWR. The 1987 *Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America on the Conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd* outlined specific provisions for international engagement, including the creation of an international board. This board provides advice and makes recommendations to the parties to ensure conservation of the herd.

The Porcupine Caribou Management Board was established under the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* and works to conserve the Porcupine caribou herd and its habitat in Canada. This board includes representation from Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, the Tetlit Gwich’in, Inuvialuit, Canada, Northwest Territories and Yukon.

In 2011, the parties to the PCMA approved a Porcupine caribou harvest management plan and an accompanying implementation plan. These documents guide the management actions in Canada and lay out a process to cooperatively manage harvest on an annual basis.

On November 24, 2016, Yukon Member of Parliament Larry Bagnell made a plea in the House of Commons for parliamentarians and all Canadians to make every effort to protect the calving grounds of the herd. Indigenous leaders from Alaska, Yukon and Northwest Territories are actively lobbying in Washington, DC to prevent drilling and other development. This is a continuation of a decades-long effort to protect the calving grounds of the herd in Yukon and Alaska.

Yukon continues to liaise with Global Affairs Canada, the Canadian Embassy in Washington, the Alaska State government, the US Congress, US federal government and American non-governmental organizations in order to monitor action and policy.

The herd is currently estimated at 197,000 caribou, up from an estimated 169,000 in 2010. This is one of the largest populations of barren-ground caribou in North America and

currently the only one that’s increasing. Regular monitoring since 1970 has indicated that the Porcupine caribou herd is primarily on the coastal plain of Alaska and Yukon during the calving period, but almost solely within Alaska for the critical one to 1.5 months afterward, the post-calving period.

In particular, the 1002 lands — the northernmost part of the ANWR lands — are where use is concentrated each year during this critical life stage. Although the Porcupine caribou herd has calved more regularly in Yukon over the past 13 years, in recent years, the herd has again shifted its calving activities back to the 1002 lands, signalling the ongoing importance of the entire calving range. The herd will continue to make its annual movement into the 1002 area of ANWR after calving each year.

Mr. Speaker, this has always been a non-partisan issue in this Chamber. Governments of all three political stripes have agreed on the importance of protecting this herd. Unanimous support of this motion would express this Legislature’s continued support for protecting ANWR. I sincerely hope all members can agree to support this motion.

Mr. Istchenko: I’m happy to rise to speak to this motion and to restate the Yukon Party’s commitment to lending its support to the Vuntut Gwitchin and the Gwich’in people in their efforts to protect the Porcupine caribou herd.

The way of life for the Gwich’in people has always been centred on the Porcupine caribou. They have maintained a healthy, balanced dependence on the herd for thousands of years.

The previous MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin eloquently — many times to me in private and in this House — described his relationship in the words of many Gwich’in elders: “Caribou are our life. Without caribou, we wouldn’t exist”. Those are great words, Mr. Speaker.

The reliance that people have had on the lands and on caribou has not changed with the introduction of our modern amenities over the years. I’ll speak more to that a little bit later. Rather, they have maintained the traditional way of life, passing on their knowledge of the dependence on the herd through generations.

Each spring, during the Porcupine caribou migration north to their calving grounds in northeast Alaska, there is further melt in the area, giving way to new growth of food for the caribou and their young.

I commend the efforts of the Gwich’in people to lobby the United States Congress in this area. There are other things that are near and dear to my heart that I have been lobbying for also. Shakwak is a good example. Protecting their caribou population is something that we can all support. The herd has been thriving and, while estimates tend to vary from year to year, the more recent counts put the herd — like we heard from the member opposite — at 200,000 strong.

I just want to give a little bit of previous history on the population of the caribou. Back in the early 1970s, there were about 100,000 and then we saw an increase in 1985. We were up to just 140,000. Then, in 1990, it peaked at 175,000 caribou. Then we saw a little bit of a decline back in 2001. I

think we were just around 125,000. Like the member opposite said, we're at 197,000 caribou with the last census that was done in 2013. I know that the Department of Environment works closely with the Porcupine Caribou Management Board. I know the International Porcupine Caribou Board was re-established — and other bodies like the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) — to ensure the conservation of that herd. The reason I'm speaking to this today — and I know the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin is probably aware of all this — I will throw in a little history of my past couple of years as the Environment minister with the caribou and with the harvest opportunities and some of the challenges that we found. Just for her — I'm sure it's probably on her radar already.

As we know, the harvest of the herd is considerably higher in years when the herd spends the winter along the Dempster Highway, and we've seen that. During those years, there is greater demand placed on our conservation officers. What I can say is — you get a briefing note that comes to you and says that the caribou are there and, oh my god, there are hunters. Everybody is out there hunting. So our conservation officers are tasked out there. You have to bring them in from other areas. They have to work overtime. They do a wonderful job. They get up there. Having their presence and having the conservation officers' vehicles there usually cleans up a lot of the issues that they've had along the highway with the wastage of meat and ethical treatment of how you go about hunting. It's not the practices of Yukoners. It's the practices of those who come across the line in the Northwest Territories more than in the Yukon, from what I understand.

When I was the previous minister, any time I had a chance to meet with the Minister of Environment from the Northwest Territories, that was a conversation. Let's work, let's educate and let's work together so we can have the proper harvest and harvesting done within the rules, regulations and laws that we have in the Yukon Territory.

We know that licensed harvest averages about 250 caribou, but it can range from a very low harvest to over 400 per year, depending on if they are on the lower Dempster Highway. I think the harvest in 2015-16 was approximately 219, but we saw a huge increase when the caribou came. At the 2016 harvest meeting in February, the data was available from all parties for the fourth year in a row. The total Canadian harvest was estimated at 749 caribou. This is extremely low, but then we will see the harvest go up. For example, it can go up much higher — 4,000 to 6,000 — as the caribou were in Canada and accessible from the Dempster. So Alaska's harvest is going to be lower when the caribou are there. It's going to be important for us to monitor that and keep an eye on that.

I was very interested to look at the new technology, some of the stuff that they have there. The collaborative effort between the departments — the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. They're great with this too — and the federal jurisdictions such as Environment Canada and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Monitoring priorities are set by agencies on an as-needed basis and are agreed to by the Porcupine Caribou Technical Committee, which includes representatives from the agencies. Monitoring is generally led by a specific agency and supported by others, as needed, to ensure success.

A few of the things that they focus on — and I believe that it's important — are the number of collars deployed, the range, the wide aerial telemetry — and I have had an opportunity to look at the telemetry and see over the years with the technology, the aerial photos, the better photos — the new population estimate, in collaboration with Alaska Fish and Game — as I said earlier, communicating and engaging with hunters on the Dempster Highway.

Another one that is near and dear to my heart is our youth, so working with our schools to enable mentorship, education, communication and opportunities of the local communities there to be directly involved in the monitoring — getting that opportunity to go out, fly, have a look and count is incredible and it's an incredible opportunity. It can tweak a youth's interest into — maybe that's the direction they would like to move to in the future. That's for the communities in the Yukon but in the Mackenzie Delta also. I think that hunter education and conservation of the herd, some of the workshops that they hold and other initiatives identified are also great.

We're fortunate and proud to be home to such an important living, breathing resource and, of course, we want to see it valued as such. The new United States government and administration has focused on opening hydrocarbon development in the Arctic area. We certainly think any decision should be made in the north by the people who live there — not Washington and not Ottawa.

This area has been a subject of a call from the Gwich'in Nation and the Vuntut Gwitchin people to protect the unspoiled wilderness. It is this unspoiled wilderness that is home to so many species of wildlife in addition to being the calving grounds of the Porcupine herd. If the people of the north are calling for the land to be managed a certain way, then our respective governments need to listen. With the Alaska Congressional Delegation calling for the coastal area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to be opened to deployment, it is a critical topic for those people who depend on the vulnerable coast area that is a favoured calving ground.

We also need to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that we are looking at evidence and science on how to support the caribou herd.

I would like to thank our previous MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin for all of his hard work and dedication to the preservation of the Porcupine caribou herd, and to this government. It is certainly a worthy goal. We urge the Government of Yukon to continue its support to our northern people to protect the herd and ensure the well-being of their communities.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for bringing forth this motion to reiterate the support — and I will use the word “reiterate” — of this House with respect to the efforts of the Vuntut

Gwitchin and the Gwich'in people of the Northwest Territories and Alaska in their efforts to lobby the United States Congress for the protection of the sacred calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd.

There is no question that the New Democratic caucus supports this motion, and we do it for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that we all see what is happening in the United States — as the Member for Mayo-Tatchun pointed out — post-November 8, 2016 and the incredible press to open all natural areas across North America to extractive industries, particularly the North Slope, to oil extraction.

It was good to see a passing of the torch, in a way, with the delegation that went from Old Crow to Washington this spring — to see a veteran, Lorraine Netro — was Peters — a former member of this Legislative Assembly, providing her guidance to a couple of young ones: Sophia Linklater-Flather and Dana Tizya-Tramm — two upcoming leaders in that community — to allow them the opportunity to see the enormity of, first of all, the lobbying industry in Washington, DC and what they're up against when they go to Washington to knock on the doors of politicians around that town — and to build on the cumulative work that has been done by previous MLAs and delegates from Old Crow.

People will say, "What's Old Crow like?", and you say, as an outsider, that it's a community of a couple hundred people, but it's probably the best-travelled couple hundred people in the world in terms of their political acumen and understanding of political processes, having had to deal with the challenges of protecting this herd, as the original peoples of this area — Alaska, Yukon and Northwest Territories. We established the borders post-contact, but those caribou have been going back and forth for many thousands of years.

It's important — as we look at the work of groups like the delegation who went there — to try to ensure that the 1002 lands, ANWR, are protected. It's also to look at the reality that the Porcupine caribou, as a herd and as a species, face — and those charged with the responsibility of their management — in particular, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board.

I note, when I look at the website for the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, that the board has been quite clear that, for the most part, the range of where that herd goes is largely undeveloped, but there are a few critical locations, they say, where development activities are increasing and may pose challenges to the herd. Those are obligations and challenges that will be faced by both Yukon and Alaska, the peoples within those borders — the Gwich'in people — as well as the territorial government and the Alaskan Gwich'in and the Alaska government, in addition to the federal government in the States.

I note, Mr. Speaker, that we're focusing today on ANWR, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, but the caribou management board has identified — and this is really important, because we talk about this holistic approach in this Legislative Assembly. I've heard it from the members opposite and I applaud that. They have identified that there are things on the horizon and that are currently occurring that need to be looked at in a more comprehensive way. In

addition to the 1002 lands, they've identified in the Eagle Plains area the historic — in the sense that we're looking back 50, 60 years — the oil and gas exploration activity that has been going on there since the 1950s. They note that increasing interest in developing oil and gas resources over this past decade has meant more activity in the range.

They also note the impact of the Dempster Highway, in terms of the increased traffic that goes up and down there, and how, as the Member for Kluane pointed out, the proximity of the caribou to the highway as they cross can mean there's increased hunting and the impact on that and the potential for that traffic to not only accidentally kill caribou, but deliberately, and/or disturb migration patterns.

They also note — again within this broad area for the Porcupine caribou — the fact that the Peel River watershed is part of the Porcupine caribou herd's winter range. They note that this area is currently the focus of mineral exploration.

Mr. Speaker, I looked at that and I looked further at what the board's strategic plan for 2016 through to 2020 was. There is concern expressed about the tendency of our environmental and regulatory bodies to take and be focused, by mandate, on a project-by-project approach. The whole issue, if we're looking at the sustained life of a herd like this that has been around forever, is that we need to work together — not just put the onus on the Porcupine Caribou Management Board — to figure out an approach to deal with cumulative impacts. They currently don't do that under YESAA.

We need to, if these four large issues of the 1002 lands, the Peel Plateau, the Dempster and Eagle Plains — caribou don't just sort of have one thing happening to them in one area and then it doesn't have an impact if they try to move on. The combination of current and future activities, along with climate change — we need to be thinking about how that may impact this sustained existence of this very important herd.

We think that, as the NDP, we would of course support this motion, so it's not just that we're sort of standing on the sidelines passively supporting the Vuntut Gwitchin in their efforts to lobby another body — another government — but it's actually that we need to take responsibility as legislators for what we're doing to think through the issues of cumulative impact and how we're going to make that a reality, so that we avoid what the Member for Mayo-Tatchun mentioned at the outset. I think he referenced that if nothing is done, they can become possibly threatened and placed on a species-at-risk list. Guess what — we don't have species-at-risk legislation in this territory. We rely upon the federal listing. We don't want to go there. I think we have an obligation and responsibility. I know that Yukoners are up to that. We look forward to not only supporting the efforts of the Vuntut Gwitchin and the Gwich'in across the Northwest Territories and Alaska in their lobbying effort, but we put the challenge to this government and to all of us as legislators to deal with the bigger issues as well. It's not just about those in Washington doing something. We have an obligation to get active and proactive here too.

Hon. Ms. Frost: As the Minister of Environment and as the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, I'm honoured to speak

today on the protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and to speak on the significance of the Porcupine caribou herd to the Vuntut Gwitchin people and to the Gwich'in Nation across northern Canada and in the US.

Thank you to the members for your passionate voice in terms of the significance of the caribou. The connection and the relationship of the Porcupine caribou to the Vuntut Gwitchin people goes back decades, goes back a lot of years, as expressed by the Member for Kluane.

Your experience as Minister of Environment in protecting and doing what you can as a previous government to engage with Vuntut Gwitchin on the issue of the Arctic refuge — what I can say is that we need to do better. We need to do more.

The Leader of the Third Party highlighted, and I think he gave some really strong words around the legislative processes. We have put this burden and this responsibility on the Gwich'in Nation to lobby efforts and the statistics that were provided earlier — we've seen highs and lows of the herd.

When times are stressed, the caribou is stressed. Pressure is stressing the caribou — environmental pressures, industrial pressures. We see the herd decline and we react. The Vuntut Gwitchin people have lived this. If you want to go to our community, you'll see that. You go to the grocery store and you buy a jug of milk for \$14 or you get a dozen eggs for \$8. You have to rely on what the land is able — we rely on the environment. We rely on the caribou. It sustains us as a people and it sustains the nation. It's our culture. I wore my vest today because I want to signify that this is who we are as a Gwich'in Nation, Gwich'in people. We use every bit of the animal to signify our dignity and our pride, and our culture and what we stand for as a Gwich'in Nation.

Now, I've been told that I like to tell stories, but I do because that's how I've been taught. You share by storytelling and there are messages in the stories. As a young adult early on in my life, my mother, Alice Frost, being the first chief of our community, was a strong advocate when this *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* and the international agreement came about. She advocated, she was front and centre, she took time away from her family to travel and lobby in the United States with members from our community. She pushed us — every one of her children — to leave our community for three to six weeks travelling in the city, travelling in New York, travelling in New Jersey, travelling wherever we can to get the voice out — get the message out — the significance and why. We have significant support across the nation. Is that enough? We're relying on United States citizens to provide and lobby on our behalf. As Canadians and as Yukoners, we have not done that. We have not done enough. We have not supported the Gwich'in Nation to influence the changes that we require, holding at bay the United States government from drilling in the Arctic refuge.

We have seen significant changes in climate and pressures in the wintering grounds of the caribou herd. We have seen Northern Cross coming into our traditional area. We have seen other oil and gas pressures with the requirement

through the YESAA process — which, by the way, derives from the self-government agreement. Those tools were put there to protect the significance of the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan*. All of these initiatives were put in place — the Ivvavik, the Vuntut National Park — by way of the Vuntut Gwitchin people to protect the herd and do our part to protect the Arctic refuge.

Just last summer, our young people at the Biennial Gwich'in Gathering crafted and wrote their values and principles in their mission statement and their vision for the future. They tooled it and defined it as the *Ni'inlii Declaration* — and I'll provide that spelling. It means — it's who we are as a people. The young people crafted this because they saw that we needed to put some action — something in place. They took that just recently. The Member for Mayo-Tatchun spoke about the young people travelling to Washington to lobby most recently. They took their declaration. These are the young people who are now advocating. It hasn't stopped from when I was a young child. They're still there, they're still advocating and they're still looking at what we can do, how we can influence so we can designate the Arctic refuge in a monument status or wilderness designation. Whatever we can get to protect the refuge is the goal. That's our end goal.

I'm going to highlight something. In November 2016, our Member of Parliament submitted to the House of Commons a plea to make every effort to protect the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd. I'm making that plea today here in this Legislature — that we do the same — that the Yukon government puts forward, as all members and all parties, an effort to protect the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd.

The question around caribou management strategies in our processes and our legislation, in the wintering grounds in our jurisdiction and in our territories — that we have an obligation to control — is ensuring that we have legislation. We hold the companies accountable to that, as well — that they have an obligation to design the necessary strategies to manage the herd in a way that is conducive to the needs of the communities. The communities, through local traditional processes and knowledge, need to feed into that.

The pressure right now is that we have a really strong herd. We have a thriving herd, a herd that we see as not being threatened, but if things continue as they are, they will eventually fall back down. Those are statistics revealed by the Member for Kluane. It will decline, and where will we be when that happens? We need to have a management plan and a formal strategy in place.

Our agreement with aboriginal governments is to strengthen our abilities to protect and conserve this very important herd. We want to be able to look at the crucial areas of the Porcupine caribou — all areas they use — and look at designing management measures and plans that will protect the herd.

The Government of Yukon will continue to work with all partners, including the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the

Inuvialuit. As well, as the Minister of Environment, I commit to working with the United States government and the State of Alaska and working for the continued protection of this iconic herd. The partnerships are essential. It's essential that we bridge those gaps and we hold them to account as well, because they have an obligation, through the international management process, that they have not efficiently implemented.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Silver: It's an absolute honour to rise today to speak in favour of this motion. I want to thank the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for introducing it and for his words. He has done an excellent job of outlining the urgency involving ANWR since the election of President Trump in November 2016. We also heard the very passionate voice of the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, who has made an excellent case as to why these issues matter so much to her community. We know that it is an issue that all Yukoners are concerned about. I thank the Official Opposition and the Third Party for their words today as well and for their continuing support of this process.

The future of the calving grounds is always an issue. When I travelled to the community of Old Crow — and Chief Charlie has brought it up as well in our meetings. I want to publicly acknowledge the work of the Vuntut Gwitchin who has consistently taken the lead on this issue. In March of this year, five Yukoners participated in lobbying efforts in Washington: Sophia Linklater-Flather, Lorraine Netro, Dana Tizya-Tramm, Jeneen Njootli and Chris Statnyk. I will get those names for Hansard. They made their case, as they have done for many years. As the Leader of the Third Party has mentioned, Ms. Netro, a former member of this House, has been a tireless advocate of protecting the herd. The other Vuntut citizens — well, they are all our youth, and they are there representing the next generation. They go hand in hand with the wisdom of our elders and the knowledge that the future is in their hands. I wish them well. I know Dana Tizya-Tramm is a tireless advocate as well for his community of Old Crow. When we were up on the campaign trail, he definitely grilled us on a lot of questions. I tell you, knowing these young individuals of Vuntut, Old Crow is in good hands as we look to the future.

I also want to thank our Member of Parliament Mr. Larry Bagnell for his continuing efforts on this file. I know also that for my community of Dawson, the Porcupine caribou herd is a source of food and indeed a source of pride.

I want to share with the House today that we are certainly not alone in trying to preserve this treasure. We have allies across the north. We have an ally in the Government of Canada. When I recently met with the Prime Minister, he raised the issue of the calving grounds before I did. He is well-aware of the importance it holds for us in the north and also for all of Canada.

When I am in Washington later this spring, it will be an issue that I will raise with American legislators and also with officials at the Canadian embassy. This is an important issue to Yukoners and to our Liberal government as well. This is

why we are debating this topic at the very earliest opportunity that we have. It is our first private members' day of the very first Sitting. I am very pleased to see that the opposition will be voting with us in favour of this motion. I appreciate everybody's comments today.

Speaker: Is there any further debate?

Mr. Hutton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank everyone in the House here who spoke on this today. I would like to thank the members of the Official Opposition and the Third Party for indicating their support for this. I really want to thank the people of Vuntut Gwitchin because it is really them who have taken the lead and protected this herd for all of us for the past three decades at least.

People from my community have had an opportunity over the last few years to travel over to the Dempster Highway and participate with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people on something they call the "first hunt". It's an opportunity for young people from Dawson, Mayo, Old Crow and other places to go out and do their first hunt of the caribou on the Dempster and they learn from the elders all the important things about respecting the land, respecting the wildlife and using every bit of that caribou. Thank you to the people of Vuntut Gwitchin, the people of Old Crow, for looking after that resource for us.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 17 agreed to

Motion No. 20

Clerk: Motion No. 20, standing in the name of Mr. Gallina.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Porter Creek Centre:

THAT this House commends the generosity of RyanWood Exploration and the northern exploration and sport development fund for contributing \$70,000 to Yukon athletes on their journey to the Olympics to compete in cross-country skiing.

Mr. Gallina: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to present Motion No. 20 to the House.

RyanWood Exploration is contributing \$70,000 to three local cross-country skiing athletes as they work toward their goal of competing in the 2018 Olympics in South Korea.

The northern exploration and sport development fund is fully funded by RyanWood Exploration, a company operating out of Dawson City and owned by Shawn Ryan and Cathy Wood. Dahria Beatty, Knute Johnsgaard and Emily Nishikawa are slated to be the first recipients of this funding, which will allow the athletes to start their dryland season without worrying about how to pay for training camps and racing on the World Cup circuit in Europe. Rather than offering these athletes a lump sum of money, Cathy and Shawn asked each athlete to submit a budget for the season. They took this approach in order to best quantify what the athletes needed so that they can focus on doing the job of committing 100 percent to their training.

A brief history of cross-country skiing in the Yukon — Whitehorse cross-country skiing's humble beginnings in Yukon was dominated by new arrivals of Scandinavian descent. In 1883, when a Finn named Sammy Rido arrived in the North, he fashioned himself a pair of skis and proceeded to ski to the region where Dawson City now lies. Years later, in 1934, a Norwegian named Arnie Anderson managed to get a track cleared on the descent from the Midnight Sun Dome down to Dawson and, soon afterwards, people were racing downhill.

Skiing began to take off in Whitehorse in 1942, when Anderson moved to the once small town in the southern Yukon, which was then booming due to the construction of the Alaska Highway. That year, Anderson managed to get a ski jump built behind the hospital. In the meantime, a ski chalet was constructed and the Yukon Ski Runners were formed. The club served both cross-country and downhill skiers. In 1948, Anderson was the aggregate champion for an international competition in Alaska consisting of cross-country skiing, jumping and giant slalom.

1950 saw the establishment of a rival ski club. This one, run by the Royal Canadian Air Force, was called the Roundell Ski Club. The new club constructed a ski hill and rope tow on a hill behind the Valleyview subdivision, known today as Telemark Hill. The two clubs merged in the 1960s, becoming the Whitehorse Ski Club and opening another ski hill on Haeckel Hill.

While downhill skiing seemed to be making significant inroads in Whitehorse, cross-country skiing slowly gathered steam. A major promoter of cross-country skiing was Gordon Ryder, who was greatly involved in both competitive and backcountry skiing. In addition to travelling to various competitions across Canada, he organized numerous multi-day trips. These included trips up to Fish Lake as well as tours from Carcross and Log Cabin to Skagway.

While downhill competitions were held on the various ski hills, a number of cross-country ski competitions also occurred through the winter, such as the Rendezvous cross-country ski races. During Rendezvous of 1968, a 15-kilometre ski race started from the Bishop Coudert Residence and went roughly halfway up Grey Mountain. Gordon Ryder won this race with a time of 39 minutes and four seconds.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, events were transpiring in other parts of northern Canada that would impact Whitehorse and leave a cross-country skiing legacy that is difficult to ignore decades later. In 1955, Catholic missionary Father Jean-Marie Mouchet and RCMP Officer P.A. Robin started a cross-country skiing program as a way of instilling physical education among the Gwitchin of Old Crow. The two believed that this type of physical activity was fundamental to the Gwitchin people's survival. It did not take long for the Old Crow skiers to get a taste of international success in March 1962, as they travelled to Fairbanks, Alaska for the all-Alaska cross-country ski races. In these races, Old Crow skiers Ben Charlie and Erwin Linklater were first and third, respectively in the men's race, while Susie Linklater and Alice Frost — Minister Pauline Frost's mother — were first and second in the women's race.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Mr. Cathers: I'm sure it wasn't intentional — I just wanted to point out that the Member for Porter Creek Centre just mentioned a member by name, which, of course, is contrary to our Standing Orders.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Please confine your comments in identifying members in the Assembly to their ridings or their ministerial responsibilities.

Mr. Gallina: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will confine references to members of the House by their riding or ministerial stature.

Speaker: Thank you; continue.

Mr. Gallina: In February 1970, Minister Frost's sisters, Mary and Shirley, both 14 years old, and Glenna, 13 years old, as well as her cousin Agnes Charlie, 15 years old, competed in the five-kilometre course at the Canadian Junior Nordic Ski Championships in Manitoba, sweeping the top four places in the race. These four Gwitchin women are trailblazers and part of the fabric that makes up the history of cross-country skiing in Yukon.

The success of the ski program did not go unnoticed and Father Mouchet was invited by the Northwest Territories recreation department to develop an outdoor education program in Inuvik. From this, the territorial experimental ski training — TEST program — was born. In 1967, the program in Inuvik was taken over by Bjorger Pettersen, who would later be highly influential in bringing the World Cup to Whitehorse.

In Father Mouchet's absence from the territory, cross-country skiing in the Yukon suffered a setback. An editorial in the *Whitehorse Star* appeared on January 15, 1968, lamenting that: "Due to a lack of funds for physical fitness and Father Mouchet being promoted to the NWT, no skiers from Old Crow were present at the Olympic trials in Quebec".

Regarding the forthcoming Arctic Winter Games, the newspaper warned: "Let's make sure the Yukon is ready this time." As this editorial appeared, plans were already well underway to re-establish a skiing program in the Yukon.

A cross-country skiing program had started up again in Old Crow in 1966. In addition to Father Mouchet's efforts, the program was helped along by teachers Beth-Anne Exham and Irene Brekke, as well as the principal of the school, Dave Brekke. In 1968, the TEST program made its first inroads in Whitehorse. The Brekkes had moved to Whitehorse and, with Father Mouchet, undertook an experiment to see if the program would take root in the city. The experiment was run out of Takhini Elementary School.

The topography of the area lent itself well to the creation of challenging ski trails, and Dave Brekke was the school principal. As a result, a three-kilometre loop was cut and, during the winter of 1968-69, Whitehorse saw its first of many TEST participants, whereby skiers earned badges for training in extremely cold temperatures.

Over the winter, the new trails played host to a number of events. In January, an invitational race was held for skiers from Old Crow. Additionally, the Gordon Taylor Memorial Race was hosted on the trails named in honour of Charlie and Betty Taylor's son. The TEST program also hosted a long-distance ski tour called the Skiathon, and eventually Saturday races became the norm. These events saw skiers from Alaska and western Canada.

The goal of the TEST program was to develop kids at an age when their muscles were developing. To fulfill this goal, a great amount of volunteer and community spirit was required. As the cross-country ski trail system expanded, Whitehorse hosted more events. In 1972, the city hosted the Arctic Winter Games. Consequently, a ski stadium needed to be constructed and the buildings were required. Gordon Ryder provided many materials to get the job done, and the Yukon government donated old buildings as a ski shack. After hosting the AWG, the TEST ski trails were the site for numerous other large competitions.

In 1974, the Canadian Junior Cross-Country Ski Championships came to Whitehorse, an event for athletes 19 years of age and younger. Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau was designated honorary patron of the event.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to mention Yukon cross-country skiers who have contributed to the history of sport and who have been inducted into Sport Yukon's Hall of Fame: Lucy Steele in 2000, Jane Vincent in 1997, Ron McFayden in 1996, Selwyn Hughes in 1995, Monique Waterreus in 1991, Ed Schiffkorn in 1998, Don Sumanik in 1983, Father Mouchet in 1980 and Martha Benjamin in 1989.

The performance of these athletes has impacted the sport in general and the recipients of the RyanWood Exploration funding specifically. I would be remiss if I did not mention two of the coaches who have contributed to the sport over the years. Alain Masson is the longest-serving ski coach the Yukon ski team has had. Prior to coaching, Masson was a multi-sport Olympian who competed in the 1988 Olympics in Calgary and the 1992 Olympics in Albertville.

In 1995, he replaced Alain Parent as the coach of the Yukon ski team. As he was living in Whitehorse at the time, this marked the first time that the Yukon ski team had hired a coach as a local. With Masson at the helm, the Yukon ski team has experienced remarkable success, including many medals at national championships and Canada Games, as well as multiple Yukoners representing Canada at various international events, such as the World Junior Championships.

Mike Gladish has become synonymous with cross-country skiing and the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club. After moving to Whitehorse in 1981, he immediately became involved with the club and he spent most of the 1980s volunteering as a coach and jackrabbit leader. In addition to this, he served on the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club board and in 1988 became president. That was short-lived, as a manager's position opened up at the ski club, which he took. In addition to his paid duties with the club, he has put in many volunteer hours for the club and, between his paid duties and his volunteer work, Mike is considered to be a significant contributor to the club.

This brings us to the recipients of the RyanWood Exploration funding. All three of these athletes are born and raised Yukoners who have successfully competed in their sport. Through hard work, training and support from the Yukon community, Dahria Beatty is a 23-year-old athlete who has competed internationally for Canada at the FIS Nordic World Ski championships in 2017 in Lahti, Finland. Knute Johnsgaard is 24 years old and he recently won a World Cup bronze medal as part of Canada's men's cross-country ski team, qualifying him to race in the next winter Olympics. Emily Nishikawa is 27 years old and she competed at the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, where she finished 42nd in the 15-kilometre skiathlon.

These athletes are a source of pride for Yukoners and, as they represent a sport enjoyed by many, they, along with the Frost family, are role models to other young Yukoners who aspire to set goals and to reach them through hard work, persistence and steadfast determination.

In conclusion, I would like to recognize and thank Cathy Wood and Shawn Ryan for their generous contribution to these elite Yukon athletes who will be representing our

territory in the 2018 Olympics in South Korea. I look forward to hearing from others here in the Assembly today and listening to their ideas with regard to Motion No. 20.

Mr. Kent: It is my pleasure to rise to speak to Motion No. 20, introduced by the Member for Porter Creek Centre. I would like to thank that member for bringing this motion forward to the floor of the House and for his remarks that provided a good snapshot on the cross-country skiing history here in the territory and some of those individuals who have developed and done a great job of growing the sport here in the territory.

I too would like to echo his thanks to RyanWood Exploration. I have known Shawn and Cathy for a number of years — about 15 or 16 years now, back to their early days in Dawson City. To see their growth and what they have been able to contribute to the Yukon mining sector and giving back, not only to these three elite athletes, but also their support of soccer and other sporting events and teams — I am sure the list would go on and on. They are great individuals and we couldn't be prouder to have them as citizens of the Yukon. This contribution of \$70,000 to Dahría, Knute and Emily has been something that they require and something that is very much appreciated by athletes who are competing at that level, I'm sure.

I am going to take a different tack. I know the member obviously did thank RyanWood and did go through that cross-country skiing history for us here in the territory, but often these types of issues would be discussed under the Daily Routine on Tributes, but I thank the member for bringing this forward as a motion because it gives us an opportunity to thank some of the other companies that have played a key role — sponsorship-wise. I'm going to touch on a few of them. As some members know, I have had a history of being involved in not-for-profit organizations, particularly on the fundraising side, whether it be the Yukon Hospital Foundation or the Canadian Cancer Society or a host of other initiatives that I've either volunteered at or went to.

I'm just going to pick a company and a few events to just highlight some of the other great things that the Yukon business community and Yukon individuals are doing to support our athletes and support our community in general. I believe there are a few other speakers on our side who will weigh in with their personal experiences when it comes to this type of activity.

Before I begin, just some of the names that were mentioned by the member opposite — particularly Father Mouchet and the TEST program. Like many young Yukoners who grew up here, I was also a member of the TEST group from grade 6 to 9, starting at Selkirk school and concluding at what is now Vanier senior secondary, but at the time it was Jeckell junior high.

There are two individuals who were teachers and instructors of the program at those schools, the first being the late Brian Hunt. He passed away in the past few years and was a tremendous mentor. I think we all have our favourite teacher from when we were growing up, and he was my grade 6

teacher and TEST instructor, and he was my favourite teacher. During the last mandate, I did pay a brief tribute to him in the House. This gives me an opportunity to reflect — the names the member opposite started to mention. It brought back those memories to me of Mr. Hunt. Again, condolences to his family and friends, as I'm sure there are still many who reside here in the Yukon.

The other name the Member for Porter Creek Centre mentioned was Selwyn Hughes. He was my instructor in Jeckell junior high when I attended there. Again, he was a fantastic teacher and a fantastic cross-country skiing instructor. It was tough love, I guess, on those of us who were in his class, but he taught us a lot about being leaders and volunteers in the community. I learned a lot from both Brian and Selwyn, as well as Father Mouchet, and I thank them for their guidance in my life as a young Yukoner and as I grew up.

The other name mentioned by the Member for Porter Creek Centre that is familiar to me is Lucy Steele. He mentioned her as a Yukon cross-country skiing Hall of Fame inductee. I was fortunate enough to go to school and graduate from F.H. Collins awhile ago with Lucy, in the mid-1980s. I thank him for mentioning those people. It just quickly brought back a number of memories for me.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit, as I mentioned, about some of the other companies that have played an important role in events that are important and are well-supported by the business community here in the Yukon — not in the footsteps of RyanWood Exploration but alongside companies like RyanWood Exploration when they make such generous donations.

When I saw this motion and when the member first introduced this motion and I saw that he was calling it for debate here today, it reminded me of Pelly Construction — Keith and Gwen Byram and Jennifer Byram have been long-time philanthropists through their company here in the territory. My time with Pelly Construction goes back to the early days of the Yukon Hospital Foundation. For those who don't know, Pelly Construction is a mining contractor. They're the contractor at the Minto mine. They have other contracts on their resumé such as the Faro mine site remediation. They worked at the Golden Bear mine in northern British Columbia. You can't drive north or south from Whitehorse on the Alaska Highway — or many of the other roads — without passing over some of the road construction that they have done over the years. They have also been active in Alaska with road construction. They are a partner with the Vuntut Gwitchin, I believe, and Porcupine Enterprises Ltd. as well as partners with First Nations in the River's Edge Condos here in Whitehorse.

For those lucky enough to visit Keith and Gwen's home out at Marsh Lake, I think one of their crowning achievements was their work in Antarctica. They built an airstrip and they built a hangar down there for the British government at one of the research stations. I believe the name of the station was Rothera, and they did some tremendous work down there. It really put them on the map. Keith and Gwen have some

fantastic stories, as do Jennifer, Karen and Lori — Keith and Gwen's daughters — about their time there.

I was able to attend an anniversary party of that a number of years ago, and there are many recognizable names in the Yukon that went down to Antarctica over two seasons to work on that project with Keith and Gwen. The fact that they were able to be successful there and be successful business people has led to the ability for them to make some significant donations to our community, much like the ones that RyanWood Exploration has done.

Just to name a few, the Yukon Hospital Foundation — a couple of naming opportunities that they have taken there. The first was with the intensive care unit, which was dedicated in honour of the Byram family and Pelly Construction. I believe that was in 2005. As recently as 2011, the emergency room was dedicated on behalf of Pelly Construction and their employees.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other initiatives that they have supported — from Special Olympics and attending other events throughout the community. No one is surprised to see Pelly Construction's logo on an event — anything from small events to some of the larger ones — as I mentioned, the Northwestel Festival of Trees and the Yukon Hospital Foundation events.

A couple of sporting-related activities that they have done — they sponsored the new chairlift at Mount Sima. They were the title sponsor on that important piece of infrastructure. The ski hill is located in my riding of Copperbelt South, but it's something that is used and enjoyed by so many residents — and visitors as well, with some of the early season training that they have been able to take advantage of at that particular facility.

The one thing in, I believe, April 2008 that jumped out at me and was very similar to the motion that we're discussing here today was a \$50,000 contribution to Yukon Olympic athlete Jeane Lassen. There was a reception that Pelly Construction hosted — I believe it was at the MacBride Museum — and Keith and Pelly Construction presented a cheque, as I mentioned, to Jeane for \$50,000 at that event. This is tremendous that Yukon businesses are stepping up the way they do.

Just before I turn my attention to some of the other events where Yukon businesses are providing support throughout our community, I heard Keith speak at — I think it was a Yukon Hospital Corporation AGM a couple of years ago. He mentioned to those gathered there — many health care professionals, board members and others — that none of this would be possible if it weren't for the mining industry. I think that's something that we can all get behind — the importance of that industry throughout the territory and the importance of that industry for these companies like Pelly that provide donations and support to local organizations.

I really wanted to thank those mining companies and the service and supply companies that support so many different events, whether it's minor hockey, minor soccer, the arts, the Rotary Music Festival — whatever they choose to be involved

with — from events like that up to, as I mentioned, some of the larger events.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk briefly about three of the events that I have had some personal involvement with and to thank some of those companies that were involved. I'll start with the Yukon Hospital Foundation and then move on to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and then the Every Student, Every Day initiative that Victoria Gold is the title sponsor of.

From 2009 until my election in 2011, I was the president of the Yukon Hospital Foundation, and prior to that I sat on the board, so I was very much involved with a lot of the activities and events. Those would not have been possible without the generous support of so many businesses and individuals here in town. I'm just going to go through what I found on the Yukon Hospital Foundation website as far as the supporters.

I'm sure that my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, will also touch on some of the individuals there, as her involvement with the Yukoners cancer care fund is also part of the Yukon Hospital Foundation umbrella. Of course, Northwestel is the title sponsor of the Northwestel Festival of Trees. Most recently, I believe they re-upped, as far as the naming partner for the centre for medical imaging in the hospital. I saw a photo in the newspaper of executives from Northwestel, as well as the Premier and other representatives of the government and the Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon Hospital Foundation — a big thank you to Northwestel for their support there and across the communities that they serve. They are a true partner in what we're trying to do here in the Yukon. Paul Flaherty and his team at Northwestel do a great job of sponsorship.

I know the Member for Porter Creek Centre would have some first-hand knowledge of all that Northwestel has contributed to the community.

I mentioned Pelly Construction as a foundation supporter. Alkan Air is the title sponsor at the grand ball. Wendy Taylor and her team up at Alkan Air — their name and logo can be found in many different events, no matter what you're attending, so a big thank you to Alkan Air as they celebrate their 40th anniversary this year.

Skookum Asphalt — I believe they still sponsor the Santa breakfast at the Festival of Trees, but they also sponsor the annual pro-am golf tournament that takes place every July at Mountainview Golf and Country Club — one of the signature events for the Yukon Hospital Foundation that brings in money to purchase much-needed medical equipment. I think this year they're fundraising for a fluoroscopy machine.

Capstone Mining and the Minto mine — a long-time sponsor, and also had naming recognition at one of the units in the Whitehorse General Hospital. I'm not sure if they are still a sponsor of the lab — but key sponsors. Ron Light, a tireless volunteer — we've heard his name in the Legislature already during the brief amount of time we've been here this Sitting. He's associated with Women in Mining; he's also with the Chamber of Mines. He has been a tremendous community advocate and I thank him for his efforts as well.

Air North, Yukon's airline plays a pivotal role in supporting the foundation. Canadian Freightways, First Nation health program — I should also mention — going back to Air North, Yukon's airline — that this is also their 40th anniversary and they have a number of celebrations that have been planned or have taken place. I thank them for their efforts. You can't find a raffle or any type of event without a couple of Air North, Yukon's airline tickets associated with it in some way, or even broader sponsorship, as they have been a tremendous booster of the local not-for-profit community.

Northern Vision Development, Nuway Crushing and the Adams family — huge sponsors of many different events that we have here in the territory, including sponsorship at Alkan Air's Grand Ball every year. Rod and Carol Adams and their children have really become incredible members of our community and are very engaged in a number of philanthropic endeavours throughout the Yukon.

The *Yukon News* and the *Whitehorse Star* have been long-time supporters of the foundation. Builders Supplyland — I think the member mentioned one of the Ryder family members — of course Builders Supplyland is owned by Mr. Ryder, and they have been a long-timer supporter — CKRW — The Rush, Canadian Tire, Inkspirationz Graphix, P.S. Sidhu Trucking and a couple of service clubs, the Whitehorse Elks Lodge and the Whitehorse Lions Club, have long been supporters. BMO Bank of Montreal, CIBC, City of Whitehorse, the Lake Laberge Lions Club, Matco, Pacific Northwest Group, the RBC Foundation, Shoppers Drug Mart, Westcan Bulk Transport, ATCO Electric Yukon, Yukon Engineering Services, Yukon Energy Corporation and the Yukon Order of Pioneers — just to mention a few. This was downloaded from the website today, but I am sure there are others that have participated, whether they are sponsoring trees at the Northwestel Festival of Trees or providing sponsorship at the pro-am golf tournament. I may have missed some, and for that I apologize. I certainly appreciate the efforts that you have put forward with respect to being a strong community supporter and a strong supporter of everything that we are trying to accomplish here in the territory.

There are couple of other events that I have some association with over the past number of years. The first one is the Yukon Imagination Library. For those who don't know, this program offers a book per month for children from birth to the age of five years when they enter kindergarten. My son — and I am sure the children of many others in here — was a member of this initiative. Our little guy just got his good luck in kindergarten book, which I am assuming is the last instalment. It did coincide with his fifth birthday. He is no longer eligible, but there are some great books from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library with the support of the Yukon Imagination Library.

This organization does have a number of sponsors as well. Many of these names I will repeat, but they are certainly still very much involved, and this is a tremendous effort that we see. The Rendezvous Rotary Club has been there from the start with this group. Each year, the Yukon Chamber of

Mines, at their annual geoscience banquet has silent and live auctions, with the proceeds going to the Imagination Library. The Yukon government has been there with them from the beginning as well in providing matching donations. I believe it is up to \$50,000 a year in matching donations. I may stand to be corrected, but I think that's what it was.

Two individuals from Vancouver from CIBC Wood Gundy, Dean Knoblauch and Tyson Boychuk, have been long-time supporters of this event and this organization. The Carmacks Development Corporation is a partner, as is the Yukon Indian Development Corporation, Alkan Air, which I've mentioned before. Yukon College, the Yukon Literacy Coalition, Derome and Associates, Tintina Consultants, Con Lattin, Kluane Drilling Ltd. and PROLOG Canada are also listed on the website as being champions. All these individual companies are supporting an organization that has volunteers and a volunteer board. I just quickly want to mention those individuals who are volunteers. According to information I received from the website: Dr. Karen Barnes, Claire Derome — who was really one of the driving forces and the initiator of this. I know literacy is something that's extremely important to Claire, and she grabbed this one by the horns and really introduced this program to the Yukon — Susan Craig from Tintina Consultants; Con Lattin, Kells Boland, Karen Fortin; Cory Bellmore, the CEO of the Village of Carmacks; Wendy Tayler, Alkan Air; and Joanne VanderMeulen. Thank you all for all that you do with respect to the Imagination Library and the important things that it's able to provide to our community.

The final event I want to mention — again, it's something that's important to me, as it was started during my time as Minister of Education in the previous government — is Victoria Gold's Every Student, Every Day initiative. When I was a minister, I received a call from John McConnell, the CEO of Victoria Gold, looking for something their company could get behind.

At the time, I was reading a briefing note that some students, by the time they reach grade 8, have up to two years in unexcused absences from school, so they've missed two years of learning. This is something that really caught my attention and, fortunately enough, I received a call from John and the team at Victoria Gold about something they could get behind. They really ran with this. I know the current Minister of Education did a tribute to this during Education Week and mentioned one of the projects — I think it was the makerspace project in Watson Lake that was recently funded.

These types of initiatives aren't possible without generous support of some of the companies we have in town. The Yukon government Department of Education does a matching program. I believe it's up to \$25,000 per year matching for this initiative. Legacy partners — I've mentioned Victoria Gold a couple of times — Victoria Gold Corp. as the title and lead sponsor of this event — a big thank you to John McConnell and Mark Ayranto and all those who are involved with this organization.

Legacy partners include: CKRW, the Rush and Air North, Yukon's Airline. The gold sponsors are: Alkan Air Ltd. —

again, thank you to Wendy and her team — Finning; Pelly Construction; Yukon Education; Cobalt Construction; the Goldcorp Coffee project; Ewing Transport; Mosaic Communications; what's referred to as the student motivator Allnorth; Chief Isaac Group of Companies; Northern Vision Development; JDS Energy and Mining Inc.; SMS Equipment Komat'su; and Kluane Drilling. There are also a number of friends of the society: Business Television BTV; the Casino mining project; G-P Distributing; K&K Truck Rentals; Northwestel; SGS; Triple J Hotel and Cabins; the Wheelhouse Restaurant; and Yukon Brewing. Those are champions for the 2016-17 year. Others have gone before and a huge thank you to those individuals who not only sponsor this, but also the individuals who give of their time. I believe that Tara Christie is the president of this organization and she has a tremendous board backing her up. Again, a big thank you to the Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society and the Every Student, Every Day initiative for all that they do to help with student attendance.

I invite individuals to go to the website and take a look. They have funded a total of almost \$186,000-worth of initiatives since they started giving money to those who applied back in 2013. It's over a four-year period. I'm not sure if that includes the ones that were recently funded this year —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. White: Thank you. I just noticed we have Mr. Dave Brekke in the gallery. Mr. Brekke, I'm not sure if you had the opportunity to hear what was said about you, but it was really nice. I didn't realize that you were so integral in the creation of cross-country skiing in the Yukon. Thank you for coming. I'm sure you will be able to see it in Hansard. You're a wonder on all sorts of different levels, so thank you for being here.

Applause

Mr. Kent: That was good timing by the Third Party House Leader. I was just about to wrap up my comments. Again, I thank the Member for Porter Creek Centre for bringing forward this as a motion. It gives us that opportunity to recognize other events and other individuals.

A big thank you to Shawn and Cathy and RyanWood Exploration for what they've done to support these elite athletes and the best of luck to Dahria, Knute and Emily as they look to own the podium in the next winter Olympics. I'm sure the generosity that was exhibited by RyanWood Exploration will certainly help them along that way.

Thank you and we look forward to supporting this motion when it comes to a vote later on today.

Ms. White: I'll echo the comments of my colleague in thanking the Member for Porter Creek Centre for bringing this motion. It's not often that we get to celebrate people's generosity in this way, so that's fantastic.

I want to thank RyanWood for the contribution to these three skiers and echo their hopes that they can encourage

mining exploration companies to make the fund an ongoing legacy project. It will also be fascinating to see which athletes can be supported this way in the future, so we thank them very much for this generous contribution.

We're happy to have Dave Brekke in the gallery and we look forward to being able to celebrate other accomplishments like this in the House.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Today we're here in recognition of RyanWood Exploration, a company run by Cathy Wood and Shawn Ryan, as we've heard, out of Dawson City. This company has recently established a northern exploration sport development fund to support Yukon's elite athletes. As the Minister of Community Services, but also responsible for sport and recreation, I would like to take a moment to thank them for this incredibly generous gesture.

Here in the Yukon we are blessed to have some amazing sporting facilities across the territory, ranging from Mount McIntyre ski trails, to the Canada Games Centre here in Whitehorse, to the Singletrack to Success mountain bike trails in beautiful Carcross, which I was talking about earlier today, to the Mount Maichen ski hill in Watson Lake. We have world-class athletes who have competed across the globe in many difference disciplines — skiing, weightlifting, cycling, hockey, curling, softball, slo-pitch and many more.

On that note, Whitehorse is hosting the 2017 Men's World Softball Championship this July, and I hope all my colleagues in this House will come out and enjoy a game in the sunshine this summer. Listening on the news today, we have the 2018 North American Orienteering Championships coming next year.

Being from the north, Yukoners know that there is an added financial burden for our athletes and their families when it comes to sport. It's often much more expensive for our athletes to attend competitions in southern Canada or the rest of the world. Many parents and children have spent countless hours volunteering and fundraising to raise money for sporting trips to send our youth across the country. When we talk about those who make it to an elite level of sport, the financial challenge becomes all the more acute and it takes a much higher level of financing to support a career.

This year, RyanWood provided \$70,000 to support cross-country skiers Knute Jonsgaard, Emily Nishikawa and Dahria Beatty. These three skiers are on the national cross-country ski team, and I have to say that having run my own community ski loppet for the past decade or so, I remember these skiers when I was young and their names are up on the wall at the Marsh Lake Community Centre as winners in the Marsh Lake Classic Ski Loppet.

Knute qualified for the Olympics with his daring bronze medal finish in the World Cup relay in Sweden last season, and I think we all watched that video. It was pretty great.

Dahria and Emily will be attempting to qualify for the Olympics in the coming season. All three skiers will compete on the World Cup circuit next season and will spend much of their season racing in Europe. Thanks to RyanWood

Exploration, these elite skiers can focus all their efforts on their training, rather than worrying about their finances.

Shawn and Cathy are hoping the fund will continue to grow with support from other mineral exploration companies that are active in the Yukon and have committed that the fund will be available to all of Yukon's elite athletes in upcoming years. This company is a wonderful example of a local company giving back to the community, and we hope that this is the start of an exciting trend for sport in Yukon.

One of the Yukon Liberals' enduring priorities is to create healthier, happier lives. As the Minister of Community Services, a key part of keeping Yukon active and vibrant is to continue to support our athletes of all ages. More than just exercise, sport is vital in developing teamwork and camaraderie and creating shared experiences that last a lifetime. Sport is vital in all our communities because it teaches our youth about the importance of practice, dedication and fun.

The success of our elite athletes demonstrates to Yukon youth that northerners can achieve just as much success in sport as our southern counterparts, and it is thanks to the support of the entire community that makes this potential achievement a reality.

The Department of Community Services supports sports in the territory in several ways. The Sport and Recreation branch continues to implement the Yukon active living strategy through annual funding that supports training, builds rural community capacity and develops ongoing programs for all Yukoners, with a focus on youth.

I just want to add a little additional information from the Department of Community Services. I had been preparing this for the budget response, and I would like to acknowledge the advocacy by the members opposite for investment in sport. I thank them for that interest.

Here are a few things: the Yukon Recreation Advisory Committee — which has been given funding for various sports — \$655,000, including \$100,000 for cross-country skiing; Yukon Sport for Life funding, \$420,000 — including \$58,000 for cross-country skiing; special recreation groups funding, \$145,000; we also have high-performance grant allocations to individual athletes, and that's \$108,000; we fund officials because we need them to help put on the races, \$110,000; elite athlete funding, \$48,000. This totals \$1.5 million.

The government will also be supporting several major games this year: \$825,000 in support for the Canada 55+ Games — which I am just about eligible for; just shy — the 2017 Canada Summer Games and the 2017 North American Indigenous Games; and, coming up, the 2018 Arctic Winter Games. By the way, I know that my colleague, the Minister of Tourism and Culture, will be going with me to the North American Indigenous Games. I'm going on to the Canada Summer Games. If any of the members opposite are hoping to go, please let me know. I would love to be there with you.

There is more than \$1.9 million to support 29 Yukon sport-governing bodies, five special recreation groups for sport development, recreation programming, coach

development and athlete development. This includes both high-performance and elite athlete funding, as well as rural and aboriginal sport development. It's incredibly important that we invest in our youth.

Thank you so much to RyanWood Exploration. Yukon's top skiers are now able to go and create their own memories on an international scale to compete for both Canada and the Yukon. We wish them the best of luck.

Mr. Istchenko: It is a pleasure to rise to talk to this motion today. I do want to thank the Member for Porter Creek Centre for bringing it forward. When I read the motion, it really got me thinking back to my community in the day. When I first met Shawn Ryan — I never met Shawn Ryan until I got into politics and ventured to Dawson for stag parties, birthdays and a few other things where the Premier and I probably hung out together — maybe a couple of times. When I got to know him, he had just become prospector of the year. I was really impressed. I met with him in Vancouver at the first Roundup I went to, and when he came in to meet with me, I was the Minister of Highways and Public Works. We never met in the same building as everybody else. We picked our own separate building where it wasn't so stuffy — 800 people in one room with ties on. It wasn't good all day — I am sure the ministers today can speak to sitting in meetings all day long. We met in a hotel a few blocks away, and when Shawn Ryan came in, I was expecting someone in a suit and tie, but that is not what I got. I got somebody kind of dressed like me actually. I was impressed with how he carried on about his passion for the industry.

Today, seeing the motion come forward — and I had heard that he had put \$70,000 forward. He took his passion and he gave back. In my community, we sort of had that when I was a kid. We didn't have a lot growing up, and I am sure most of us in rural Yukon and in Whitehorse, for that matter — I can remember playing in the old Stan McGowan Arena. I think there are three or four sheets of ice in town now, so we are a lot better off. When the 100th birthday of Canada came in 1967, in my community there was funding from Ottawa to build a community centre, so we did build a community centre. Except there wasn't enough money to finish the community centre, so folks like Bill Brewster — a previous MLA in this House — my grandfather Ronald Watson, Al Tomlin — a business owner — and Ed Karman — I could go on about community members and there are quite a few of them — went to town to the bank and signed on the dotted line. They put their houses up so they could secure the rest of the funding so they could build our community centre. Bill Brewster was an outfitter. Vic Hotte was another outfitter. They donated a hunt so we could raise money. One of the guides back in the day, Billy Sam — I remember him — Vic's son had told me that he had asked, "Why are you giving something away? Why would you give a free hunt away?" "Well, you are going to get paid, Billy, but it is about the community and about having a place for us to get together and for our community spirit." They raised money, and they had community dances. Wednesday was payday in the

community for all the government employees who were there, and on that Saturday night there was a big dance.

People came and the business community was there, their wives, my mom — lots of people volunteering their time so they could make enough money to keep those payments going on so they could complete the facility. The Bill Brewster Arena is named after Bill Brewster — the time and effort that he put into it. John Bakke is another name in our community — he is the founder of our community. He put a lot of time and effort into it. They took from their success in business and they gave back to their community. That was always near and dear to me as a young man working in our store — Watson's Department Store. We would get a deal on stuff from down south when we shipped out of Alberta Grocers. We would maybe order too much stuff, so it was good that we had an item to donate — something to donate to someone.

To see the donations to someone heading off to the Olympics — I think that's just incredible for cross-country skiing. I know in my community, before we had our national park, community members and the business community — all the ski trails that you see in the front range of our Kluane National Park were built by community members. Volunteering their time, businessmen were out there with whatever equipment we had. There wasn't the fancy equipment we have today — lots of labour. I'm hoping that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin gets up to speak because there is a stoic history of cross-country skiing in her riding too.

I don't want to take too much time, Mr. Speaker, but I just wanted to bring to light today that it's great to see that people are giving back to their community.

In my community, we have an event coming up shortly. We have our annual four-wheeler poker run, fun-run. The Lions Club raises money for our drivers' education school, the library and other community youth projects. On Friday we'll be in Whitehorse, talking to businesses like we do every year, asking them for a donation and they're more than willing and open to donating. I think that's great to see from our business community. I think it's just wonderful and I think it's important too. Your community is only as good as the community members and what everybody gives back to the community. I know in my community I could go on — our business community is great. They are the organizers of a lot of events — our second annual Rendezvous. Everybody got tired of going to Whitehorse for Rendezvous, so they have a mini-Rendezvous in Haines Junction and we call it a fever reliever. You know, it's getting light out now and we're outside and we find a use for all the pallets that Highways and Public Works has for a big fire and throw axes and tugs-of-war and the kids' events, but that's the business community. It's those people who have succeeded in life who are donating back to their community.

I guess, in closing, I don't have a whole bunch more to say. I caught a video the other day — I was actually doing some research for a tribute I'll be doing later in the House for the 100th anniversary of the Lions Club International — and I came across a quote. It was something that Denzel

Washington had said and it piqued my interest and it really made me think that if everyone was like that in our community — and the majority of people are; I'm not saying they're not. This is what makes our community so vibrant and great today — and his quote was: "At the end of the day, it's not about what you have or even what you've accomplished. It's about what you've done with those accomplishments. It's about who you've lifted up, who you've made better. It's about what you've given back."

I believe that, and I want to again thank the Member for Porter Creek for bringing this motion forward. I look forward to actually listening to members in this House talk about some of the successes and some of the great people in their ridings.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I stand here today in support of the motion, Motion No. 20 — that this House commends the generosity of RyanWood Exploration and the northern exploration and sport development fund for contributing \$70,000 to Yukon athletes on their journey to the Olympics to compete in cross-country skiing.

RyanWood Exploration is a private mineral and exploration company based out of Dawson City. This company, owned by Shawn Ryan and his wife Cathy Wood, has been in operation since 2004 and it is predecessor to GroundTruth Exploration, which began in 2010.

You might say Shawn Ryan is a local celebrity. He is well-known globally and in the prospecting and mineral development sector. He made the cover of *The New York Times Magazine* in May 2011 with his story *Gold Mania in the Yukon*. In this story, he was labelled as "... the king of a new Yukon gold rush, the biggest since the legendary Klondike stampede a century ago." I think that's certainly quite a big deal. I think for many of us, we remember — I certainly do — the excitement around him winning the award and all the excitement that came around the PDAC — the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference in Toronto that year. I can still remember seeing him being interviewed by Peter Mansbridge, and certainly what we're seeing here today when you think back to that early work and really his innovation — we're seeing the fruits of that now in White Gold and we've seen that over the last number of years.

Not only are his discoveries worthy of worldwide attention, but also the means to his exploration. He has used technology to his advantage — drones, software and other equipment. The technology he has developed reduces the environmental impacts and costs for exploration. This eliminates much of the need for obtaining permits and cuts down the time spent in the field substantially.

I'll share a quote here with you from Shawn: "What used to take us two field seasons in the Yukon and roughly 500,000 bucks to trench and drill a target that we found in soil sampling, we can actually do in two weeks now for roughly 25 cents on the dollar."

GroundTruth Exploration, which is owned in partnership with Isaac Fage and Tao Henderson, was recognized for this work in 2014 when they won the 2014 Leckie Award for responsible and innovative exploration in mining practices in

the quartz mining sectors. Certainly just mentioning both Isaac and Tao — unbelievably innovative individuals, although Shawn has always been the leader in that organization. I think the Premier can probably speak to this better than I can, as they are all very close friends of his, but I think when you look at his support to those young men as they came up through the company, giving them the support and ability to be innovative and to take chances and to look at these amazing ways to do things — I don't think anybody even understood over the last number of years the magnitude of what was happening there and the economy they built in Dawson City, when 20, 30 or 40 people were coming in over some years for their training.

This year, just talking to Isaac — now we have this company that's based in Dawson, but is reaching out across northern Canada in some of the work — and even broader than that. Mr. Ryan is responsible for a number of property deals with major mining companies in the Yukon, including Kinross Gold Corp. and Agnico Eagle in the White Gold district, just to name a few.

I appreciate the Opposition House Leader's approach to this conversation today. Certainly we're looking at two amazing people and, as touched upon, in minor soccer — I remember them donating, maybe to the Selects in the Yukon — an unbelievable amount of philanthropic work they have contributed to in the Yukon.

It's also interesting — it's so important. I really appreciate the listing off of all the companies that are here. One thing you start to learn, when you're in the private sector or you start to put these events on, is that although government tends to be there — we talked about this the other day that we need this robust and growing private sector. That's one thing that the Member for Lake Laberge and I were agreeing on this week. These are the people who donate the money. Whether it's the Northwestel Festival of Trees, as the Member for Copperbelt South touched on, or a series of sporting events, they're the people — whether it's good times or bad — who are always there to cut the cheques.

What comes to mind as we talk about sporting events — I think cross-country skiers in the Yukon have always been exceptional, whether it be my colleague and her family, as we've seen things move through, it's interesting to see how things transpire and what companies can do.

About 16 years ago, a close friend came to me and talked about the fact that there was no hockey school in the Yukon. There had been once or twice things such as that, but how could you build advanced sport excellence in hockey? How could you bring people to the Yukon? How could you afford to do that? Was there enough interest to do that? How could you give these kids an opportunity to get these extra opportunities? It's extremely difficult to try to do that without corporate sponsorship and help. When I think back — and I'll bring this through to today — we sat down, three of us, and said we can make this happen, we can put this hockey school together. We had many people from across the country we had good relationships with, and we could reach out to them and bring them here to the Yukon, but we needed the support.

I'll never forget, just two buildings over was NMI — essentially Northwestel — walking in to sit with them. They were absolutely — they understood. It was amazing — the same way that Northwestel, to this day, continues to support all of these events and continues to do work at the hospital and in other areas.

They put money on the table right away. Right out of the chute, we had an opportunity to bring kids together. The Member for Kluane touched on it — the Stan McCowan rink. That's where it was, actually. It's funny. I think back to the individuals in the first couple of years. An individual who was sitting here not too long ago — I can say it now; he's not in the House — Mr. Currie Dixon. He was a coach who was brought for some of the young players who were in the community — a number of other players who were probably 16 or 17 years old — but it was essentially Northwestel and also these other great companies that were starting to do work in the Yukon. ATCO was there at the table, but also, as the member opposite said, Pelly Construction, as always, putting up the appropriate money to make that happen. That led to just amazing opportunities.

At that point, there were one or two players from the Yukon who were playing outside the Yukon at any level. We know some of the names of players over the years who certainly went on to play junior hockey — some fantastic players — and even to the NHL level. Certainly at that point, there were one or two. Through that corporate investment and support within that first year, the hockey school was completed and we had brought in coaches who were associated with the women's Olympic team. So Crystal MacEachern was the first individual. So within three weeks of that hockey school, she had an opportunity to be on the Olympic ice training centre in Calgary with the women's Olympic team.

Over the years, Northwestel continued to be committed to it and we worked through a series of different ways to move the school — and then players that we hear about today. It's interesting. When I go through the roster of the Coy Cup and I think about all the players who went through the program — so they went through the program. They either evolved into coaches who got paid in the summer to be part of the process, or got recruited to go on to have great university hockey careers. When I think about players now — now they're back here. They have amazing careers. A couple of them are accountants working in the corporate field, but also individuals who have gone on to starting their lives here but also are the guys who just won the Coy Cup, which is interesting — so talk about going full circle.

I think about a time when there wasn't a lot of opportunity. People like Rob Warner, who is now a chartered accountant here in town, or Ted Stevens — skating on ice first in the old days at Stan McCowan, then at Takhini. Certainly, once again, because of these corporate donations, we could bring in the former coach of the year for the NHL, Ted Nolan, or a coach who had just won a couple of Memorial Cups at Sault Ste. Marie — you know, very well-established coaches. They had an opportunity to see all these young men and

women and basically had an opportunity to give them chances to move on: Ted going on and playing junior hockey in Moncton and then that leading on to his university career at St. Francis Xavier University; Rob Warner, the player who also went to St. Francis Xavier and won a Canadian academic and athletic award for his good work; Adam Henderson, who was our coach every summer — and Adam, of course, went on and had a great career in Alaska; and the Campbells, driving in from outside of town and having the opportunity to be a part of this.

I can't say enough. There's one thing we'll all agree on in this House: these events happened because of the private sector. I just wanted to give you a snapshot — not to get into a big story — about summer hockey. If there wasn't corporate money available, these people wouldn't have had the opportunity to go on and have these experiences in university that helped to shape them as individuals and as leaders in our communities. Watching them — to this day, they are still individuals who are mentors.

I think back to Pelly Construction. It struck a chord. During Hockey Day in Canada and working with George Arcand on that project, Pelly Construction was there, but also a company that has been known in the Yukon and is back doing their good work — and that's Golden Predator. Companies like that in the mining sector, if they weren't available to come to the table when things are busy, and they have that extra ability to provide funding — when I think back to that, it was always the *Whitehorse Star*. I apologize to the House Leader if I'm duplicating any names, but there is Integraphics, Air North — as always, getting people in and out — Igloo Building Supplies — at that point they were having a bit of a footprint here — and the Yukon Convention Bureau.

Those events — you get what is the equivalent of millions of dollars in publicity for your community and an amazing impact, but it doesn't happen if not for the private sector. I will commend the House Leader across the way, because he did a good job of rallying these businesses over the years. I've always had great respect for that. The Member for Porter Creek North, with her work, is constantly volunteering but also rallying people. I think we touched on it this week through her work with the Yukon Cancer Society.

When there's resistance to this, the industries of resource extraction, people have to take into consideration what these companies do. I know we'll have lots of conversations about the impact of resource development, and I look forward to those conversations. What I think I've learned is that there were situations that occurred years back and what we're seeing now are these companies that are doing things right, like Shawn and Cathy.

I can remember sitting on a couch having a discussion with him about it, and when he started to articulate how they were going to do exploration — understanding that you're not going in with the same methodology, and you're not going to have the same impact, and understanding where this world is going when it comes to impact and what's happening with class 1 and the challenging discussions that we're going to

have about class 1 notification and impact and what can happen in a class 1.

For a person who is that innovative to figure out a way to do things, partnering with First Nations across the Yukon on some of these projects, his energy is paramount.

All the stories about Shawn, I love. Who else goes and buys a helicopter to figure out how to make sure that he has a more efficient way to extract mushrooms from the forest and get them to market? He is certainly just an amazing individual.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we have more conversations like this. I think the private sector needs more support and there needs to be more information shared. I know from being at Northern Vision that the phone rings — it doesn't stop — and it's constantly different organizations that are all trying to do good things and they are there asking for dollars.

I appreciate the motion from the Member for Porter Creek Centre and I would like us to have more times where we champion and talk about the attributes and good work of our amazing private sector and innovative people who are here. I thank Cathy and Shawn for continuing that work and, hopefully, like was said across the way, giving other people who have the extra means and understanding that they are seeing profitability because of hard-working Yukoners using their businesses or because of the great wealth of resources we have here, of giving back. Certainly I can look toward what happens next — if we look to other games being hosted here. I sure hope that all these companies that my friends across my way and I have been mentioning are all ready to commit to helping us make sure that we have more phenomenal regional and national games like we've had in the past.

Ms. Van Bibber: I beg the House's pardon for my stumbling after all these eloquent speakers. I'm still feeling my rookie nerves, so bear with me.

On this side of the House — because the Member for Porter Creek Centre has opened up a discussion on businesses who give and people who volunteer, and then with the Member for Porter Creek South giving me a segue into being able to speak about volunteers and how much they give to our communities — volunteerism is what makes our communities, villages and hamlets thrive. Without them and their time and energy, we certainly wouldn't get things done. I think many of our communities — especially small communities — would just sink with disrepair and neglect. There would be no pots of money in some magic place to fund every clean-up, event or building that needs help, or even our living spaces. Here is where volunteers step up to the plate.

I recently had an interview about why I volunteer and I'm going to take a note from the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and also rely on my storytelling. As the Member for Klondike will note, all my stories are based from where I grew up in Dawson City.

Growing up in that dusty little town, we all volunteered. It was just the way of the world. As a brownie or guide, we served teas, we cleaned up the yards. As members of the Anglican Church, we cleaned and dusted the pews,

straightened the hymn books and folded clothes in the thrift shop. There was even a small campground in Dawson before tourism was really a big thing. It is where the helicopter pilots now land near Crocus Bluff in Dawson, and we would go up and clean that.

Later, as a teenager, we were active in high school. There were about 40 of us in the whole school from grade 9 to 12 and we would plan our own events. That taught me how to plan for dances, bonspiels and sledding parties. We, as a group, would organize, even down to getting our own chaperones.

Then, as life happens and you have children, then you're volunteering for fundraisers and everything that they're involved with, as well as being coach, driver and all sorts of other things. There are swimming clubs, bands and Girl Guide cookies to sell and more volunteer time.

For several years, I was very involved with the Canadian Cancer Society, raising funds, knocking on doors — similar to campaigning and a lot of times with the same reaction. I was quite surprised that raising money was so very difficult.

I was also on the original team that hosted the Relay for Life cancer event in Yukon, and for several years that was a huge success. We raised hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Later, after the Canadian Cancer Society decided to close its doors here in Yukon, we gathered, after a few community meetings, and a small group of volunteers stuck together and we started the Yukoners cancer care fund. It's a fund now that I speak passionately about and, with the support of the Yukon Hospital Foundation, we too have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars and all of the money stays here in Yukon. It's to help support families who have cancer in their homes, to cover expenses and to alleviate financial stress because, no matter what the disease, the bills keep coming in. We did mention that in the tribute earlier this week.

Supporting other organizations throughout the years, I firmly believe it is the responsibility of all community members and each citizen to give back because, if you don't have money or goods, you always have time.

Volunteering can give you experience to add to your resumé. It gives you an opportunity to meet some wonderful people and it gives you a sense of joy and peace. Today with the mental health walk and this being Mental Health Week, it has been proven that volunteering aids mental health — just knowing that you're contributing to the overall sense of your community and place. If only an hour a week or as much as you can — because we know we're all busy — just reach out and see what you can do. There's an enormous need for volunteers, and I don't even know if we can put a value on the number of hours given by volunteers.

I would like to send a shout-out to all the volunteers, no matter what their passions — they give so much of their time and energy. I would again like to commend RyanWood Exploration and their wonderful contribution to the territory, especially their area in Dawson.

The not-for-profit organizations that we all are a part of or all contribute to — just a heads-up to continue to support them.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Gallina: I would like to thank members for their contributions to this motion today. We've taken this time to highlight and thank champions in the community, from businesses to volunteers to families and to athletes themselves who saw the opportunity to advance sport and healthy living in our northern communities.

Mr. Brekke, in my opening remarks in putting this motion forward, I did my best to highlight your contributions and the contributions of Irene to the sport of cross-country skiing, both in the territory, in Old Crow and here in Whitehorse, through the creation of trails, the development of athletes, the TEST program and helping Yukoners appreciate this wonderful sport.

From the discussions today, we've heard many valuable contributions. It sounds like many members in this House are supportive of this motion, and I thank everyone for their contributions.

Motion No. 20 agreed to

Motion No. 23

Clerk: Motion No. 23, standing in the name of Mr. Adel.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Copperbelt North:

THAT this House supports the efforts of the Government of Canada to restore confidence in Yukon's environmental and socio-economic assessment process through amendments contained in Bill C-17, *An Act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act*, now under consideration by the Parliament of Canada.

Mr. Adel: I am honoured today to begin debate on this motion. As a government, we believe it is important to let Yukoners know where we stand on Bill C-17, which is now making its way through the House of Commons. It will have a major impact on our relationships with First Nation governments and on the future of Yukon's mining industry — fitting that this is Mining Week. I know many Yukoners are interested to see where all parties in this Legislature stand on this issue as well.

We were clear during the election campaign last fall that we supported Bill C-17 — and the Third Party, the NDP, as well. The Yukon Party was silent. Today we will see what side they come down on. Bill C-17 went to second reading in the House of Commons on April 10, 2017, sponsored by Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. Its purpose is to repeal the amendments to the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* set out in Bill S-6, which was passed by the previous federal Conservative government.

A five-year review of YESAA was launched by the previous federal government as required under the *Umbrella*

Final Agreement. The review resulted in 76 recommendations, 72 of which were agreed to by all parties. But, when Bill S-6 was introduced, there were four additional amendments thrown in without any meaningful consultation with First Nations. These four additional amendments, to be repealed by Bill C-17, are as follows: this enactment amends the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, YESAA, in particular by repealing the provisions: (a) that authorize the federal minister to delegate any of his or her powers, duties and functions under the act to the territorial minister; (b) that exempt projects and existing projects from the requirement of a new assessment when an authorization is renewed or amended and there are no significant changes to the original project as previously assessed; (c) that establish time limits for assessments; and (d) that authorize the federal minister to issue binding policy directions to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board, YESAB.

From the time Bill S-6 was first introduced, the relationship between the now former federal Conservative government and the Yukon First Nations has been very contentious. A lawsuit from three different First Nations, with the support of the Council of Yukon First Nations, was filed against Mr. Harper's government over these very amendments. Bill S-6 created a power shift and significantly reduced the autonomy of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board, handing the federal minister the opportunity to make unilateral decisions or delegate to the territorial minister if they chose to do so.

Consultation is key. The intent to work together as different orders of government is what our territory is built on, and we need to respect that. Bill S-6 did not respect our final agreements, nor did it represent the territory as a whole.

The last-minute amendments were severely criticized in this Chamber by the Yukon Party and the New Democrats. They were criticized outside of this Chamber by Yukon First Nations and the mining industry. At Roundup in Vancouver in 2015, the mining industry said — among other things about Bill S-6 and the amendments — that they would like to see a government and First Nations avoid litigation if at all possible. The process has to be done right. We should see the parties work together to avoid court.

Eira Thomas, CEO of Kaminak Gold, said that resolving disputes between government and First Nations needed to be a top priority. Kaminak continues to encourage dialogue to achieve a resolution on those outstanding issues, she said.

Rick Rule with Sprott Asset Management, which funds mining projects, was more direct. "If you want my money, don't ask me to fund a dispute," he said. In December 2014, the president of a company planning a mine in Yukon went public with his concerns about Bill S-6. He asked the federal and Yukon governments to find a solution to address the outstanding issues within Bill S-6. It went on to ask the federal Conservatives to recognize the company's concerns about the fragility of the intergovernmental relations in the Yukon surrounding Bill S-6 and the negative impact this is having on the territory's mineral industry. He said it was imperative that YESAA has the broad support of all

governments to ensure the confidence of projects, proponents and Yukon residents in the YESAA process and to facilitate investment in the territory. In the face of this criticism, the former federal Conservatives and the Yukon Party had a choice to make: try to avoid another lawsuit with First Nations or barge ahead unilaterally. They could have reduced the regulatory uncertainty and addressed the concerns of the mining industry. We know what they chose. The results are here for all to see. The "my way or the highway" approach of the former government failed.

Mr. Speaker, the unilateral approach on the four amendments that originated within the Yukon Party government demonstrated a complete lack of respect for First Nations and their integral role in the involvement in sustainable resource development. They were just a slap in the face. A complete lack of meaningful consultation with all orders of government and stakeholders, especially First Nations, was evident in the former government's approach. It disrespected and disregarded the final agreements, which were developed and implemented over the years of consultation, multiple drafts and efforts from all Yukoners. In that sense, it disrespects Yukon and how we have chosen to govern and work alongside one another. There was a clear undertone of the federal government's approach of wanting to exert more power over the assessment process outlined by the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*. It also undermined the First Nations' authority. Two of the four amendments to be repealed apply directly to the federal minister's authorization to act and/or intervene on the assessment process.

The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board operates at arm's length to the government. They are the policy-making body. They are the professionals from industry, environmental stewards, Yukoners and much more. We have nominated them to this role under good faith that they will guide the assessment process for the Yukon with sound policy directives.

By assigning the federal minister additional overarching authority over the board, you completely undermine their ability to operate as an autonomous body. How can they fully impart their knowledge and experience on to the assessment process if it can be amended or even revoked, without question, by the minister? Mr. Speaker, they can't.

When projects are subjected to YESAB's assessment process, they are placed on an equal playing field. They are subject to the same policies and baseline data requirements. This brings balance and integrity to the process. The policy directives and guidance of the board to the district offices are given under the same format.

All being said, the assessment process has its challenges, and we have committed to working in collaboration with Canada and the First Nations to amend them. The previous Yukon Party government stood by Bill S-6 to the end, to the point where it ended up in court. They condemned themselves to the labours of Sisyphus when dealing with the First Nations. Their support included four additional last-minute amendments, of which two were said to have been requested

by the Yukon Party Premier himself. This approach showed a complete lack of respect for First Nation governments which, unfortunately, the previous government was well-known for. The blatant disregard of the First Nation final agreements has led to many lawsuits filed against the Yukon Party government, including the Peel lawsuit.

In October 2016, three Yukon First Nations filed a lawsuit in regard to the four additional provisions set out in Bill S-6. Chief Smith of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Chief Fairclough of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and Chief Sidney of the Teslin Tlingit Council, as a united front, launched a petition filed in the Yukon Supreme Court. They received unanimous support from all self-governing First Nations through the Council of Yukon First Nations.

At this point, I would like to quote Chief Sidney on the lawsuit. He said: "The amendments through Bill S-6 undermine or weaken Yukon's development assessment process and our role as First Nation governments. They are a clear breach of our final agreements."

The filing of this petition was a very clear statement made by Yukon First Nations. It is not okay to dilute their role in responsible resource development, especially without meaningful consultation. The final agreements are protected under the Constitution — as they should be. They were signed in good faith.

Bill C-17 is the first step to repair the Yukon environmental and socio-economic assessment process. As a society, we need to work together to repair our relationships with First Nations. Reconciliation is our only way forward, and the Yukon Liberal government has made it a priority. Through collaboration, meaningful consultation and government-to-government work, not only can we mend the assessment process, but also our relationships.

We come to the table ready to listen, learn and contribute. We will work hard for Yukoners to make this right. Bill S-6 should never have been pushed through. It is an infringement on First Nation rights and the federal government has been working hard to repeal provisions and move forward from there. Bill C-17 is intended to reverse the controversial amendments contained in Bill S-6, something our Yukon Liberal government fully supports. It is something we support.

Repealing these amendments will provide certainty to the industry and assurances to the First Nations. The bill is an example of governments moving forward together, working in partnership to better approach our life in the north.

On April 8, 2016 the Yukon government, Canada, Council of Yukon First Nations, and Yukon First Nations with final agreements signed a memorandum of understanding to repeal these four contentious clauses in Bill S-6. On June 8, 2016, Bill C-17 to amend YESAA was introduced in the House of Commons on behalf of the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs. The motion we are discussing, if it receives unanimous support, will address a broken relationship, lack of trust and lack of certainty that has resulted from the previous government's actions and thereby set us on a course toward reconciliation.

The Government of Yukon, First Nations and Yukon Chamber of Mines issued a joint letter on March 16, 2017 confirming their united support to have Bill C-17 passed by Parliament without change and to address the industry's concerns through a collaborative framework. Our government will do what it can to support Bill C-17, as Yukoners have asked.

The federal Conservatives do not support Bill C-17. Here's what David Yurdiga, the Conservative MP for Fort McMurray-Cold Lake had to say in the House of Commons: "Bill C-17 is just another example of the difference between the previous Conservative government, which empowered northerners, and the current Liberal government, which is obsessed with taking power away from the territories and bringing in countless regulations to stifle economic... growth.

"Bill C-17 is a step back in the progress that has been made for resource development in Yukon. It seeks to expand governmental regulations and stifle growth. These unnecessary regulations would impede private sector investment and pose further threats to jobs and economic development in the region.

"... Bill C-17 puts the people of Yukon at a competitive disadvantage with the rest of Canada for private investment, as industry is dissuaded from resource exploration in the region by an uncertain review process and a seemingly endless amount of bureaucratic reassessment."

Mr. Speaker, I am curious to hear, and I'm sure many other Yukoners as well, what side the Yukon Party is going to take on Bill C-17 and the motion we are debating today. Do they stand with the federal Conservatives? We know several members opposite were just recently quite eager to show off their membership to the Conservative Party of Canada.

So the motion is clear and I hope we get a clear answer, particularly from the Official Opposition.

Mr. Hassard: Of course it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Motion No. 23 with regard to the amendments contained in Bill C-17, which of course, as we all know, is currently under consideration by the Canadian Parliament.

As we were able to highlight yesterday in a number of tributes, mining and mineral exploration is an extremely important aspect to all levels of our territory's economy and well-being of our communities here in the Yukon. Many of our friends and neighbours remain employed and provide for their families, thanks to the resource industry, including through placer and quartz mining, exploration, geological services, engineering and environmental monitoring. The money that flows from mining investment benefits many aspects of the private sector, whether that be through partnerships with development corporations; supporting the hospitality and airline industries; and contracting local companies for supplies, construction, equipment and transportation or generous donations to our non-profit fundraising organizations, such as we have heard a lot of today in this House.

We have said before that it requires hard work and determination to get a project to successfully take off, but

that's not all it takes, Mr. Speaker. A significant amount of time and investment goes into the process of establishing an operating mine. It already takes years for a mining project to get off the ground, even if the regulatory, permitting and assessment pieces go through expeditiously. Companies and investors require clarity and certainty in these processes to ensure that the money and time they dedicate to projects is not wasted.

In developing our platform, the Yukon Party spoke with a number of members from the mining industry and the industries that rely on it. We spoke with mining executives, investors, engineers, regulators and geologists. We spoke with placer miners, hard rock miners, mining associations, chambers of mines and our chambers of commerce, and we spoke with the families. Even in discussion with communities, business owners and contractors, we heard the same thing. They want government to increase certainty for the industry, stand up for resource jobs and support current and future mineral exploration in the territory.

Here are just a few things that we arrived at in our platform. We committed to create a mineral exploration tax credit to jump-start exploration and create new jobs for Yukoners. We committed to invest more money — \$7 million to be exact — in the Yukon mineral exploration program and to find ways to make it more accessible to exploration and grassroots miners. We committed to continue our support to the Chamber of Mines and their successful campaigns to promote mining in the territory, as well as organizations such as the Klondike Placer Miners' Association, Yukon Minerals Advisory Board and the Yukon Mining Alliance. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we made a number of commitments to ensure that unnecessary or duplicated regulatory processes did not stand as a barrier for companies to explore, invest and mine here in the territory. That included working with the industry, the federal government and First Nation governments to establish greater certainty around access to resources, water licences and permits — continuing efforts to ensure a clear permitting regime with established timelines, comparable to that of other Canadian jurisdictions. We committed to work with First Nations and industry, and streamline the permitting process to ensure that it would not hinder investment and further development. That brings us to the content of the motion.

The intent of the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* is to establish a single development assessment process for projects on all federal, territorial and First Nation land here in the Yukon. When the five-year legislated review occurred, changes were made by the federal government with the desire to make Yukon more competitive for investment in the resource sector. I believe that the federal government's rationale for these amendments was to allow Yukon to remain competitive with other jurisdictions.

Regardless of where Bill C-17 goes in the House of Commons, having our territory remain competitive in this industry is what we, as a party, want to see for Yukon. I think we can agree with members on the government side of the

House that a competitive mining industry is a good thing for Yukon, and that projects and project proposals do not get tied up or slowed down in the regulatory process, which could have an effect on the current and future investment in this industry.

We would like to see the territorial government work to mitigate any measures that could potentially send private companies and their investments elsewhere. We want to ensure that Yukoners are still able to experience the benefit of these investments. Working to get projects off the ground already has a significant cost associated with it.

I would like to start by reading an excerpt from a meeting on the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, which occurred on September 25, 2014, in its examination of the previous amendments to YESAA. This was provided by Dave Morrison, the current government's chief of staff, in his role as the president and CEO of the Yukon Energy Corporation, with regard to the nature of investment in our territory. For the record, Mr. Speaker, this testimony was in favour of those amendments: "One of the things about Yukon is that much as you have all seen how beautiful it is — and how much those of us who live there like being there — it does have a high cost of business. If you add to that cost by regulatory or assessment processes that are lengthy, cumbersome and not easy to understand or navigate, you add another chink in the armour."

This is particularly in reference to the significant costs associated with the process and potential delays in that process, especially where there is a lack of clarity as to what is expected to occur in that process. A significant portion of this lack of clarity is with regard to timelines. The amendment provided by the Senate bill was to set clear timelines for assessments. With respect to that, we recognize that timelines do exist in the environmental assessment process, but they are set by the board on a case-by-case basis.

Industry requires certainty to help them make their investment decisions. Any number of circumstances can influence the length of time it will take for assessment. Allowing them to be set arbitrarily would not offer any relief for companies wanting to move forward on their projects. People rely on these projects to move forward expeditiously or else they may consider taking their investments elsewhere. Securing investment is highly competitive, and dollars move quickly.

I want to reiterate a couple of other points made by the former president and CEO of the Yukon Energy Corporation. I quote: "Timelines are imperative... Projects work within a fairly logical set of processes when you go forward and try to build things. First you do some planning; then... you do some preliminary engineering and you start moving projects forward. Projects move forward not when every 'I' is dotted and 'T' is crossed and they're ready to go. They move forward about halfway through their life, and they move into these screening processes. Having screening processes that don't have defined timelines, and strictly defined timelines, makes it

very difficult for people who are investing millions and hundreds of millions of dollars.”

I would have to agree, Mr. Speaker. Clear timelines are very important.

I would like to read another excerpt, this time from the executive director of the Yukon Chamber of Mines in the Senate committee meeting on October 10, 2014. I quote: “There are three aspects that have been a part of our submissions and our activities as part of the consultation that AANDC has undertaken with respect to the bill.

“First and foremost are the definitive beginning-to-end timelines. That was probably the most important aspect of this bill to our membership. The definitive beginning-to-end timelines create certainty and allow for consistency from coast to coast to coast for proponents, regardless of where they are doing business... It is so important for proponents to have consistency and regularity when dealing with and preparing for their project activities.”

This was followed up with comments from the president of the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association offering a perspective from their part of the industry on how established timelines will alleviate some of the issues that have arisen in the past for placer miners. I quote again: “Placer projects generally have a designated office evaluation, so that’s an area in which we are concerned with timelines. In recent years, there has been a further increase in timelines, with some licence renewals expiring as they wait to go through the YESAB office. This means that some mines are left in a state of limbo. They can’t operate. They have to go through care and maintenance, and for a small, family-based operation, this is a considerable burden to go through a mining season without actually being able to mine.”

This goes to show that the importance of having established timelines does not just affect investment in big, open-pit, hardrock mines. This has an effect on small, family-based placer operations as well. This affects a miner’s ability to provide for their family and to put food on the table.

The second aspect that received support in the previous amendments was with regard to certainty around reassessment. This was offering the ability to exempt a project from reassessment when an authorization has been renewed or amended, unless there has been significant change to the project. If a project has not made any significant changes to its project and it is up for renewal or the amendment of an authorization, it seems logical not to burden these projects with another long assessment without clearly defined timelines to keep operating.

I would like to read another note made by the executive director of the Chamber of Mines on the nature of reassessments before the amendments. This one is particularly in reference to the proposed section 49, were it passed. I quote: “... project proponents are being assessed to death. We believe this is where section 49 will help alleviate some of that and assist in not needing a review for non-significant modifications to a particular project.”

The president of the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association stated — and I quote: “As for proposed subsection 49.1(1) on

reassessments, our industry is heavily burdened with repeated YESAB reassessments for minor amendments and renewals of ongoing projects that we believe have no significant changes. This adds costs and time for the proponents — us — for the First Nation governments and for Yukon territorial government, where they should be devoting their resources to projects that are new and/or of more impact.”

In summary, there is a lot of support across the territory with regard to clarity and certainty around timelines and requirements for reassessments. I think we can all agree that providing certainty to industry is a good thing. I would like to follow up by reading some of the statements made by Clynton Nauman, president and CEO of Alexco Resource Corp., whose primary assets lie in the Keno Hill silver district — and I quote: “Alexco has been a recent producer of silver, lead and zinc from the Keno Hill district and plans to go back into production pending a successful outcome of a current environmental assessment under YESAA and other authorizations that key off YESAA.

“We realize that we are delivering this testimony today when we are at a time when we currently undergoing another of many environmental assessments. In fact, our current environmental assessment is the tenth YESAA assessment of our various projects at Keno Hill since 2006; five assessments on the exploration, development and mining side of our business; and an additional five assessments on the environmental cleanup side of our business.

“I believe our relationship with Canada, our contribution to the environmental cleanup of legacy liabilities and our experience in the resource extraction industry in Yukon make us exceptionally qualified to provide you with some real-world realities and business impacts for this policy decision.”

With regard to reassessments, Mr. Nauman stated — and I quote: “The nature of many ore deposits is that during the mining process, new or extended ore bodies will be identified that require slight modifications to the operating approach. The current act requires us to undergo a complete reassessment of our production process, including previously assessed aspects each time this happens, even though there are generally no or few changes in the production stream.”

He stated further — and I quote: “... support the need for an environmental assessment process for new resource development projects and where fundamental changes are being made. However, small changes to a mine plan or time extensions for water treatment plants should not require a ‘back to ground zero’ assessment, especially when the environmental record of these facilities has been excellent.”

On the topic of timelines, Mr. Nauman mentioned that Alexco supported timelines for the reassessment process. He specifically referenced the fact that, over the past five years, up to 2014 when the committee proceedings were held, Alexco had undergone the environmental assessment process four times specifically for mine development and mine operation purposes. He noted — and I quote again: “Clearly, the issue of timelines and both adequacy and assessment periods needs to be addressed to restore certainty to the assessment process.

“The current uncertainty has had a negative impact on our ability to efficiently plan and operate our business, and by extension, it impairs the competitiveness of Yukon as a jurisdiction to assert certainty in the mine development and production process.”

In closing, Mr. Nauman explained that, “Simply stated, in Alexco's experience, it was much easier to assess and permit the initial development of mine operations at Keno Hill than it has been to sustain our operations. This has been due in part to the continual reassessing and re-permitting of routine changes to mine plans that do not alter the effects on the environment.”

Mr. Speaker, one concern we had going forward is that projects that were determined not needing reassessment previously will not be grandfathered into the changes when these amendments are repealed. Essentially you're going to see projects that were submitted through the YESAA process under one designated timeline coming out of this under the rules of a different timeline.

As the members opposite can appreciate, it isn't fair to change the rules mid-game for industry. This again raises the issue about certainty to promote investment. That said, I do note that, recently, the Government of Yukon, the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Chamber of Mines sent a joint letter to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, which issued a subsequent joint news release in support of the bill and the amendments of the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*. In their joint news release from March 16, 2017, the representative for the Chamber of Mines stated that, “The mining industry is on the front lines of reconciliation, as exploration and development activities occur in the traditional territory of all Yukon First Nations. It is with this in mind that the resetting of the relationship between all orders of government brings the opportunity to address challenging issues around timelines & re-assessments through a collaborative framework moving forward.”

It is with that, that I would like to propose a friendly amendment to this motion, Mr. Speaker.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Hassard: I move:

THAT Motion No. 23 be amended by:

(1) adding, after the words “Parliament of Canada”, the following: “; and

“THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to address industry concerns around timelines and reassessments through a collaborative framework with the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Chamber of Mines.”

Speaker: I find that the amendment is in order.

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

THAT Motion No. 23 be amended by:

(1) adding, after the words “Parliament of Canada”, the following: “; and

“THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to address industry concerns around timelines and reassessments

through a collaborative framework with the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Chamber of Mines.”

The Leader of the Official Opposition, on the amendment, has 20 minutes.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly will not take 20 minutes. I would just like to begin by reading the motion as amended. It would now read: “THAT this House supports the efforts of the Government of Canada to restore confidence in Yukon's environmental and socio-economic assessment process through amendments contained in Bill C-17, *An Act to Amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, to make a consequential amendment to another act now under the consideration of the Parliament of Canada; and

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to address industry concerns around timelines and reassessment through a collaborative framework with the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Chamber of Mines.”

I do believe that this is truly a friendly amendment — apparently someone disagrees with me over here on the left. I believe that the current government — I would like to hope anyway — understands the intent of the amendment to this motion, as the wording to the amendment came directly from a government news release. I hope that we can all have some more good discussion around this motion as amended, and I look forward to hearing what other members in the Legislature have to say.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I find this really disappointing. What we're seeing by a back door is a reiteration of the Yukon Party's position with respect to Bill S-6. Yes, of course we would urge the Yukon government — not limited to working with Council of Yukon First Nations. Of course we urge the Yukon government to work with First Nations and industry to develop collaborative frameworks. We've heard the Yukon government tell us repeatedly, since this session began, that they have a number of protocols and other tables going on to deal with mining and mining-related issues.

YESAA, I would remind the interim Leader of the Official Opposition, is not restricted to mining. It applies to all development in this territory. It was originally the development assessment process in the *Umbrella Final Agreement* — if the member will recall that.

The intent of the motion as I understood it coming forward today was to actually demonstrate that this House could show some unanimity — could show some maturity with respect to actually acknowledging that we have come through some pretty dark times over the last couple years where we saw a government that attempted to undermine and unravel the key provisions of the relationship between the Government of Yukon and First Nation governments and, through that process of trying to unravel both the land use planning process and the Yukon environmental and socio-economic assessment process, what they did is they made it very clear that these Yukoners understand that these are not First Nation agreements — they're our agreements —

and so to the extent that the Official Opposition still doesn't get this is very, very disappointing.

What we saw in the motion originally — and I'll say it right now because I probably won't get another chance to speak, given where these folks are going. We were, optimistically — perhaps naively — assuming there would be unanimous consent to the intent of the motion that the Member for Copperbelt North had proposed. With that optimistic mind, we were going to be proposing that we would ask the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly to convey the motion to the Prime Minister to signify that the Yukon Legislative Assembly had overcome the last couple of years of dysfunction where we had a Premier going to the federal government and saying, "We want you to undermine the environmental assessment process, and we want you to change a piece of legislation that we all worked on for years, and we want you to undermine that so that now a territorial minister could give binding policy direction to YESAA." One wonders, when one reads the statement of claim from Northern Cross, whether that was part of that intent. One wonders what was intended when they undermined the Peel land use planning process — if that's what they intended when they went to the federal government and said we want these abilities for a federal minister to delegate to a territorial minister the ability to give binding policy direction.

I find this is not a friendly amendment. There is no way that it's consistent with the intent of what the original motion was, at least from our perception. For that reason, we would not support it.

Mr. Kent: I'm going to speak to what we believe — unlike the Third Party — is a friendly amendment. As my colleague, the interim leader of our party, has said, this wording comes directly from a Yukon government press release with respect to the collaborative framework that they talked about.

Perhaps it would be useful, as I sat in the chair of the EMR minister at the time that this was initially discussed, to provide a little bit of background on the reassessments piece and the timelines piece. I'm not sure if the current minister has experienced this as well, but one of the things I certainly experienced early on, and as this went through discussions, is that industry did not have a unified approach.

I believe, to this day — just even recently when this joint letter was sent and the press release put out by the Government of Yukon, Council of Yukon First Nations and the Chamber of Mines — there were a number of calls into my office from different proponents — I'm certainly not going to name who they are here on the floor here today — expressing some frustration with this approach.

That said, I think the Chamber of Mines was pleased with the commitment the Government of Yukon had made to the collaborative framework around timelines and reassessments. I think hopefully if the minister has a chance to respond today, or perhaps later on in this Sitting, he can give us a little bit more detail on what that collaborative framework would look like with respect to timelines and reassessments.

Just for a reference point, I did sit on the YESA Board from 2004 to 2007 as a member of the executive committee. It was the initial YESA Board; it was when it started, and they started to conduct assessments in 2005 or 2006, after all the rules and procedures were put in place.

The YESA Board right now has the ability to set timelines and they do have timelines in place and for the industry — as we take a look back to when this bill initially came forward and the amendments that were proposed — it was to enshrine those timelines in the legislation. It's up to the board right now. The Member for Copperbelt North, during his opening remarks, did state that the board is arm's length, so they do set the timelines. In fairness to them, there's a consultation process that takes place with respect to those timelines. I know they've changed the designated office evaluation timelines once since the original rules were put in place. I stand to be corrected on this, but I don't believe there have been any changes to the executive committee timelines, and of course we are awaiting our initial panel review, which is being contemplated for the Casino mine project.

There are still some industry concerns about the timelines and how long it takes. The big piece on this is the reassessment piece. For those who don't know, we were provided with a document that was released through access to information. It was a third party that requested it and provided it to us. The number in there, Mr. Speaker, is 87 projects so far — and they're not all mining projects. There are some municipal projects that have gone through the reassessment piece. There are 87 projects that have been deemed not to require reassessment so far.

I don't have the specific section in front of me, but it is that section 49 piece of Bill S-6 where those are applied. It's my understanding — and perhaps if the minister speaks he can provide some further details — that when a project applies for reassessment, there is consultation or notification with the affected First Nation, or whoever's traditional territory the project is in.

There are 87 projects — some municipal, some mining, to my understanding — that have not required reassessment. I think that's where this collaborative framework will be positive for all proponents, because not only does it free up time for projects or allow projects that don't have significant environmental impact to not require a reassessment, but it also frees up the time of the assessors. They can spend time focusing on all the projects that they need to focus on. I think whereas there have been some obvious challenges around that piece since Bill S-6 has been the law, there have been a number of companies apply and be successful through that section 49.

I think we're supportive of this collaborative framework announcement that First Nations and the government and the Yukon Chamber of Mines had made. My colleague mentioned — and it was brought to our attention by a couple of proponents — a concern in Bill C-17 around grandfathering. My understanding is, and I don't have the specific section with me again, but one of the sections in the bill suggests that no matter where you are in the process, once the bill is

assented to or once the bill becomes law then you are subject to the previous piece. That has obvious repercussions for individuals who have applied under section 49 on the reassessment piece, where they will be no longer able to follow through with that.

For anyone new, we believe that should be the case that once the reassessment provision is repealed then they shouldn't be eligible, but there will potentially be a number of projects that are halfway across the stream, so to speak, when it comes to this.

The other piece is on timelines. I think members opposite know that there are a number of projects that will be going through the process right now with the timelines that have been set in place under Bill S-6. Many of the designated office ones it may not make a big difference for. I don't want to speak for all of those proponents, but the designated office evaluations are relatively simple, but there are two projects that are currently, as all members know, going through the executive committee screening level currently at the timelines set out in Bill S-6. That's Goldcorp's Coffee project and BMC Minerals' Kudz Ze Kayah project, but once this bill becomes law, once it goes through the federal government, they will be subject to a different set of timelines halfway through an assessment — not halfway, but after their assessment has started. We have some concerns about procedural fairness when it comes to that. That would require some interventions by the Yukon government and the Council of Yukon First Nations with federal counterparts if this bill — I think it could be potentially changed when it's in Committee. So again, we would just flag that as a procedural issue and hope that members and ministers opposite would contact some of the individuals in the Government of Canada with respect to that.

Unlike the Leader of the Third Party, we believe that this amendment is friendly. It only restates in the motion put forward by the Member for Copperbelt North of the government's commitment to a collaborative framework — which I think was extremely important to the Yukon Chamber of Mines when it came forward. Should they choose to expand that to those discussions, to municipalities and others that are involved with the YESAA process on a regular basis, of which there are many, perhaps they can choose to do that. Again, the news release and the letter that we saw suggested that those discussions happened between the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Chamber of Mines. We would, of course, as I mentioned, be supportive of any expanded dialogue between other groups as well.

I will wrap up my comments there, Mr. Speaker, and if the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is to speak on this, I would be interested in his experience. As I mentioned off the top, there has never been in my time a common position by industry with respect to these amendments. I guess a lot of it depends on where you are in the process and what size project you have. We have seen today the Leader of the Official Opposition talk about some of the comments that were made to the Senate committee at the time, and I think we should take those into account when having these

deliberations here today. I'm anxious to hear from other members.

I know the Premier was going to stand up when I stood up, so please go ahead.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In consideration of time, I'll be very brief here.

I appreciate the intent of what the Yukon Party is doing here and some of the comments from the Leader of the Official Opposition talking about regulatory certainty and streamlining. We're so close here, but we're putting the accents on the wrong syllable right now when it comes to the intent of this amendment.

We're seeing the Yukon Party hopefully turning a page here and actually supporting Bill C-17 moving forward. That's the intent and that's really what we should be debating here today. We need to have a united voice here to go to Ottawa to say, "We need to move forward." We need to move forward on a lot of things, not just necessarily for the regulatory certainty piece for mining but, to the Leader of the Third Party's words, a wide breadth of things we need to speak of. These things should have been talked about in Bill S-6. We need to get back on the table and I don't know of a First Nation chief or economic development branch that doesn't want to talk about this.

You're very correct as far as the chamber's intent and CYFN, but we don't want to be making decisions on behalf of the First Nations of the Yukon here in the Legislative Assembly about the process. That is not what we're supposed to be doing here. What we're supposed to be doing is seeing that we have a united voice in us saying that we need to see Bill C-17 go forward.

As I made a commitment to the Leader of the Third Party, I said with the amendment that she was going to put forward, we will do that.

We will work with the Speaker — if we all approve this motion, we will make sure that this goes into Ottawa and that they know the actions here today. We will make a commitment to the Yukon Party that the concerns of the Chamber of Commerce, when it comes to the concerns around timelines and reassessments, we'll absolutely pursue that.

This amendment, in my opinion — and this is just me being frank — takes away from the original intent. It's important, and we do want to get to it, but we don't want to focus all the attention just on one area. We commit to you, as well, to making sure that we move forward on that process and work with CYFN, but we can't support the amendment at this time.

We really would like to get to a vote on the main motion. I do commit to a new process, moving forward. I do commit to turning the page and not talking about who did what, as far as the amendments go or who did what as far as Bill S-6. Let's move forward. I make that commitment to the Yukon Party right now, but we can't support this amendment because it puts the accent in the wrong place.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: This is a vote on the proposed amendment put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition for Motion No. 23.

Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Disagree.

Mr. Gallina: Disagree.

Mr. Adel: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Mr. Hutton: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are six yea, 12 nay.

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

Amendment to Motion No. 23 negatived

Speaker: We'll return to the debate on the main motion.

Mr. Cathers: We are disappointed by this outcome. I think in crafting this amendment, it would have strengthened the motion, as I know was the intention of the Leader of the Official Opposition. What should be noted is that the commitment, as my colleague noted, did come from a press release that was sent out by the current government.

What is disturbing to me here is that I think the government may have lost sight of the fact that, just as this issue is very important to First Nations — and we certainly accept and acknowledge First Nations' concerns with how the amendments were developed and the way consultation done by the Government of Canada was conducted on amendments that were made — it is important to remember that, for people whose livelihoods were affected by the regulatory process, the problems and the flaws within the YESAA process are of very great concern to them. In some cases, as members may often think of it applying to mining companies and to larger companies and, of course, an impact on a large project — a delay on a large project — can delay economic benefits for Yukon contractors and employees of the mine, the impact on

major mines are certainly important. The impact on amendments to licences, for example — as one of my colleagues mentioned, the challenges that Alexco has faced and the fact that delays around permitting have been part of what led to them going into a temporary shutdown — it is important to note that, for the Minto mine, permitting risk and timelines around that have been something that has affected their decisions of when to hire or when to reduce their workforce.

I want to also put the focus of this on small businesses and on placer miners who are affected and on the fact that it is not just the mining sector that is affected by some of the problems within the YESAA process that have not worked so well in the past.

We have heard consistently from Yukoners who have to deal with the YESAA process that certain parts were overly onerous. For example, when the legislation and regulations were originally put in, the triggers for certain activities required someone — literally for a single power pole — to go through the YESAA process. That type of activity — while an application for putting a power pole would probably not be overly difficult, at least in everything but exceptional cases, to get through the YESAA process at a designated office level, it is a cost to that applicant — and in my opinion it's really a waste of the system's resources in looking at fairly simple applications that have fairly similar impacts and themselves still do require a permit from Yukon regulatory authorities in most cases.

It's a matter of recognizing that it doesn't make sense for relatively simple, relatively low-impact applications to have the triggers that require someone to go into the YESAA process to be set too low. That was one of the concerns that we have heard from the mining sector.

My colleagues and I do recognize and support the first part of the motion, recognizing that, at this point in time, probably the best way to proceed forward and attempt to get a common, shared approach between the Yukon government, the Government of Canada and Yukon First Nation governments would be to take a step back from the amendments that were put in by approving Bill C-17.

What does need to be recognized is one issue that my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, raised — about the fact that, if the legislation is approved without further amendment, there are applications currently in the process that will have the rules changing after the point of application.

The point we were attempting — in suggesting what we believed was a friendly amendment, pulled right from a government press release — is urging the government to recognize the real importance of sending a message to not just Yukon First Nations, but also Yukoners who are genuinely worried about their livelihoods and whether the YESAA process causes them a potential problem, delay, the loss of a season or significant cost that they may not be able to afford. These people have also very genuine and sincere concerns and, just like every Yukon First Nation person, everyone who is a placer miner who lives in the territory, and every one of these Yukon small business owners is part of our Yukon

society, part of our Yukon community, and we believe a message should have been sent that acknowledged the concerns of everyone.

While supporting the Parliament of Canada repealing the amendments through the bill that they're contained in, Bill C-17 — also making the strong commitment, through what we hoped would be a unanimous vote in the Assembly, to Yukoners who were concerned about the YESAA process — that, in fact, government hears their concerns, is committed to acting on their concerns and believes their concerns are important and worthy of the acknowledgement of this Legislative Assembly.

While we are disappointed by that, I acknowledge the Premier's comments. I do have to express a degree of scepticism when someone makes a strong commitment but votes otherwise, but I will hope that he indeed will follow through on the commitment he made. I would sincerely urge the Premier and everyone on the government side to recognize that the YESAA process has problems with it — recognize that some of the inconsistency that has occurred in the past between the way designated offices assess projects in different districts does pose a concern for Yukon families, Yukon small businesses, and for Yukoners who depend on getting through the process to make a living. I would encourage government to not let this go dormant but very sincerely work with all involved to recognize there are still problems with the process and they need to be fixed.

Speaker: Order, please.

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

Debate on Motion No. 23 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled May 3, 2017:

34-2-13

Yukon Law Foundation Annual Report — November 1, 2015 to October 31, 2016 (McPhee)

34-2-14

Yukon Judicial Council Annual Report — 2016 (McPhee)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 9

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, May 4, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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| Hansard Administrator | Deana Lemke |

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, May 4, 2017 — 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 the International Day of the Midwife

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today — I think, along with all colleagues in this Legislature — to pay tribute to midwives in Canada, around the world, and in the Yukon.

Tomorrow, May 5, is the International Day of the Midwife. Every year since 1991, on May 5, the International Confederation of Midwives asks the world to focus on the role of midwives and midwifery throughout the world. The 31st international congress of midwifery will be held in Toronto this year from June 18 to 22. Their theme is an anthem for midwifery and the role they play — midwives, mothers and families — partners for life.

This theme ties in well with our commitment to collaborative and people-centred care that promotes long-term well-being and quality of life for Yukoners. We believe that a healthy pregnancy is the foundation for a healthy birth. Investments at this critical time of development result in exponential gains in the health of newborns.

Mr. Speaker, people expect and want to share and shape their health care, especially when it comes to pregnancy and the birth of a child. Registered midwives are primary health care professionals in Canada and internationally and have been shown to be safe and effective in managing low-risk births.

In a moment we will welcome Angus.

They provide care from early pregnancy through to at least six weeks postpartum to women and their infants.

While midwives are responsible for the majority of births in other countries, midwifery is a regulated profession. As a regulated profession, it is relatively new here in Canada, where there are some 1,200 practising midwives in the country, including three here in Yukon.

These trained practitioners are responsible for approximately 10 percent of all Canadian births. In 2016, a midwifery working group was created and led by the Department of Health and Social Services to examine the practice of midwifery in Yukon. This group includes the Community Midwifery Association of Yukon along with the Women's Directorate, Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon Registered Nurses Association, Yukon Medical Association,

Council of Yukon First Nations and my own department, the Department of Community Services.

Regulating midwives in Yukon is a key goal for Community Services. As specified in my mandate letter, I will — and I quote: “Work with the Minister of Health and Social Services to regulate and fund midwifery to provide safe and more affordable childbirth options in communities.” I’m pleased to say we are currently working to develop a regulatory framework for midwifery. I have met several times with the midwives’ association and attended their AGM, and I note that the young fellow who is here visiting us in the gallery today is older than I have been Minister of Community Services. It’s a humbling thing to meet with the folks.

Yukon government will engage and partner with midwives as well as physicians who deliver maternity services to develop mutually beneficial working relationships. We value input from midwives and other medical professionals, and we will also rely on information that we have already obtained from the Community Midwifery Association of Yukon as well as research gathered by the departments of Community Services and Health and Social Services. Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs branch, which regulates a variety of professions including health care professionals, will examine options for developing a regulatory framework for midwives that is inclusive, safe, progressive, and fits Yukon’s small-scale and unique needs.

Regulating midwifery in Yukon is one aspect of developing and implementing an inter-professional model for maternity care services. Including midwifery in Yukon’s health care system will offer additional options for Yukon families.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to just pull out a quote from our throne speech that was given here just a couple of weeks ago: “Your government believes in making investments in newborn health. Midwifery can and should be a safe, supported childbirth option in Yukon.”

Working with midwives, doctors and other medical professionals, the government anticipates licensing the practice of midwifery later next year. The birth of a child is a major milestone in any family. Integrating sustainable and safe midwifery services will provide Yukon families with the ability to include midwifery, if they wish, when preparing for this great event.

I would like us all to welcome three of the executive of the Community Midwifery Association of Yukon: Erika Oppen, who is the vice-president; Christina Kaiser, who is the treasurer; and Ms. Kathleen Cranfield and partner, who is the president.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to May 5 as the International Day of the Midwife, which highlights the work of midwives around the world.

I am happy to acknowledge this day and the chance to celebrate midwives in Yukon and raise awareness to their role in family health care in our territory. Midwives are health

professionals in the field of primary care for women and their babies throughout pregnancy, throughout birth and into the postpartum period. They provide a holistic approach to primary care and emotional support for families, as well as offer support in family planning and, in some cases, menopausal care.

Here in Canada, we're fortunate to have options from pregnancy to postpartum care. We can seek the services of medical doctors and choose to give birth in a hospital setting. Alternatively, we can ask for the help, guidance and expertise of midwives and embrace the choice of a birth free from medical interventions. We can choose to use the services of all, and they are readily available to us. Across the world, however, women do not have the choice.

Internationally, the practice of midwifery is an essential part of health care for women and newborns. In some cases, there may be no hospital and no access to medical care. It's here that midwifery is essential. It's estimated that over 350,000 women and over two million infants around the world die each year as a result of preventable complications in pregnancy and childbirth. By increasing commitments worldwide to midwifery education and employment, these numbers could be greatly reduced.

In Yukon, the practice of midwifery is not just about having the option of an alternative form of care. For many, it's about substantially improving the experience before, during and after childbirth. The Yukon government is in the process of regulating the practice of midwifery in our territory, which will place Yukon in line with other jurisdictions in Canada.

Efforts have arisen throughout the years and we have seen more of our community members lobby for increased resources, education and recognition of the unique professional role of midwives. Private midwives, as those in Yukon, are not territorially recognized and, as such, are unable to carry out the duties of regulated midwives across Canada. They cannot order diagnostic tests or labs and, along with not being able to participate in the full scope of service, there are limited educational, financial and professional supports and resources.

We thank the new government for continuing to work toward this goal of regulation and to allow Yukon to take its place among other provinces and territories that recognize and regulate this important part of our health care system. We would like to recognize the many contributions of our local midwives and encourage you all to continue your efforts in improving maternal and neonatal care.

Your services are welcomed by many and appreciated by all.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to pay tribute to International Day of the Midwife. Across Canada and around the world, professionally trained and registered midwives are well-educated health care professionals who are fully integrated into the public health care system. They care for women during their pregnancy, labour, birth and the

postpartum period, including care of the newborn during the first six weeks after birth.

In some jurisdictions, they care for families for up to a year. Imagine what that level of support could do for families in Yukon.

Registered midwives work to empower families by offering informed decision-making throughout their care, as well as recognizing that pregnancy and birth are a life-changing event for any family. Registered midwives offer continuity of care within small-group practices, choice of birthplace and a focus on the woman as the primary decision-maker in her maternity care. When women or their newborns experience complications, midwives will work in consultation with appropriate specialists. In a nutshell, midwives are experts in a healthy pregnancy and birth.

We thank the good work and long hours put in by the Community Midwives Association of Yukon. Your ongoing events, celebrations and community presence have made the topic of midwifery an everyday occurrence in Yukon. Your dedication and perseverance have got us to where we are today. Tomorrow, I believe you're hosting an event at Baked Café — Birth Stories at 7:00 p.m. If you want to know about how birthing affects women in Yukon, here is an opportunity — tomorrow at Baked at 7:00 p.m.

We acknowledge the commitment made by the Yukon government to have regulations in place to allow for licensing in midwifery in 2018. We look forward to that day when midwifery in Yukon will be available to all Yukon mothers.

A big thank you, Mr. Speaker, to the midwives across this country and in the Yukon who are working to offer choices to women and their families to bring healthy babies into this world.

Applause

In recognition of the Tantalus ridge run

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour for me to rise in this House today to pay tribute on behalf of all members of this House to the students, staff, volunteers and organizers who will converge on the Village of Carmacks tomorrow for the 40th annual Tantalus ridge run. This tradition held on the first Friday of May since 1977 has changed much over the years. It has grown and it has always brought people together.

Originally organized by Tantalus teacher, Bob McCauley, the event started out as a simple run along the north Klondike Highway. Eventually, it became a trail run along the ridge of beautiful Carmacks. As of Tuesday afternoon, well over 500 students from over a dozen schools had registered. This will officially be the largest ridge run ever and Tantalus School has been buzzing with activity. Race distances vary from three to five kilometres, to shorter distances for younger runners. Age categories range from six years to over 40. Every staff member and student at the Tantalus School is involved with the ridge run. This event requires all hands on deck.

I would like to recognize the hard work of principal Morgan Douglas-Alexander and teacher, Mitch Bruce, who have organized the run for the past five years. I would also like to give a special mention to teachers Patsy Cashin and

Ruth Buyck, who organized this event for many years before that. In addition, Ruth and Patsy have been responsible for organizing the Tantalus running club for K to 12 students, twice per week for over a decade.

I would also like to thank the RCMP and many community members who volunteer their day to ensure the safety of all runners out on the trails. You are wonderful role models for the students from near and far who will enjoy both the run and the post-run barbecue tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, it's people like Patsy, Ruth, Morgan and Mitch who, through their efforts, change an ordinary community in a beautiful setting into an extraordinary place that shows northern hospitality is alive and well. I wish the runners a happy, safe and sunny day.

Thank you and mahsi' cho to everyone involved.

Applause

In recognition of Faro Crane and Sheep Viewing Festival

Mr. Hassard: It's truly an honour to rise today on behalf of all members of the Assembly to pay tribute to the 14th annual Faro Crane and Sheep Viewing Festival, which takes place this weekend, May 5 to 7, in Faro.

For those of you who have made the trek to Carmacks to the Tantalus Ridge run, it is just another hour-and-45 minutes down the road to Faro — good little segue there, thanks.

The Town of Faro is located in the beautiful riding of Pelly-Nisutlin and is commonly referred to as Yukon's best-kept secret. Faro just happens to be in the prime geographic location to view the phenomenal display of more than 150,000 sandhill cranes migrating from their wintering grounds around the State of Texas to their summer breeding grounds across the north from Yukon to Siberia.

At the same time as the cranes fly north over the Faro area, visitors and residents can also view Fannin sheep from the Mount Mye Sheep Centre as they cross from their winter to summer range as well. It is not unusual to see up to 100 sheep at any given time, and I would encourage anyone looking for a road trip destination this weekend to head up to Faro to take in the sights and sounds. I will not try to demonstrate what the sound of the crane or the sheep sound like here in the Legislature today.

Staff at the Mount Mye Sheep Centre will be on hand to offer information to visitors on the sandhill crane and the Fannin sheep, as well as a number of other species that viewers might be lucky enough to spot this weekend. The centre includes a cabin and viewing platform and is complete with detailed signs and information on the migratory patterns of the Fannin sheep.

For the adventurous, there are guided walks offered to the mineral lick alongside the Blind Creek Road and Van Gorder Falls, and I encourage all members of this House and the public who have not had the chance to make the journey to Faro to take in the crane and sheep festival to do so.

Not only will you be welcomed with spectacular sights and sounds, but the warm and wonderful people of Faro are

happy to host people from around the world to join them in this unique celebration.

Just as an added note to entice you a little more, they have cupcakes that I will be delivering — not made by me, but made by my neighbour — and they are absolutely worth the trip. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would ask everybody in the Legislative Assembly to help me in welcoming former Premier of Yukon Pat Duncan.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have for tabling the Yukon Utilities Board annual reports for 2014-15 and 2015-16, which are tabled pursuant to section 19 of the *Public Utilities Act*.

I also have for tabling the Yukon Workers' Advocate office report, which is tabled pursuant to section 109(7) of the *Workers' Compensation Act*.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support the continued growth of the Yukon agriculture sector by working with farmers, market gardeners, and agricultural organizations to increase production of local food and agriculture products with actions including:

(1) working with farmers, market gardeners and industry associations to implement the local food strategy;

(2) reviewing the *Vision for Yukon Agriculture 2006: Yukon Agriculture Policy* and Yukon's agricultural multi-year development plan to ensure they reflect the current needs of farmers, market gardeners and the Yukon public;

(3) supporting the development of agriculture infrastructure that improves food security, facilitates access to market and encourages local food production;

(4) making agricultural land available to Yukon farmers through planned development, a directed spot land application process and spot land applications;

(5) seeking partnerships with First Nations interested in creating opportunities for farming settlement land through options available under the new *Land Titles Act, 2015*;

(6) supporting development of local markets for Yukon agriculture products, including providing the Fireweed Community Market with a renewed multi-year funding agreement;

(7) exploring opportunities to improve the ability of farmers and gardeners to sell and market their products;

(8) working with farmers, market gardeners, processors, and industry associations to maximize the effectiveness of the Growing Forward 2 funding program;

(9) consulting with farmers, market gardeners, processors, and industry associations on the details of the agriculture funding agreement that will replace the Growing Forward 2 agreement;

(10) supporting the development of community greenhouses and community gardens;

(11) reviewing the operation, structure and fees for the mobile abattoir to maximize its effectiveness and ensure it does not unfairly compete with small businesses offering similar services;

(12) exploring the feasibility and effectiveness and of developing an agriculture production tax credit aimed at increasing the production of locally grown food and other agriculture products; and

(13) ensuring fuel for farming purposes, including irrigation, working in fields and electricity production for off-grid farms is exempt from a carbon tax.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works, the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to convene a meeting immediately with the Kluane First Nation, Kluane Lake Athletic Association, local businesses and local residents to discuss and move forward on the critical maintenance required to the Destruction Bay marina, which is the main access point for Kluane Lake.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to meet the commitment of the previous government to the early opening of campgrounds and to ensure access roads and campsites are graded and well-maintained prior to opening the gates.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately initiate a review of Yukon's minimum wage in the Legislature prior to BC's minimum wage increase scheduled for September 2017.

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: Watson Lake alcohol and drug services

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On January 6, I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services for information regarding what services are available in Watson Lake for people dealing with drug and alcohol abuse issues.

On January 12, the response I received back was simply a list of departmental employees in the community. On February 21, I requested a meeting with the Minister of Health and Social Services, and it wasn't until March 27 that I finally got to meet with the minister.

At the meeting, I raised my original request, dating back to January 6, and I have not received a response to that request yet. I also raised the fact that the department website directs members of the community dealing with drug and alcohol abuse to call Whitehorse, and how this is a problem for those seeking help.

As it is May 4 and I still have not received the information I originally requested on January 6, will the minister today share with us what services are available in Watson Lake so I can share them?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you for the question. I will commit today to provide a detailed list of the services provided in Watson Lake to the member opposite.

Ms. McLeod: Of course we know that drug and alcohol abuse is a major issue in our communities and, sadly, we have all lost too many members of our communities to these issues. Residents of all communities require access to resources and supports in their home community. As I stated earlier, I have been asking for a list of services available to my constituents. The website directs people from the communities to call Whitehorse if they are in trouble and need help. This is either in the morning or in the evening — 24/7 you call Whitehorse. This is a real problem and I hope the government addresses it.

Will the minister commit to providing better access to drug and alcohol abuse services to our communities? Will she also commit to having her website fixed so that members of Watson Lake and all communities know who they can contact in their own communities if they are in urgent need of help?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to say at this time that yesterday, in response to the mental wellness process and the 11 new positions that were created for mental wellness and the strategies for meeting the needs of Yukoners, we responded appropriately to the requests and the pressures from Watson Lake. As I understand it, we have two positions currently in the community. We fund and provide supports for the women's shelter in Watson Lake. We have responded in a timely fashion to the pressures received from Watson Lake.

I stated in the first response that I will get a list for distribution, if required, to the member opposite of all the programs currently provided to the community of Watson Lake.

Ms. McLeod: I appreciate the response, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to take the minister at her word that she will provide that information in a timely fashion. I'm a little

concerned about what that timeliness will be, so I will ask the minister if she can commit to a time frame to: (1) have the information provided; (2) have the website updated; and (3) improve supports to drug and alcohol abuse in all Yukon communities.

While I appreciate the addition of employees, that doesn't guarantee to any resident that services will respond to their needs.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the programs and services provided to the community of Watson Lake, historically that was the responsibility of the previous government. I would hope that the timely fashion in which the services were delivered and provided to the community would have been conducive to the needs at that time. At this point, we are working and we will work with the community of Watson Lake. In fact, the Health and Social Services team, along with Yukon Housing Corporation, are prepared to meet with the community of Watson Lake. We are going to commit to doing that.

With regard to the website, we will most certainly have a look at that and update and modernize it if that is necessary. The department will respond to the question posed. As I indicated, I will get the list. I am not at this point committing to a time frame, but I will get it to you as quickly as I can.

Question re: Roads to resources

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, the previous Yukon Party government had been working with the Government of Canada, First Nations and industry on what was called the Yukon Resource Gateway project. This is a multi-million dollar project designed to improve upon existing road infrastructure and build new roads to support resource development opportunities in the mineral-rich Dawson Range as well as the Nahanni Range. When the election was called, discussions were underway with affected First Nations to come up with the project agreements. Can the minister please update the House on where the process is now and if Canada is still willing to provide support for this project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, this government is completely committed to making sure that we have the appropriate infrastructure in place for the mining sector. Certainly, the key areas to that are: (1) making sure we have energy infrastructure so that we look toward making sure that there is proper transmission in place — a big priority; (2) making sure that we have the proper roads to access these resources; and (3) making sure that we have the proper capacity. We have talked a little bit in the Legislative Assembly about the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining and building a local workforce. Those three things and the regulatory regime are things that I am sure we will talk about as well.

As for roads to resources, that is something we are absolutely committed to and we have been continuing conversations with Canada on that very important topic.

Mr. Hassard: The member also mentioned power which leads to my next question. The previous Yukon Party government was also in discussions with Canada to partner on

improvements to the Stewart-Keno transmission line. This project has broad support from the mining industry and mining companies in the area as well as the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun. It was felt that this would be a great fit under Canada's proposed green infrastructure fund. Can you tell us today: Is the government still working on this important project for central Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: One of the great things about having First Nation leaders travel with us during Yukon Days was having everybody at the table together. Certainly, all of these major projects were key conversations that would happen — whether it was with Minister Sohi or other government officials, these were all key items. We know where we are going from a commodities standpoint. We know where we are going from interest in particular jurisdictions.

Leading off from the work that was previously done by the member across, there was a \$4.1-million engineering study — a good engineering study — that was in place. There were some funds I think the previous government had available to them. They might have not hit the priority on the historic Keno line. This is a priority for us. You have nailed it. I think the green fund, a \$2 billion northern fund — what northern means could be anything just outside of Winnipeg to here, I'm not sure. We're trying to define that, but I think it's a place we can go. This is what is known as a true green energy play.

The member opposite has nailed it. We need to have those continued discussions to make sure we can access funds to secure that line.

Mr. Hassard: Further along those lines, I would like to know if the minister — I'm sure he is well aware that there was a study conducted by the previous government on the feasibility of connecting Yukon to Skagway via a new electrical transmission line. This would be beneficial for both jurisdictions, as we could sell them much-needed energy in the summer to support cruise ships, and we could potentially buy energy from them in the winter, particularly if their West Creek hydro project was developed.

This would also make a number of projects along the line a lot more attractive. Can the minister tell us if the government is still looking at options around connecting our electrical grid to that of Skagway?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We're looking at all options at this point. Part of my concern is if we have enough energy. Some things are happening quite quickly. We have the extension at Minto and we have Alexco moving very quickly toward wanting to get back into production. I think things are looking good for Victoria Gold, so we have all those items.

Then we had a little scare this year in December, which we took into consideration, where we had some challenges with Aishihik and what that would do to us.

You are absolutely correct. There is an opportunity in Skagway. When you look at something like the potential Moon Lake project, there are still some early discussions on that. You could actually bring that online, which would be good. I am looking at all avenues at this point, but no big decisions have been made about looking at going to Skagway. I need to focus at this point, when I'm talking about

transmission, on Stewart-Keno. I need to make sure we're ready for what's going to happen in the Mayo area.

Question re: Seniors housing

Ms. White: For many years, the Vimy Heritage Housing Society board and volunteers have worked diligently to plan and build a seniors supported independent living facility, a glaring gap in current housing options for seniors. This organization is made up of individuals and groups, including the Legion, the Elks, ElderActive and Yukon Council on Aging. They have completed surveys among seniors and have done a needs analysis. They have a strong business plan and have completed a space analysis report. At every turn, this board has found support from more than enough individuals to fill 150 units, never mind the proposed 75.

Mr. Speaker, this group is asking the government to support them by making land available and providing a bridging loan that would be repaid and would allow them to apply for a mortgage. Does this government plan on supporting the Vimy Heritage Housing Society in a meaningful way to complete this project?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. Right now, what I can say is that we are looking at all options. Our mandate, vision, and direction we're taking with the aging-in-place model is to look at the broad needs of Yukoners. How do we capture and address the needs of rural Yukon?

We are looking and we do acknowledge the work of the Vimy Heritage Housing Society. They presented us with an independent model, a model that addresses and meets the needs of a certain demographic group. That is being taken under advisement.

We have pressures from elsewhere as well, and we are taking that under advisement and looking at all the options that are available to us.

Ms. White: It's important to note that this is not a social housing project. This is private market housing. The Vimy Heritage Housing Society has recognized a growing gap in the range of care for seniors. Currently, seniors and elders no longer able or wanting to live on their own, perhaps in a home that is too large, have limited options beyond government care facilities. There is no in-between.

Vimy proposes to build a facility that will provide one- and two-bedroom units, as well as a common dining room, providing two healthy meals a day, some light housekeeping and social activities. With appropriate home care support, this would allow seniors to age at home and reduce the need for more costly government services. The Vimy group has completed a financial analysis of the monies that governments would save by supporting this project and, most importantly, individuals would be supported to age in place.

Has money been set aside in the 2017-18 budget to assist Vimy Heritage Housing Society in moving their project forward?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can confirm that at this point in time, we have no money set aside for the Vimy Heritage project.

We are looking at all of the options. As I indicated, we are looking at a rural approach. We are looking for an aging-in-place model that meets the needs of Yukoners.

We know that, to date, the Vimy Heritage project has received \$74,000 early on from the Community Development Fund for a project management strategy and the government has contributed another \$50,000 to the building plan. At this point in time, all of that is being taken under advisement. We have the housing action plan that the previous government initiated in conjunction and collaboration with all Yukoners and the input from that was that we are now looking at a Housing First model. In terms of rural Yukon and looking at the needs of vulnerable populations, we really have to balance our budget appropriately. The question right now is: Do we put our resources into a project that addresses a high-end need or do we look at trying to balance a budget that provides for the vulnerable population and homelessness in our community? Really, I think we are trying to take into perspective what it is coming at me as a minister and doing it in a way that has input from everyone.

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. White: With previous Liberal support, it's disappointing to hear that there is no meaningful support offered in this year's budget for this project. It's important to note that they're asking for a loan — something to be repaid. This is not a social housing project. Residents living in this building and receiving those services, such as meals and light housekeeping, will be paying their own way through rent. This project will be self-sustaining, covering staffing, maintenance and mortgage payments. All the society needs from the government is temporary help with up-front costs. This non-profit group has done their due diligence. They have a quality proposal that fills an important gap in housing options for seniors.

When is the government planning to provide a real commitment to get this project moving forward?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. I have been to many of the AGMs over the year of the Vimy project, as have other members from across the way. I know that the previous government did put some money toward feasibility studies to take a look into this particular project on Fifth Avenue and Rogers Street. I want to reiterate what my minister has said.

We have to take a whole-of-government approach on this and a whole-of-Yukon approach as far as priorities. This is a fantastic project — the member opposite is correct — as far as options for seniors who don't want to go into social housing or actually have the money to afford it.

This project is good on another basis as well. Imagine all of the homes that would be freed up if these individuals go into this project.

We have sat down and we have spoken with Ranjit and others. He was even at the chamber lunch the other morning. Of course, when he stood up, we knew exactly what question he was going to ask of the government. We are making sure that we do an evidence-based approach to housing as a whole. We know the benefits of Vimy as a particular project. We're

looking forward to future conversations with that agency and moving forward on this housing project.

Question re: Energy retrofits

Ms. White: In the last election, this government promised to invest \$30 million annually in energy retrofits. Energy retrofits create jobs, reduce our energy consumption and save money for us in the long run. It's a win-win-win situation. That's why we were disappointed to see this government break that promise in their first budget. In fact, the budget announced only \$200,000 in new money specifically for energy retrofits. Now it seems that the government's approach is to say that the promised sums are allocated throughout different departments.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell this House what this year's energy retrofit budget is? Can he confirm whether or not this represents new money or simply existing programs?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, you're absolutely correct. This is outlined in my mandate letter as part of my work plan for this year.

We did an analysis of what has been committed through the previous work of the government across the way. I think it was about \$23 million that was in place for projects that would carry on. There's the \$200,000 that we're looking at for this year.

We feel good about where things can go with the federal government — whether that's something that we look at — it's not in our mains right now. Certainly, I think, we can understand why. We're in a situation where we have a tremendous amount of pressure. We are showing a potential surplus but, at the same time, we are trying to figure out within the envelope the money we have. That is something I know you're going to keep my feet to fire on, and certainly it's a wait. But I think we can get there.

My colleague, the Minister of Community Services, continues to have conversations with the federal government. I think the approach that the federal government is taking on allocating money toward these initiatives shows that there should be some good funds in place, based on, sort of, their philosophy and where they are rolling out their funds.

The same as the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin said — there are some of these green funds that seem to be available and that would be a good place to leverage these dollars.

Ms. White: When this government promised \$30 million for energy retrofits to Yukoners, I doubt many people expected existing programs or regularly planned government building upgrades and maintenance to make up the core of it.

The truth of the matter is that with energy retrofits, nothing has changed for Yukoners. Existing loan programs are good, but I'm sure the minister knows that not everyone is able to borrow \$40,000 or \$50,000 to reinsulate their homes. There is limited government incentive to install solar panels or other renewable energy systems for one's home, and a \$600 credit on a \$25,000 heating system doesn't exactly make it affordable for people to get off of fossil fuel when it comes to home heating.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm if any of the existing programs for energy efficiency or renewable energy have been expanded through this year's budget?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'll try to answer several parts of the question that came from the member opposite.

First of all, the commitment that we made in our platform and that is now in the mandate letters is about new money. We're not talking about the existing money. It's a significant increase in the money.

We recognized that, as we announced during the campaign, it would have to build over time. It wasn't going to happen from day one. We stated that very clearly.

We need to build across all of our communities. It's not meant to be just Whitehorse-based; it would be across the Yukon. That includes building the dollars, investment, capacity, training, et cetera.

One of the other questions posed by the member was about — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I apologize, but I've just lost my train of thought.

Ms. White: I appreciate the effort. Yukoners want to do their part to support energy efficiency and renewable energy in the territory. Projects are popping up all over the Yukon. First Nation governments, community centres and also individuals are making major investments to wean themselves off of fossil fuels.

There is no doubt that these investments will pay off in the long run. They are environmentally and economically sound. Yet many people don't have the resources up front to make these investments that would benefit them and the government in the long run. Selling surplus energy from solar panels to the grid is great, but it won't help those who can't afford the money up front to install them in the first place. Will this government commit to using part of the \$30 million promised for energy retrofits to increase support with up-front costs for Yukoners who want to invest in renewable energy or energy efficiency for their homes?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to go back and I'll just try to help out my friend behind me here on one item. Yes, the \$1.6-million residential energy incentive program, which the previous government put in place — contractors love it, developers love it. It tends to work. We're going to stay committed to that.

It has been oversubscribed to previously and we're going to keep that good program in place. There is a lot that was put there and I know I don't have a lot of time to hit on it.

Yes, multiple communities are looking at projects. How do we support them? I think it's a combination between federal money and territorial money. As the \$30-million envelope, once in place or close to that — that new money — should we divert that over to the capital expenditures of new energy projects? I'm not sure. I think that is part of what we're thinking through our new innovative fund at Yukon Development Corporation. One year to do the governance piece — you will see in the budget as we roll it out \$5 million — I think that's the right place to get the dollars, but I think that the federal government will also have existing programs over and above the northern program. That might be a place to

go, but I'll take that under advisement. Should we be looking at that package as a place to move money? Potentially. I don't think that it has always been the practice to use those funds in that way, but we are seriously looking at all those communities — Old Crow, Burwash. We have interest from Watson Lake on geothermal and Carcross on wind.

Question re: Agriculture funding

Mr. Cathers: I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about the agriculture sector of the Yukon economy. As the minister knows, the Growing Forward 2 funding agreement with the federal government is coming near to the end of its life and it's expected to be replaced with a new agreement that I believe is to be signed later this year.

Can the minister please tell us the status of negotiations between the Yukon government and the federal government about the new agriculture funding agreement, including whether the federal government has fully shared its plan and negotiating position with the provinces and territories and, if so, what the details of the federal government's proposal look like?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: A little bit of background and context for those who are not aware — my friend across the way represents a tremendous amount of the agricultural sector and knows this file from his previous role, but the Canada-Yukon Growing Forward 2 agreement, which is in place right now and which is what we're leveraging funds from, is a commitment to Yukon's agricultural sector by federal and territorial governments to build the productivity, profitability and competitiveness of the agriculture industry.

Growing Forward 2 emphasizes investments — as will the 3, as he is alluding to — into innovation, market-based profitability, adaptability, and long-term sustainable growth. Those align with the Government of Yukon's commitment to move forward a greater degree of food self-sufficiency.

Just on the timing of this, the Government of Yukon is working toward securing a successor agreement to Growing Forward 2, which will cover the years 2018 to 2023. I look forward to meeting with my provincial counterparts and my territorial colleagues. The signing of this is going to be done in July. I think the date is July 20. It will take place in St. John's, Newfoundland.

As for specifics, I'm not at the negotiation table. Probably as you had done, I'm supporting the officials in the department to work through it, but there are even some conversations happening next week as well.

Mr. Cathers: I thank the minister for that answer, and I understand that he doesn't have all the information in front of him but I would ask if he can provide more specifics at a later date. That would be appreciated by me as well as by my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, last time during the negotiations, one of the things that the Yukon pushed for and successfully negotiated with the federal government was a change to the agreement that allowed us to use federal funding for infrastructure, which is not something that provinces typically can do.

I would just ask at this time whether the minister could tell us if the Yukon government has consulted with Yukon industry associations and agricultural industry associations — the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee — individual farmers, market gardeners, processors and retailers to discuss Yukon's priorities and whether changes are needed compared to what they were in the past. If those consultations haven't occurred, does the government plan to hold them and when?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I don't think I will have the ability to tell you about every one of those interactions, but certainly I think the key people we need to talk to are — first, we have the Yukon Agricultural Association. I will be attending their AGM on Friday night. The initial conversations with them were fantastic from some people in your riding. When you look at Steve MacKenzie-Grieve, who is a real commercial farmer — I am getting some really good guidance from him. If you look at agriculture production — first and foremost, the big priority for me was making sure that I could help them with the commercial growth of that. They requested from me — and maybe we will pre-empt this. I wanted to talk them tomorrow, but to answer your question, they said: "We need somebody specifically in the Department of Economic Development to help us with this. We have some cross-border opportunities." I think the officials at Economic Development have identified an individual who is going to specifically work on agriculture. That individual is going on to do their MBA later in the fall, so there will be a little bit of capacity building, but we are absolutely focused on that. I know what you are getting at when you talk about infrastructure building. I think that is a great point.

We have an opportunity here, but we have to get behind some specific farmers who are really growing quickly. That is really about food security. Not to take away from some of the smaller operations, but some of the people in your riding have the experience to do it — generational farmers. Any time you would like to share some comments with me and some wisdom, I am open to that.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the response from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and his willingness to work together on continuing to grow the Yukon agricultural sector. Like the minister, I will be attending the AGM of the YAA. As the minister knows, both the Yukon agriculture policy and the agriculture multi-year development plan are also due to be renewed and updated. Could the minister please tell us whether consultations with Yukon farmers and industry groups about the new Growing Forward agreement will include talking about the agricultural policy renewal and the multi-year development plan? If not, are those discussions scheduled separately and when might my constituents expect those consultations and discussions to occur?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, right now at this particular time, I don't have dates in front of me about the consultation piece. What has happened is that a series of members — essentially the Yukon Agricultural Association Board of Directors have asked me to go out to their properties and have some discussions. I think that is the key thing. Growing up in and around the farm industry, I think that is where you are

going to have the best discussions to really understand what the needs are. As for how we align that with the strategic plan forward, I know that we are just in the midst of — there are a couple of spots on the advisory board. The Yukon Agricultural Association and the Growers of Organic Food have put some names forward. I have accepted all of those recommendations. They are great, long-time Yukon farmers. I think once we have that group in a fulsome way, we will be having some discussions there. Certainly, there is some quick work in conversations that will continue just on that infrastructure piece. I think there are some existing policies that have been in place. I know that you probably had some challenges with this — the previous government — where we are looking at infrastructure that needs to be built, but some of the existing regulations and policy is not really conducive to farming, so almost overdoing it than what you're looking for with infrastructure.

That is a tremendous amount of costs that I don't want to see put onto farmers.

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. 201: *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 201, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, Ms. White.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful for the opportunity to address the budget.

We left off on Tuesday when I was talking about the importance of the Child Development Centre and how it's critical that a program like that runs for 12 months of the year as opposed to along the school calendar.

One thing that I really notice absent in the budget is any conversation about the disabled community. The more people I get to meet and the more lives I get welcomed into, the more I realize the challenges around how having a disability in the Yukon can really be a limiting factor in so many different ways.

Previously, using the end of the northern housing trust money, there was an accessibility grant that you could access through Yukon Housing Corporation and it was up to \$25,000. That was grant money, not loan money. That was when you made an application on how you want to change your house or what you need to make your life easier. Well, I had the good fortune of going through that application process with a friend of mine to get a wheelchair ramp built. For him and his family that was life-changing. His mobility was deteriorating and stairs were no longer safe.

We got the grant money, but it was done in such a way that he had to front the \$12,500 first to get to the 50 percent before the first payout and then had to cover it to get to the

last payout, so what it meant is that for any family accessing that money, it was really limiting. I talked about it in previous budget debates and I bring it up again because, although it was problematic and it was hard and a lot of the time it was based on my relationships with people in the community to be able to access and be able to hold and carry that money forward, that money doesn't exist in this budget any more. The accessibility grant money is gone and for the families who were able to access the \$400,000 in \$25,000 increments, it was life-changing because that wasn't money that they borrowed; that was money that they were given to make those changes.

So the wheelchair ramp that my friend has is spectacular and that brings me to the next point. His mobility has continued to deteriorate and now he has been told he can't walk, so now he has been given a prescription for a motorized scooter. Now I don't know if anyone in this Assembly has had the opportunity of trying to find medical equipment, but it is daunting, so when I was told that he needed a scooter, I thought, oh, my gosh, I don't even know where to start. Where do you even look?

I called the Council on Aging and I started to call around and I was really fortunate that I have — there are great people working at the Yukon Association for Community Living, and they host the Rick Hansen fund, but the Rick Hansen fund actually ran out. You had to make applications prior to last September.

When I contacted them, they said that their clients were really thrifty and they accessed money, but they gave money back, so if they got \$3,500 for a motorized scooter and it was only \$3,000, they returned the extra \$500 so there was money left over.

With their help, I was able to access \$1,200 but, even on sale, the scooter was still \$3,700. I had additional money to find. I'm lucky that my friend is a member of a First Nation. The first time he contacted them, he was told to contact the mining companies. I thought that if I have to go to a mining company with a letter in my hand — because he doesn't have the mobility to do it — I will go. He will sign the letter, but it will be me who physically takes the letter to the mining company, asking for help for a motorized scooter. That's kind of hard, and I have to put on a different hat. I go in and I'm not Kate White, Member of the Legislative Assembly or elected Member for Takhini-Kopper King. I'm going as the human.

I was lucky that the First Nation was able to cover the balance of the cost, but when people come to me for equipment, they're not necessarily guaranteed to be First Nation members, nor does their First Nation necessarily have the ability to pay the balance, nor will the Rick Hansen fund and the money there exist. So how do we, as the Yukon government, make sure that people who have disabilities still live full and complete lives? Medical equipment — my friend couldn't use a hand-powered wheelchair. He couldn't. If it was the only thing he was left with, he would be dependent on the people around him, and that's not okay.

For the first time in about a decade, my friend is now more independent than he has ever been. He has this scooter; it's pretty exciting seeing him use his ramp, which I didn't think we were going to see so soon. It has been incredible. There are many other community members who require this kind of equipment and we might not be able to find the pots of money to be able to do that.

You are going to have all sorts of different people with disabilities. You're going to have people who are incredibly active and, if their equipment is limiting their ability to participate in society, then we have to look at the cost to the health care system that is going to have to pick them up when they're really down. If anyone in this House is like me, I can tell you that adrenaline is how I function. It's how I deal with this job, it's how I get through the days — it's knowing that I'm going to go for a bike ride at the end or knowing that I'm going to get outside.

Within the disability community, specialized equipment is very expensive. If you don't have the means, how do you go about doing that? How do you fix that?

Recently, and definitely with some support from members of this House, I decided the world was crazy — I just had a birthday and I wanted to help a family get a wheelchair-accessible van. That's something else we don't cover. I get that. There are federal grant applications that you can make to help with making a vehicle accessible, but a quote from a company in Ontario for an entirely wheelchair-accessible van was \$45,000. That's a lot of money.

With help from the community, we're getting really close to helping that family get the van. That's really exciting, but is it up to the community to throw a fundraiser every second Saturday when another family comes forward to say, "Without this, we can't survive?" I don't know what the answer is. I know that, within the budget and the budget speech, we don't talk about the disability community. We don't talk about the continuance of housing. We don't talk about options, and we don't talk about choice.

For me, that is a concern. I'm just putting that out there, because I have learned a lot of things — having a seniors complex and understanding the importance of being able to use your bathroom independently. For the first two years, I talked about bathrooms all the time. I never thought I was going, but we got big changes, so congratulations to the Yukon Housing Corporation, which made those renovations. We shouldn't be putting people into units with bathtubs that are higher than my knee, but that's what we were building. We should be looking at building units in which you can age in place.

Removing those factors, I've learned that it makes way more sense to have the buttons on the front of a stove, because if you go from being able to walk to having to use a wheelchair — if they're on the front of the stove, you can reach them, but if they're behind the stove, you can't. Refrigerators — how those are set up.

It's great, because now the Yukon government is accessing the disability community with those conversations about how we build better buildings and how we make sure

they are accessible for longer. So that has been an improvement, but that is still an issue because we're still putting people in inadequate spots.

We can talk about access to housing. I'm sure you've been contacted now and things have changed. Sometimes I see some of our regular visitors visiting the office next door, and I think this is great because you're going to start to understand what we were dealing with.

One of the things I do most is I become a translator for government programs. How do you access housing? Well, you go through a seven-page application form where it asks you everything — where you have to get copies of your income tax, you have to get copies of your banking information, and you need to get all of these things. If it's not complete when you go for your appointment, you have to come back at a later date. They don't accept it. They don't take what you have right there and you don't bring back the additional information; you come again with the entire thing.

In my experience, it has taken an entire business day, with support from me and the individuals specifically as they're trying to go through the process, to get that information together. That's hoping that I haven't missed anything, because sometimes the mistake is mine and it's awful to know that I'm going to send that family back in for the second time.

We have all sorts of things happening. We have a record number of seniors on the wait-list for social housing. I have people right now living in parking lots and that is hard, because what can I say? I can say, "Okay, your pension cheque is going to come in at the end of the month, and maybe if we can find you something, then you can rent it because you'll have the deposit and you're on the list for housing. But you're not at the top of the list because you get \$32,000 a year so you're not in the greatest need. It doesn't matter that you're living in a parking lot; you are not in the greatest need." I have had to learn to say that this is the best that I can do. Sometimes when you have to say that, it is painful. It is painful. If I had a bigger house, if I had more room, I tell you — as it stands right now, sometimes it's a lot more full than my roommates would appreciate, but I'm always trying to figure out how to make that process better and how to help out with that.

We've talked about Housing First and I'm so glad to even hear the term "Housing First". I spent three years talking about Housing First. I spent years asking if housing was viewed as a human right because that fundamentally decides how you move forward and how you look at housing. If you don't believe that housing is a human right and you believe that somehow you're responsible for where you're at, then there's no way to address it. During the 2016 election when, in the Liberal platform, they talked about Housing First, I thought, "Hot dog, we've arrived". Someone other than us was talking about it. That's critical.

I'm so appreciative that it's included, but it can't be Housing First in four years. With recent events in the community, we can't say that it's okay to wait. We have the City of Whitehorse, we have Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an

Kwäch'an, and they're working really hard for vulnerable people. But they don't have our resources. They don't have our abilities to actually put money forward to help fix the problem.

So we have the old St. Elias group home site. I have a friend who lives in the new St. Elias group home and it's beautiful. Maybe it isn't where it was originally going to go, but it's fantastic. It's a facility that's designed for those residents to age in place, which is amazing because a lot of them had been together for 10 years already and they will continue to live there. They live in a family. It may be government-run, but that is a family.

We have the old St. Elias site and the government owns it. We know that the building is in poor shape. We know that it can't be used. We know that it was a temporary shelter that had very few vacancies over this winter.

My question is: What happens to that site next? When do we make that decision? If that is going to be where we put Housing First and if that's where government is going to say that this is how we're going to address vulnerable people in our society — we are going to give them a safe roof over their head and we are going to build in the services to help them overcome or not overcome, but let them live safely — then why can't it be in that site? When do we make that choice? Because if we say, "Well, you know, in 2020, that's when we're going to open those doors," I'm going to tell you that more deaths will happen, more families will feel loss, more communities will mourn, and that's not okay. If you give someone an option of going to someplace safe or you tell them, "Well right now, I'm sorry, you're going to have to figure it out," then we are putting people in vulnerable situations.

In 2011, I got elected out of Corrections and I worked in the women's facility. I said that the one thing I saw over and over again there is that when women got to the point where they were being released, their anxiety spiked because, although the men could go to the adult resource centre, women went back to where they came from. Although they may have been sober for three months, six months, nine months, a year or 18 months, when they came to their release date, do you know what happened? We said, "Good luck." Just prior to that, they would start reaching out — they would start contacting old friends. They would start trying to figure out where they were going to go because we had no programs in place to ease them back into society in the new way. I got to meet them, I got to hear stories and I got to hear how challenging it was. I asked over and over and over again, "Can we do something? Can we build something?"

We had the facility that I was in that's now Takhini Haven group home. It's a group home on the footprint of a correctional facility, and if you ask the residents where they live, they'll tell you they live at jail — but they don't. It's a building, a group home that I would love to see moved within the community — if they could be in a house and neighbourhood. It does not matter that some of those clients are on the Yukon Review Board, because being on the Yukon Review Board does not make you a criminal. It means that the

government is responsible for your health and well-being and we owe it to those residents to make them feel like part of a community.

But to be honest, at the bottom of College Drive, it doesn't feel very much like a community. It's in my riding — I see it all the time. I know where it is. I worked in the building for two years. I'm pretty familiar with the site.

When we talk about social inclusion and we talk about the importance of a society for everyone, the testament comes down for the most vulnerable, and how do we address the concerns of the most vulnerable?

We talk about access to sport. For three years after the Carmacks ice rink closed, we asked, "Are you going to put \$500,000 toward repairing that roof?" The community of Carmacks deserves recreation in winter. They deserve an ice rink and they made do. They built a rink across the river on the First Nation's land. They did all these things, but there is a facility there that, with a bit of repair, will be usable again. When we look at recreation, we need to look outside of the City of Whitehorse. It's not to say that I don't think we should have recreation within the city limits, but every community is entitled to those recreation opportunities. There is a little, tiny skate park in Haines Junction, in Kluane, and it's fantastic. It's really small, and if I used a skateboard instead of a bicycle, it would probably entertain me for much longer. But there are opportunities for us to build pump tracks for bicycles or small skate parks that are small financial investments, but huge investments in recreation for those communities.

The Singletrack to Success — I rode the trails before the program existed, and I have seen that growth but, more than that, I have seen these kids grow up through it. I've seen someone who started quite young, and now he is a supervisor and they're looking at expanding to Dawson City. This is a phenomenal thing and it gives pride of ownership, but it also encourages recreation.

Those kinds of things are important and we have to look outside the City of Whitehorse. It's also important to note that, although we were elected to represent our ridings — because we all were — we also work for the entire territory. I'm not just the elected Member for Takhini-Kopper King. I'm an elected member of the Yukon Legislative Assembly and my job is to deal with anyone who contacts me. I want us to look outside, because it's not just about Whitehorse.

I recently had an opportunity to have a conversation with a contractor. I learned a lot of things. We had a conversation here earlier. I told you it was really important that we have mediation or arbitration available in the procurement process; that we needed to be able to sit down around a table and hash out details or problems that were wrong before we said we were done with the contract process. He taught me something really cool. He called it the golden triangle. He said you have this triangle, and it's cost, time and quality. He said you can speed up or take away any of those things, but the other two will suffer. I am going to put this out there right now with the continuing care facility. I'm going to tell you right now that I assure you that I will never ride you about the timeline. If it takes longer to build than has been committed, but that means

the cost will stay down and the quality of the project will last, that is what I want. I don't want it to open knowing that this is a building that won't last for 25 years. I want to know that this is a facility that, when it opens, it will stand the test of time and will do what it needs to do.

When you stretch that triangle and you switch those angles around in a triangle, something will be lost, and it cannot be the quality of that project. It absolutely cannot be the quality of that project, because you inherited it. You inherited that decision, whether you wanted it or not. I want to make sure that I do my best to support you in making that the best facility possible.

Remember the triangle: cost, time and quality. As soon as you adjust the schedule on one of those, the quality will be what is affected. I want to make sure the quality is what we are guaranteed at the end. Please, don't rush through projects. If you come into the Legislative Assembly and you say, look, it was cold this winter, the ground froze, things were crazy, and we didn't want to pour concrete when it was minus 30 — that is valid. What is not valid is pushing it forward at all costs and sacrificing the quality to try to keep up with that timeline. Please remember that triangle.

The Skookum Jim youth shelter was a conversation, if you can imagine, where it took almost 2.5 years for that to happen from when I was elected. Prior to that, youth used to go to ADS. They would have to change their clothes, they would have to leave all their possessions behind, and then they would be taken upstairs in the ADS building.

As you might imagine — I'm sure it's not hard to imagine — there wasn't a lot of uptake there, because it didn't feel like a safe place. Youth did everything they could to not go to that facility.

We supported the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre in opening the youth shelter, and that's amazing. It is busy there, but there's a problem with it. It's not with that facility, per se, but it's a problem with our continuum, which is that you need to be 17 years old to stay there. If you need emergency shelter as a young person, you need to be at least 17 years old. What happens if you're 12, or 13, or 14, or 15? What happens then?

Right now, that is happening in our community. What we are doing is forcing young people into couch surfing. We are forcing them into really precarious and unsafe situations because they are looking for a place to stay. How do we address the housing emergency for people under the age of 17? It happens — it's even happening within our group homes. We need to find out a way to answer that question. I don't know what the answer is, other than the fact that we need safe beds made available for people who are under 17 if they require it. That is really important.

There is the whole species at risk legislation. I talked a lot about species at risk legislation in the 33rd Legislative Assembly. I am hoping that when I bring it up in the 34th, it is not going to have to be quite so regularly. We signed on to an agreement that said that we would create species at risk legislation for the territory. We should. I would like to see it soon. Maybe in the fall — that would be great. We could have some good legislative debate about species at risk legislation,

but that has to happen. We made a commitment as Yukon. We haven't fulfilled it. We signed on to that agreement in 2009. I would like to see species at risk legislation.

We had changes here for the *Lands Act*. We made other changes so that we could protect sensitive environmental areas in the shoulder season from off-road vehicles. We made those changes. When I would pressure the previous government about when they were actually going to identify those spots even for interim protection, I was always told that we were going to have to wait. We are going to wait. We are going to have to wait. The problem is that with waiting, the damage continues to happen. It was great to hear at one point in time when the minister said, "Well, how do you identify these vehicles without registration?" I would love to have that conversation. If we looked at registering off-road vehicles in the Yukon instead of saying, "the red ATV with the guy in the yellow jacket", we could say, "licence plate number XYZ." That would go a long way to helping with enforcement and protection of sensitive areas. I look forward to that conversation and doing my part in helping with that.

We need to protect wild spaces, because the farther we push out, the farther the animals go and the worse it happens. In some situations, you can see the damage now on satellite images. You can see that what was once pristine is now covered in tracks. I mean, if it's okay with you, that's one thing, but it's not okay with me.

We are excited to hear about the positions for mental health workers in the territory, because having two people cover outside of Whitehorse is not acceptable. We heard today from the Member for Watson Lake where she talked about the challenges in her community for people in accessing alcohol and drug services. It is interesting because we had brought that forward before. In my previous trips to Watson Lake, I met people who had come in to ADS and went through the program and returned to their community. They were hitchhiking back in because they wanted to get to detox. Do we think that is acceptable? Is that okay with us? Are we okay with that? I don't know. Is there an answer? Am I saying that we need to build a facility in every community? I don't know — but can we make services available? Can we make transportation available? Can we somehow make that process for someone trying really hard to make changes in their life — can we make it easier? I would like to think so. What I learned when I was in Corrections is that if you release someone from the communities on a Friday, there was a distinct possibility that when you came back to work on Monday, they might be there.

You can't ask a family and you can't ask a community to make sure that someone is picked up if they don't have the capacity to do that. But it's our responsibility to make sure that someone gets back to their community — it is. It's the same thing with ADS, it's the same thing with medical travel, and it's the same thing with corrections. We have a responsibility to make sure that people get back to where they can be safe and we don't just let them out, because that's what we've done. That has been our previous decisions, with

Corrections, with the hospital and with ADS. Those things need to change.

There are some great things. There are great things that have been proposed across the way. National Aboriginal Day — I might have an opportunity to talk about that later today — that makes me really happy. The amount of people — when we talked about it last year and we circulated a petition and we had a placard for people to take pictures, they couldn't believe that it actually wasn't a statutory holiday — that we would celebrate Discovery Day and we would have Family Day and Rendezvous, but we did not have National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday. That was a hard one to explain.

With the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, that's a beautiful way to start it. That's a beautiful way to say to everyone in the territory that I hope you have the opportunity to do this, and if you don't — I used to own a coffee shop; I used to own a small business and statutory holidays weren't bad for me. We were pretty busy and I paid more, but it didn't harm my business. People came and they probably came more because more people had the time off. Even when we talked about it and even when small businesses responded, they said that they understood the importance of National Aboriginal Day and they would figure it out. That's beautiful.

When the changes came forward to the *Vital Statistics Act* and the *Human Rights Act* to make sure that every person in our territory was afforded the same rights as the others — as everyone round them — that was amazing. The one thing that I have heard from the LGBTQ community is that they were concerned that we were the last jurisdiction in Canada to do it and they wondered why they had to fight so hard. That's great. It's great to know that they will be afforded the same rights as their friends and their families. That's great.

One way we can move forward at addressing that is starting to look at new construction. We can start looking at building public buildings in a different way. Bathrooms don't need to be gendered. You don't need a men's washroom and women's washroom. You need doors. You can have a big room with 15 doors and communal sinks and I can tell you, it works. Every time I go down south and I see one of these bathrooms and I think, oh man, my friend wouldn't stress out here — could use whatever bathroom they wanted without having to be like, "Is someone going to challenge me if I go into the one I feel safest in?" I know that for the trans community, bathrooms are actually pretty stressful. They're pretty stressful. I didn't know this, but I have since learned that often a social outing is based totally on how long you can be away from home, because using a bathroom can be really stressful — picking the spot where you're going to feel safest is going to be really stressful.

How do we get rid of it? We get rid of gender. You need a toilet, you need a sink. We can share sinks. I would be happy to share sinks with all of you. It has to change. We have to look at it that way. We have to look at making sure our schools and our government buildings are inclusive. There is one gender-inclusive washroom up here, because it doesn't

have a man or a woman. It has a toilet and a wheelchair. But it's up here and it's a bit of a ways away and maybe you would feel vulnerable if that's where you had to go.

We need to look at doing things like that better and we need to make sure that we're protecting the people around us. I have it pretty easy and most of you in this room have it pretty easy, but it's not about us; it's about making sure that the most vulnerable people in our population also have it easy.

This is what happens, Mr. Speaker, when you have your notes all over the counter and you haven't really put them into an order.

We know we got to hear the Minister of Community Services today talk about how families were important and children were important. Well, an early childhood strategy and one that makes sense for families is going to be critically important. I use my little sister. She totally knows I talk about her in here so it's okay. But my little sister and her husband both work. My sister drives a bus now because — did you know the most family-friendly company in the entire territory is actually the bus company? My little sister takes her two preschool-aged children with her to work and they ride on the bus with their mother every day. She has made them little reflective vests and they go to work with their mother every day because her family can't afford daycare. Two full-time positions in daycare — it's unaffordable for them and they both have jobs. They work. I mean, they're not living large. If you were to meet my sister, her husband and their three kids, you would understand that they do a really good job living within their means, but daycare is unaffordable.

It's important that we don't even look at daycare as "daycare". Daycare is early childhood education, and every child should have the right to early childhood education because it's all about development and it's about growth. When we limit a person's ability to have their children participate, if they so choose, then we're limiting that ability for that child to grow. It's an important thing to look at because we also lose skilled people out of the workforce because they have had to make the choice to either work or stay home, and sometimes staying home is the easiest answer — although it might not be the easiest answer.

Having midwifery in the mandate letter — knowing that we're going to look at having that by the end of 2018 is fantastic. Previously when we asked questions about midwifery, a person from a community accessing a midwife coming into town would have to pay the medical travel because it was not viewed the same as visiting with a doctor. Families were paying out of pocket to come into Whitehorse to visit with their midwife, although they would have had to come into Whitehorse to visit with their doctor because babies are still not born in communities. How is that a thing? So knowing that we're going to have midwifery legislated in this Assembly for the end of 2018 is amazing. It's levelling the playing field. It's allowing people to make choices. We had great tributes today about midwifery. It's true. It's about choice. It's about decisions and it's about women being able to make the best choice for themselves. I'm looking forward to that.

I was happy to see the increase to the youth organizations because youth organizations have had stagnant money for quite awhile. It's good to see that's increasing, but there are challenges within those NGOs because they're trying really hard to fill the gaps of government. The only reason I know right now that there are kids under 17 who are homeless is because of people working the front lines of those NGOs. If it weren't for those front-line workers, we would never know what some of the realities are in Whitehorse and Yukon. That's a specific Whitehorse story, but that's super challenging. How do we change that?

It was great to see in yesterday's paper about the two transitional housing units in Ross River — for when those houses are getting refurbished.

But there was a promise in 2016 that the housing crisis in Ross River would be addressed, and two units at a time when 47 have been deemed uninhabitable — it is not enough.

Mr. Speaker, I thank everyone for this opportunity. I really look forward to budget debate. For all the new ministers, you have a decision to make — if you want to engage or not. I hope you choose to engage, because 20-minute responses to a 35-second question gets really old really fast.

If we have the ability to go back and forth and talk about things, you'll be so impressed by how far we can go, because the questions coming from this side of the House aren't about catching you up. They are about trying to make things better for people in Yukon.

I thank you for this opportunity, I thank you for all your statements, and I look forward to budget debate and in future years.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the honourable member for her comments. I think they were food for thought for all of us, and we will continue to learn from all of the former members and current members of this Legislative Assembly and we look forward to doing so.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and my colleagues for the opportunity to speak to the 2017-18 Yukon government budget presented last Thursday in this House by the Premier. I rise for the first time in this budget process to speak to it, and it is my honour and privilege to do so.

The Yukon Liberals said repeatedly during the election — and as the Yukon government, during all of our work to date, and in this House — that we intend to work collaboratively with all the members of the House to make lives better for Yukoners. Many of the comments I have heard recently and during previous days give me hope that we will actually be able to do that.

To that end, I thank the honourable members who have already had the opportunity to speak, and those who will speak, to this budget for their thoughtful comments and for their ideas. As my colleagues here know, I was brought to this House by the Riverdale South riding. It's an amazing and rather unique place to call home. It's an established, yet diverse, neighbourhood.

People who live there are like Yukoners from any other community. There are lots of children, single parents, multi-generational and smaller families; there are elders; there are new Canadians; old-time Yukoners and newcomers. Every one of them will be touched by something in this budget.

Part of my job during the budgeting process was to respect their interests and the interest of all Yukoners — I take the honourable member's point on that — and give voice to their concerns in determining how government needs to work for them, understanding what those concerns are and speaking about them at the table. On many occasions, there are sleeves rolled up, trying to figure out what we should be doing.

I have promised them and have been sent here to work hard on behalf of them and all Yukoners, and I stand here proud of that commitment.

I'm going to take a second to thank my family and friends for their endless support and understanding. As everyone who has done this job, even for a short period of time, knows, being a member of the government and of this House takes a toll on relationships. It is wrong, but the demands on your time mean that your family and friends regularly take a back seat and they don't have you in the everyday moments of their lives as much as they or you might like. This commitment is one that they make as well, when we decide to go down this road.

This first budget of this new Liberal government is groundbreaking. It represents a new direction for government of transparency and accountability, and I look forward to us discussing it and having real conversations about how these decisions came about and what they will mean for Yukoners. It illustrates fiscal responsibility and innovation and responsibility. It shows how we are to meet our commitments to make Yukoners' lives better. We've been clear in stating our enduring priorities or our guiding principles, and we've repeated them many a time.

Our government is working with all Yukoners to make their lives better. We're focused on creating jobs and strengthening a diversified economy and protecting our environment — all critical. We're working collaboratively, we hope, in this House and government-to-government to ensure that all communities in the Yukon continue to grow and thrive. I particularly appreciate the comments during this budget debate with respect to the communities and the representation of members of this House of their home communities or of other communities and their dedication to those. It's important for all of us to remember that, which is why it's an important piece for the Yukon Liberals to say and repeat that all communities matter. Communities in the Yukon, hopefully, under this budget — our cooperative approach focuses to ensure that all communities in the Yukon continue to grow and thrive as we move forward and make responsible investments in programs and services that lead to healthy, productive and happy lives for Yukoners.

After 14 years of promises with shine but only some substance, we will do what we said we were going to do with real measurable results for Yukoners. As the Leader of the

Third Party so aptly said the other day during her address, actions speak louder than words. We agree.

Yukon is currently facing many challenges, but there are positive changes on the horizon that will be led by this budget and other initiatives. Making Yukoners' lives better means more than just encouraging capital projects, although this budget has plenty of that — as outlined by my colleagues, and I won't repeat them — but for happy, healthy lives, we need more.

I recently had a number of very meaningful experiences that brought that home to me again as I was thinking about addressing this House. I had the honour of attending the Yukon Special Olympics' banquet, where I was so inspired by the athletes, coaches, families and friends, as I am every year. It's one of my favourite events in the year. They show us how important encouragement in sport, competition and friendship is to our lives. The Special Olympics motto is one that we would all do well to remember — maybe not so important in here — but it is: "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

I was also recently at the Skills Canada competition and banquet, where I witnessed the young future of our workforce. Trades and technologies must be supported and encouraged. We must recognize that the growth of trades and technology means the growth of our economy. The experts who work in the trades and areas of technology make endless contributions to our everyday way of life.

At the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees — the AYSCBC, an acronym I might actually have now in my brain — we heard about the educational experiences, among other things, of four former students. They were all First Nation young adults — three from Vuntut Gwitchin and one from Carcross. They described their stories and experiences within the education system and the individuals who influenced them. We learned so much and can learn so much from knowing and understanding their learning journeys. It will help us to do better.

The Rotary Music Festival's showcase of music, dance and voice also reminds us of the importance of the continued development and support of arts and culture in the territory. Arts and culture enhance our lives as Yukoners. While the Rotary Club of Whitehorse has been a leader in supporting our amazing talent here in the territory by hosting the Rotary Music Festival for 49 years — I had to think about the ages of the kids who were in that first one and how old they would be now, and it scared me a little. The arts and culture in our community are important to our lives although it hasn't always been a priority for the Yukon government. We hope to make that change inherent — it has to be adopted and I know my colleagues believe that as well.

Our goal is a growing, prosperous economy as well as vibrant communities. All of these organizations that I have mentioned and the great honour I have had in attending these events — all of these organizations and programs contribute to a better, happier, richer way of life for all of us.

Yukoners are very hospitable people. They are always prepared to share their way of life. Newcomers can come to

the Yukon to follow their dreams, be they in mining, sports, conservation, arts, trades, professions, farming or as inventors — whatever they may be. Yukon is the land of opportunity and it has afforded many of us — even many of us here in this House who came chasing one of their dreams — a chance to grow, thrive and give back to our communities. I, myself, have had too many opportunities to count to work both in the justice and educational arenas and other parts of the community as a volunteer and for other things that I believe in. Now here I am with the ultimate opportunity to participate in shaping our priorities in those areas for Yukoners — of justice and education.

Our priorities in Justice initiatives include — and this is by no means an exhaustive list, but there are some things I want to point out today and in relation to the budget. I will work with the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and our community partners to improve services for victims of violence and sexual assault. We will also conduct a review of legislation, policies and practices to ensure non-discrimination for the LGBTQ-two-spirit communities. We will develop alternative correctional therapeutic environments for individuals with disabilities, mental health and addictions problems. There is — while maybe not indicated — new money in the budget. There are programs that we will support in the current departments to do this. We are working with Health and Social Services on these priorities at the Department of Justice.

We will engage with Yukon First Nations to develop culturally relevant programming for offenders. This was promised — I read it myself in Hansard — upon the opening of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre in 2012, but it is a goal that has not yet been adequately achieved. A small piece of that will be completing a consultation, and there is \$20,000 in this current budget for that consultation to be completed so we can move this project forward.

Part of my job is to improve access to legal services and protect the public's interest by preparing updates to the *Legal Profession Act* and regulations — another priority that has been on the books for more than 10 years — actually for 13 years. That will happen this fall. There is \$820,000 in this budget to implement the land titles modernization project and to complete it. It has been going on for a bit and is really an opportunity to modernize that project, which will affect all Yukoners and a lot of Yukon businesses and developers. It's an important piece of how our land is dealt with.

It's essential for me to note here that, for the first time ever, we anticipate that our Land Titles Office will issue a certificate of title for a Kwanlin Dün First Nation category A or category B settlement land as a result of a consent amendment to the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Self-Government Agreement*. This will mean that land owned by the Kwanlin Dün First Nation can be registered, opening up opportunities for development. They are leaders with this partnership project, and we hope other First Nations may find this a useful option for some of their settlement land. This was done

without any expense to our government, the First Nation or Canada. It was built on positive relationships and goodwill.

There's \$11,000 in the budget for the continuation of the Lynx project, which is a project that supports children who come into contact with the court system, whether they are witnesses or victims. This project makes that experience better for children.

This budget contains \$489,000 to enhance programs and services for victims, including the expansion of training for victim services workers. We know that the response by the first person who a victim discloses to, particularly victims of sexualized violence, dramatically affects the trajectory of the situation and how the victim experiences the days, weeks and months to come, and ultimately how they recover. We must address this with a one-government approach so that, no matter where a victim turns, she or he will find comfort, empathy and meaningful assistance.

This budget also supports and provides additional funding for the Human Rights Commission of \$72,000, a one-time funding this year based on a request, and funding for Yukon legal aid of \$200,000.

Other investments include the Community Wellness Court and the Justice Wellness Centre, which was started as a pilot project in 2007 and has been running and funded as a pilot now for some 10 years. This program has been very successful, resulting in an almost 70-percent reduction in recidivism rates for offenders who have gone through this program to deal with what were very high rates of re-offending.

We all know that, in order to plan and continue to evolve and meet the needs of the community, secure funding is required. It is our government's intention to pursue that. This budget allocates an additional \$100,000 to the court this year, being the last year of the third pilot project. Permanent funding for this project is being pursued.

The honourable member spoke eloquently this afternoon of re-integration for people leaving the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, Alcohol and Drug Services or the hospital, both women and men, and we also believe this is a priority. It will be a focus for Justice in the coming months — how we can make that integration back to their community better for the individuals, for their families and for their communities and help them to be successful.

Moving to Education, the priorities that I will mention — again, not an exhaustive list — but some of them that are evident in the budget are as follows. One of the key priorities, which is coming quickly and is well underway, is implementing the new student-centred Yukon version of the revised BC school curriculum from kindergarten to grade 12. In 2017, kindergarten to grade 9 will be implemented. There is \$472,000 in this budget to make that happen.

We'll complete the planning and begin the construction for a new French first language high school. There is \$8 million dedicated to that project in this budget. As part of that initiative — and I want to stress this — we've promised to properly complete the F.H. Collins Secondary School, including remedying significant deficiencies that still exist,

and \$2.9 million has been put in this budget to complete that work for students and staff. For some reason, the grounds work at F.H. Collins campus was either not done at all or completed with serious problems. The completion of that work must be done as soon as possible and we have dedicated \$2 million to that end.

As well, \$474,000 will be spent to provide for annual intake into Yukon College's licensed practical nursing program — something that was considered by the former government and is a good idea. Other work at Yukon College's learning commons and electrical system on that campus is also being completed — again something started before we were here, but certainly worthy to be finished at this time.

In her remarks the other day, the Member for Porter Creek North posed some excellent questions, all of which I look forward to addressing as we proceed through the budget process in the House. Her questions were particularly — not all, but the ones that I'm keen to discuss with her are about education. I value her insights and look forward to working together for Yukon education.

Our government is focused on cultivating a one-government approach with a view to removing silos — removing silos in caucus, in Cabinet, between departments, between divisions inside departments, and between government staff. The process of developing this budget was done as a one-government approach to get a full picture of how funds are actually being spent. For example, youth programs are funded by several different departments, making it overly complicated for applicants and difficult for government to coordinate funding or even know what's being spent as a big picture. A one-government, coordinated approach will address these issues in this and in future budgets.

Our team is very proud to support the leadership of the Premier as our new Finance minister. His leadership and that of his department in the development of this budget has been illustrative of government operating as he believes it should — and as we all believe. He listened, included caucus in wider conversations to set priorities and painstakingly reviewed every decision with Cabinet in determining expenditures. His expectations were high of government staff, officials and of us all — as they should be. The process was wise and innovative with a commitment to gathering the best information possible for every decision and making them based on the evidence.

It's possible — and perhaps we will be criticized for something like the small business tax, reducing it at this time from three percent to two percent. But when we looked at the numbers, it became apparent that more information and further exploration of the effect of the reduction was needed. In particular, we needed to ask if eliminating the tax at this time would provide benefit to the Yukoners that it was intended for. We needed more information. We have promised to make evidence-based decisions and that too is a commitment — one that is over-arching to all other commitments, in my view, and one that must guide every other decision. I promised the people of Riverdale South —

and we all promised the people of the Yukon — to make the best decisions we can on their behalf with the best information we have at the time. If the information we have changes, we will review our decisions and update them as well.

Canada — and particularly the Yukon — is unique in the world. When other parts of the world are closing ranks and becoming less tolerant, we continue to evolve and progress with such innovations as: making National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday; new laws to support the LGBTQ-two-spirit community and to protect their rights; modernization of regulations for pharmacists and midwives; support of nurse practitioners; innovations in housing, home care, medical care, clean energy, communication infrastructure; access to information; reduced government red tape; access to training and education — all designed to make the lives of Yukoners better.

Before I end my remarks, I want to make one statement to address the statement from the Official Opposition that seemed to say that this government does not understand or appreciate the staff and officials of the public service. I was offended by that suggestion because us not having faith and respect for the public service is simply not true. Our relationship with the public service is characterized by openness, listening, learning and mutual respect. I hope the honourable member will restrict his future comments to topics on which he has some facts. His assumptions and insinuations were simply not true. We've been working with every public service staff and official, and our relationship has been really characterized by mutual respect.

Mr. Speaker, I'm truly honoured to work with the staff and the officials of the Department of Justice and the Department of Education and with the one-government approach to the other members of staff and officials whom I've had the honour of working with in the other departments.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this address today.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to begin by saying thank you for the opportunity to speak as the MLA for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I'm very pleased to get a chance to speak to the budget today. I would just like to follow a little bit on the words of our House Leader to say that we have been working hard — as it should be. It has been a really great process to get to work with the department officials and with colleagues. I'm pleased that we're now here in the Legislature to start to discuss the budget and I am pleased with the budget itself.

I would like to state clearly that it's my impression — our impression — that when we took over the reins of government, we inherited some very significant fiscal challenges.

I would like to talk about red and black for a moment. I would like to discuss deficit and surplus, debt and savings. I would like to discuss our financial situation and when I say "our" financial situation, I don't mean the Yukon Liberal government, but rather I mean the financial situation of the territory.

Days after the November 2016 election, we had our very first briefing with the Department of Finance officials. Before we had been sworn in, before a Cabinet had been chosen and before the outgoing government had even vacated its office, we got our first look at the fiscal framework. It was deeply disconcerting. From that first day, we recognized that the projected surplus was already a deficit, so we rolled up our sleeves. We started to dig into the finances. We asked questions, and the more we pulled back the curtain, the more resolved we became. Not only were we in a deficit but, as we dug down into the departments, we started to identify many budget line items that had been one-time for many years. In simple terms, this meant that these line items were being paid for but not accounted for as expenditures in future years. This type of short-term budgeting risks turning a deficit into a structural deficit.

Then we came across large budget line items which had not been appropriately costed in future years. The 2016-17 budget indicated that we should be in surplus. Instead it was a deficit. We, as a government, got to work making hard decisions to control expenditures. In doing so, we turned last year's deficit into a slim surplus for 2017-18. We turned it from red to black.

At the same time, we told all departments to ensure that the cost estimates being used were accurate — neither overprojections nor underestimates. We asked for the best estimates based on the best data and the best understanding of the budget items. Based on that direction, we looked at the fiscal projection. It showed large deficits starting in 2018-19, so we decided to share these numbers with this Legislature, respectfully and with the citizens of the Yukon.

For a moment, let me use some actual expenditures to illustrate the situation. Here are some operation and maintenance costs that were not budgeted for previously: \$2.2 million for continuing care beds in the Thomson Centre and McDonald Lodge; \$3.5 million for new teachers who were hired last year before we took office; and \$4 million for an increase in pensions to the Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon College. This already comes to nearly \$10 million in costs, year-over-year, that weren't in the budget.

Now let's add in the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. We were briefed that the future budget projection for O&M was originally woefully underestimated by the previous government. The current estimate is \$36 million per year. Yesterday, department officials from the Department of Finance stated publicly that the previous government had not accounted for the true ongoing costs of the continuing care facility — and I quote: "It wasn't \$28 million annually, it was \$20 million over the four years. That's why we say that there was just a small fraction of the annual costs."

The operation and maintenance costs of this one project represent an unaccounted swing in the budget of over \$30 million. I have to say that when we uncovered this situation, I was astounded. Then add new budget pressures for Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, CanNor, local area network upgrades for our rural communities — which are all great by the way — and suddenly the jump in

operation and maintenance is well over \$40 million. That is year over year — all spending that pre-dates our arrival. If you add these costs and projections to the previous government's 2016-17 budget, which I have here, then it too would have been showing a significant deficit in future years.

For a moment, I would like to turn to capital spending projections. I realize that the back and forth from the government's side to the opposition side is never as transparent as we would like, but here it is in black and white. I have the government's Budget Address from 2016-17, and I am looking at the long-term plans. Under that, I look at capital expenditures where it says 2017-18 projected estimate, I see it listed as \$215 million. Whereas, this year we have projected that we will be spending \$243.5 million, or a difference of \$28.5 million. For 2018-19, the previous government had here in black and white a projection of spending of \$175 million. We projected that as \$220 million. The difference is \$45 million. From those years forward — from 2018-19 to 2019-20 — the difference again is \$45 million. In that comparison, what we are able to show is that the previous government, who has been criticizing us for not having enough capital expenditure in our budgets and for not moving fast enough or spending enough money on capital expenditures, they had budgeted for a lower capital budget in out-years. If you add these costs and projections to the previous government's 2016-17 budget, then it too would have been showing a significant deficit in future years.

Adding up those two — \$45 million in operation and maintenance costs, which are ongoing, and \$45 million in projected capital spending costs, which are sitting in black and white in front of us and which we can't dispute — then we end up with a \$90-million difference per year. That is the difference that we are talking about. This past Monday, the Member for Lake Laberge stated that we as a government had — and I quote: "... inherited the rosiest financial situation that any new government in the territory's history has ever had on taking office." I respectfully disagree. As we took office, the territory was already heading for future-year deficits and/or deep cuts in capital spending — both actually. We inherited a red-ink picture, and the only silver lining is that we identified the situation and are now working to turn it around here in the Legislature.

I understand that the opposition's perspective is that, as government, we need to take responsibility for these future-year deficits, and I agree with them. I disagree with what caused this deficit and where it is rooted; however, I agree that we were elected to govern the finances of the Yukon. I also agree with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, who stated that it is our job to move forward. It is our job to steer us away from a deficit. It is our responsibility.

We decided that the best course of action was: (1) work to bring this year's budget back into a modest surplus, which we did; (2) share an understanding of the full cost estimates in this Legislature and with the public, which we are doing right here and now; and (3) restructure the Department of Finance to better inform fiscal planning and create an independent

expert Financial Advisory Panel, which are the next steps. For me, this is responsible fiscal management.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I listen to the members of the Official Opposition, each one outlined their belief that we were spending too much money — far too much money. At the same time, each one also criticized us for not spending more. I heard requests for more spending in hospitals, Meditech, sports, expansion of cell service, brushing, road maintenance, land development, information centres, a marina and more infrastructure. The overall message I heard was: spend more, you are spending too much.

They have been pressing us to spend more money on infrastructure when they told us that they would spend approximately \$28.5 million less this year alone, based on their past budget. The Member for Watson Lake let us know yesterday that, when it came to her community, and I quote: "We have seen almost no investment for a number of years." Again I quote: "We have seen almost no investment for a number of years."

Let me again reassure her that we are investing in her community. We care about Watson Lake. For example, we have budgeted just under \$12 million for infrastructure in Watson Lake this year. We are investing \$10 million in Pelly-Nisutlin this year, and \$12 million for infrastructure in the communities of the Kluane riding this year.

As the Premier stated, all communities matter. Overall, this budget is investing \$310 million in capital projects this year across all our communities. All communities matter. This budget is our first step toward partnering with municipalities and First Nation governments. We are emphasizing local solutions to local problems.

I have been tasked with helping municipalities have predictable levels of funding, including structural fire protection. We put that into this budget and, next week, I will be sitting down with all municipalities at the Association of Yukon Communities annual general meeting to discuss the comprehensive municipality branch going forward. I look forward to seeing many from the Legislature there.

Through this budget, we are putting \$2.1 million toward solid waste and recycling diversion. We are committed to working with municipalities and all communities and our partners in waste diversion — the chambers, the processors, the haulers. In fact, I believe our solid-waste working group is meeting again this week. We will collaborate with our community partners to create a standardized system for the Yukon with shared responsibility, waste reduction, financial sustainability, environmental health, and economic benefit.

With respect to our budget contributions to sports, I would like to thank all members of Legislature for their strong support for sport, recreation and culture. The Yukon is stronger when our young people have hope and confidence. Sport and recreation is a way of investing in active and vibrant lifestyles.

Overall, I'm happy to report that sport funding is up this year. The operation and maintenance budget is increasing by 14 percent to \$5.9 million. As well, we have identified an additional \$220,000 for youth groups and an additional

\$60,000 for Singletrack to Success, which has been doing great work in the community of Carcross, plus we have earmarked \$2.5 million for the F.H. Collins track.

As part of that \$5.9 million, there is nearly \$1 million for games this year, including the Canada Summer Games and the North American Indigenous Games. This money will reach out to youth from across the territory, from all communities.

By the way, just in comments to the member opposite from Takhini-Kopper King, I have been sitting down with all communities to talk about their sport infrastructure needs. We have talked to Carmacks about their rink, we've talked to Dawson about their rec centre roof, and we've talked to Carcross about their skateboard park. When it comes to all infrastructure — noting the needs to have planning with infrastructure and when I have spoken previously about the clean water and waste-water fund — our strategy is to plan over time so that the money is well invested.

All communities matter. In Protective Services, we have \$650,000 for four new ambulances, \$1.5 million for four new fire trucks, \$120,000 to enhance emergency measures services for e-patient care, and \$150,000 for an additional wildland fire crew this year.

I have had questions from members opposite about where those ambulances are going. My understanding is that it's a formula based on the age of the ambulances, so I don't have the answer at this date. I will get it at some point and I will be happy to share it as soon as I hear it.

I have also been sitting down with First Nation development corporations to have conversations about some of those wildland fire crews. We invested in some training with them this year and we're looking forward to expanding the service with them. We think this is a great way to get more of our communities engaged around Protective Services.

We're also investing \$100,000 into a case management system for the Employment Standards and Residential Tenancies office. We're adding \$90,000 for our Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs office. Both of these are there to reduce red tape and to increase services to our citizens.

We have \$360,000 that we are putting toward asset management. This is to try to ensure that the \$310 million that we are investing into capital projects this year as an infrastructure investment will mean that this infrastructure will last over time. It is very important that we look at how we ensure that our investments in infrastructure last. We are working in partnership with municipalities and First Nation governments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with respect to the Yukon Liquor Corporation, we have been working to improve the efficiency and operations and are already seeing that this investment is starting to pay off. This year, we are working to support the growth of our local producers, reviewing our pricing policies and working on social responsibility.

With respect to the French Language Services Directorate, we are super excited to get a new agreement with the federal government to support our French language services. This is especially with respect to access to health

care. It's a tremendous investment and we are very excited about it. Over the next three years, we are building to triple the previous agreement. It won't happen this year, but it will build up to triple what it has been.

I want to read here a couple of quotes from AFY — the Association franco-yukonnaise. I quote: "AFY will continue to position itself as a privileged partner of the Yukon government with respect to French language services in the territory". That's from president of AFY, Angélique Bernard. I continue with the quote: "The last few years have been characterized by a number of positive developments; the future looks even more promising for the Yukon Francophone community".

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the work that was done by the past government under Ms. Elaine Taylor. I know that the French community speaks highly of her work and we are happy to build on that work. Thank you.

All communities matter. My own community of beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes is excited about our investments in home care, land-based healing, work on the Nares bridge, the \$1.5 million for innovation in renewables and the Carcross learning centre, and that we've doubled our regional economic development funds to \$800,000 and also that we are focusing on aging in place and working in all of our communities to support that.

I am very excited to have been part of working on this budget. I'm very excited that we are here today to present it to you and I look forward to us passing the budget.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate it.

I would like to take the time to recognize all of the hard work that has gone into the budget that is before us. I also want to thank the officials from the Department of Finance for their work on the budget.

This budget document offers a different way of doing things — two main differences from previous governments as far as delivering the budget. It accounts fully for known O&M commitments that are on the horizon — for example, taking into account the \$36 million that it will cost to run the Whistle Bend facility. The budget we are debating also includes the annual economic forecasts. We intend to issue this forecast every year. Previously, there was no real schedule to the release of the forecast. Sometimes it happened in the spring; sometimes it happened in the fall. I believe there was one year where it wasn't released at all.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is guided by our top-line commitments to Yukoners. Our government is working with all Yukoners to make their lives better. We are focused on creating jobs, strengthening and diversifying the economy, and protecting the environment. We are working collaboratively, government-to-government, to ensure that all communities in the Yukon continue to grow and to thrive. As we move forward, we are making responsible investments in programs and services that lead to healthy, productive and happy lives for all Yukoners.

Our collaborative, government-to-government approach has set a new positive tone and we are already making progress with our First Nation partners, with the federal government and with our provincial and territorial counterparts. We are holding the Yukon Forum on a regular basis. Our meetings with the Government of Canada and Yukon First Nation governments has set the stage for positive growth going forward. We have secured millions of dollars for mental health and home care and the new health accord. We have signed on to the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change* and signed a trade deal that will see a reduction in trade barriers.

We have met with our federal counterparts, Prime Minister Trudeau, Finance Minister Morneau, Infrastructure Minister Sohi, Natural Resources Minister Carr, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Minister Bennett and others. We have seen the results of these meetings in the 2017 fall budget, which included significant investments for Yukoners. We will be maximizing our efforts to ensure that all of those federal dollars and opportunities find their way to the Yukon. While we have inherited some financial situations, we have a responsible plan for progress, which we shared in the throne speech and also in the budget. From the environment and the economy to the health and well-being of communities, our government is working every day to make the lives of Yukoners better.

I would like to address some of the issues that were brought up in the responses from the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, there was a question about the Government of Canada's carbon-pricing mechanism from members of the opposition. As I have noted, this is a Government of Canada initiative and, while we have information on how they intend to proceed, we will release that information on how we plan to rebate 100 percent of that funding to Yukon people and Yukon businesses. Again, this is a federal initiative, so it is not in our budget to answer that question.

There was a question about the Vimy housing project. The decision to support transitional housing for seniors had not been made by the previous government. We are looking at housing as a priority but, as we talked about today in the Legislative Assembly at Question Period, Rome wasn't built in a day. We are working on a housing strategy that affects all Yukoners.

It's a similar story on the fibre optic line. While little work was done by the previous government, there was a big announcement on the eve of the election, but, as we're finding, much of the leg work is not completed. We have recently applied to Canada for funding for this project and we remain committed to it.

The status of the Dawson City Airport project — much of the prep work not completed. I was at the Mineral Exploration Roundup a year or so ago when the previous premier announced that this was going to happen but, again, no homework was done. Our government remains committed to working toward solutions to that project.

There has been a fair amount of criticism from members opposite on future projected deficits. I will note for the record

that the Yukon Party government ran deficits in 2010 for \$25 million and in 2011 for \$6.6 million. I also note that a look back at the budget tabled last year by the Yukon Party provides an interesting perspective on how they planned to keep their books balanced. We have discussed several times that the main plan was to not include figures for O&M forecasts. They also planned on dramatically reducing capital spending. For example, in 2018-19, our plan is to spend \$220 million in net capital. The Yukon Party's plan was to spend — I believe it was only \$175 million. That alone is another \$45-million difference on the bottom line. In 2019-20 — the same approach — \$45 million less in capital under the Yukon Party compared to ours.

There were comments from the opposition about standing up for contractors. The plan that was signed last spring by the previous government tells a different story. There was a big reduction in capital that would have caused significant problems for our contracting community.

I want to note for the record that most of the Yukon Party members in the House refused to speak to the Speech from the Throne. Yesterday and the day before that — the first time this week and the first major speech for several of those members. There was one member who, in his first speech, really set a tone for how they want to participate in this session. He accused the government of deliberately overprojecting the spending pressures in years to come. He basically accused the government of cooking the books. This is a very troubling approach.

I would like to highlight today some projects that I am particularly proud of, and they include investments in aging infrastructure. We are protecting Yukon's infrastructure to ensure its value for generations and are allocating \$15.3 million for bridge rehabilitation projects, including the Nares River bridge, Nisutlin River bridge and Fox Creek bridge. There is \$30 million for infrastructure investments in communities across the Yukon. There is \$35.8 million for all Yukon highway restorations and rehabilitation projects. There is also \$6.5 million for restoration and the rehabilitation of Yukon airports and airstrips. The total budget is \$1.44 billion. The operation and maintenance budget is \$1.14 billion, and the capital budget is \$309 million.

The capital budget is in fact \$300-million higher for mains to mains compared to last year. There is \$1.5 million toward the innovative renewable energy initiative to support small First Nation and community-driven renewable energy projects. There is \$1.6 million toward residential and commercial energy incentive programs, and \$3.5 million to extend the interim electrical rebates.

With regard to lifelong learning and supporting education at any stage of life, there is: \$422,000 to implement new school curriculum; \$4 million to increase school staffing; expanded training opportunities for Yukoners; and \$145,000 toward operational and activity funding related to the cultural component of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation learning centre.

To promote innovation and growth, there is: \$100,000 to develop an open-data repository; \$1.6 million to support the

implementation of e-health programs and services; and support for Yukon College's transition into a university.

For our people-centred approach to wellness, we are supporting Yukoners' well-being through programs and services that include: \$771,000 toward enhancements in home care; beginning planning for a bilingual primary health care clinic; funding for 11 new full-time addiction and mental wellness workers in eight communities; and \$150,000 for land-based healing programs as well.

We have cut the corporate tax rate from 15 percent to 12 percent and reduced the small business rate from three to two percent. More help is on the way for small businesses, particularly sole proprietors.

To create good jobs in a sustainable environment and build healthy, vibrant communities, we will allocate \$75,000 to fund an arts summit hosted by the Yukon Arts Centre; double the regional economic development fund budget to \$800,000; and spend \$150,000 to develop an overarching strategy to support Yukon's tourism sector.

We are building relationships through reconciliation and advancing a modern Yukon that is diverse, inclusive and strong by allocating \$100,000 annually to host the Yukon Forum four times a year; \$150,000 to support indigenous women's organizations; \$325,000 to support the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle in delivering training to communities and to Team Yukon attending the North American Indigenous Games; and \$1.5 million for the First Nation housing program for new housing, renovations and rental supplements.

We are building strong, vibrant communities and seeking local solutions to local problems by providing \$500,000 to Habitat for Humanity's construction of two triplexes; \$660,000 for four accessible seniors housing units in Carmacks; \$2.4 million to construct six staff housing units in Ross River; \$95,000 to support rural dog population management; and \$220,000 as additional core funding to Yukon youth groups. We're extremely proud of all of these investments and there are many others we will discuss in department debate I'm sure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to highlight two specific initiatives in the Department of Finance today as well. We are beefing up the Finance department. The new division in the Department of Finance — economics, fiscal policy and statistics — will provide fiscal policy analysis and advice that has not been available to previous Management Boards. The division will operate in a highly collaborative manner with all departments to ensure that all budget planning incorporates the latest information and provides for an internally consistent fiscal plan.

Budgeting and reporting processes will be improved and streamlined and supported by a consistent set of assumptions across Yukon government departments for planning purposes. Future budget documents will include the economic and population outlook, thereby improving the sophistication of budget documents. This will also allow third parties to assess the fiscal outlook and associated risks to the territory for investment.

Economic and fiscal forecasts will benefit from a more rigorous internal review process by the economics, statistics and tax unit, thus improving fiscal accuracy and forecasting accuracy. Tax data can be shared within the departments and is informative, not only in forecasting exercises, but in some areas of responsibility for statistics, including reviewing work in progress for governmental financial statistics — GFS, and also for economic accounting, which is the GDP work in progress and also in verification.

I would also like to highlight the positive feedback that our budget and initiatives have been receiving from local organizations. Just two days ago, the Association franco-yukonnaise announced the launch of a network of sightseeing circuits, Le Yukon autrement, to head out to discover untold stories on the BaladoDiscovery mobile application. These unique, self-guided tours mark a new milestone for francophone tourism development in the territory. The association received \$35,000 from the Department of Economic Development and this will boost tourism and showcase the economic potential for the franco-Yukon community.

The Tourism Industry Association of Yukon issued a press release this morning stating that they believe that the budget introduced by the Government of Yukon on April 27 will help strengthen the Yukon's tourism industry and is a reflection of the government's commitment to helping the tourism and cultural sectors develop more capacity and access untapped potential.

The Yukon Chamber of Commerce issued a report card in regard to our budget, grading the budget on taxation, on infrastructure investments, housing and balancing the budget. The overall grade given was a B+ and we received high marks specifically for balancing the budget and for record high capital expenditures.

We are proud to have earned the support of many Yukon organizations and we look forward to continuing to do so.

We are committed to ensuring that the government's finances are sound now and into the future, while meeting the fundamental needs of Yukoners. We are establishing an independent Yukon Financial Advisory Panel to provide advice to Yukon government on appropriate financial policies and tools. Because we want to hear from all Yukoners on the financial priorities, I have directed the panel to engage with residents, First Nation governments, municipalities, businesses and organizations on how we can make the Yukon government financially stable now and for future generations. The panel will be made up of two Yukoners and three Outside members, who will bring financial expertise and familiarity with a Yukon context. It will be chaired by a Yukoner. The advice and options developed by the panel will inform the Government of Yukon's financial decisions and policies over the term of this government. The Department of Finance has budgeted \$250,000 to cover the costs of the panel and the public engagement.

The Yukon government is facing significant fiscal challenges due to an unsustainable ratio of revenue to expenditures. Our current unstable fiscal situation is driven by

previously unbudgeted commitments, including operating the new Whistle Bend seniors facility, budgeting teachers in the classroom and increasing O&M commitments related to a growing capital asset base. The costs faced by municipalities and communities are related to key infrastructure deficits, the need to build local economies and to develop their businesses, industrial and human resource capacities and also the cost of an aging population. The panel will engage with all Yukoners on the fiscal and economic challenges facing Yukon and the fiscal and economic tools available to us with regard to revenue and expenses.

They will provide all Yukoners with the opportunity to commit to and make recommendations about potential government fiscal and economic spending options. The public engagement is anticipated to start once the spring legislative Sitting concludes in June, will break in July and August and restart again in September. The work of the panel will not replace any future direct budget discussions between the Government of Yukon and First Nation governments, municipalities, organizations or citizens.

The terms of reference will be released very shortly and the final report will be released later this year. Hopefully the Official Opposition will decide to support the panel. The leader said that he did yesterday, but the Member for Lake Laberge said that it demonstrated a lack of confidence in financial officials.

Perhaps they could compare notes, decide who is speaking for the party and what their position is on the panel.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for interrupting the Premier. I would just like to introduce Bob Dickson, Chief of Kluane First Nation and one of my constituents. Welcome to the House today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, to sum up — good timing. It is my pleasure to speak to our goals and priorities as outlined in the budget. I want to once again thank all of the members who have shared their ideas and their views. While there has been positive debate on this budget, worthwhile debate will continue to take place on determining the best path forward for Yukon so that we can build on our prosperity and quality of life.

Before I conclude, let me outline our plans for developing future budgets. The Financial Advisory Panel will recommend actions for putting Yukon finances on a sustainable pathway forward. The panel's work will include broad public engagement. That input will inform our government's 2018-19 budget and future budgets. I hope all members will actively participate in this discussion and encourage people in their communities to do so as well.

The Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned how we plan to receive input from Yukoners. He raised legitimate concerns about the timelines and timing of the consultation process. Again, I hope he and all of the other MLAs in this

House will encourage their ridings to participate and for their constituents to participate.

As the work of the panel proceeds, we will continue building capacity within the government to apply evidence to decision-making. To support this work, we will continue our progress in reorganizing the Department of Finance's lines of business — this year, as detailed in our budget, investments focused on four priorities that will guide the government's work in the coming years. The budget supports people and their well-being. The budget supports strong government-to-government relationships, fostering reconciliation and cooperation with First Nation governments. The budget commits and promotes support to sustainable economic growth and will support the creation of good jobs for all Yukoners. The budget will contribute to healthy, vibrant communities. This is the first of many budgets that will set a new standard of making decisions backed by evidence. It will be addressing the real challenges faced by Yukoners and it will use evidence. We will show measured progress toward the goals that we identify. The budget recognizes that we have stepped boldly toward Yukon's future. We do so with confidence and we do so together.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

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. 201 agreed to

Bill No. 2: National Aboriginal Day Act — Second Reading — adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 2, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker; adjourned debate.

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is my honour to express my sincere support for Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*, which amends the *Employment Standards Act* by recognizing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday in Yukon.

I must begin by acknowledging that we are on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and it is a privilege to support Bill No. 2 on this land.

It is only recently, relatively speaking, that we have started to hear about reconciliation. We have calls to action, goals and genuine desire to improve things in our own country. It has been almost two years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its report that included the voices of 6,750 residential school survivors.

Of the 94 recommendations from the TRC, one speaks directly to government with regard to actions like recognizing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday. The Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action 80 reads — and I quote: “We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.”

While this call to action is directed at the federal level, it resonates with our Liberal territorial government. This is an opportunity for Yukon to lead the country in an effort of reconciliation and join the Northwest Territories in recognizing National Aboriginal Day as a holiday.

I believe that making National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday is an integral step toward the path of our own reconciliation. Responding to the TRC recommendation will contribute toward building a strong foundation of reconciliation efforts. It's time that we celebrate the immense contributions that First Nation people have made, and continue to make, in our territory and across the country.

We have the opportunity to show the provinces of Canada that National Aboriginal Day is a day of celebration, hope and pride. It is especially poignant to legislate the statutory holiday this year, as we celebrate 150 years of Confederation. Let us remember that Canada is much older than Confederation. Let us celebrate the First Nation people of this country, the people who were here first.

When I moved to Yukon as a teacher, I immediately felt welcomed. I was most welcomed by my students — the students whom I taught at F.H. Collins and other high schools in Whitehorse in my first two years in the Yukon. They are the reason I am still here, and they are well in their 40s now and great friends of mine. I have lots of great friends from those first couple of years.

I did want to speak about what I witnessed back then. There was a double standard. It wasn't a shared double standard but it was there. I taught in those years with some of Yukon's most amazing teachers, EAs, LAs, administrative folks and administrative assistants, but still, there would be a double standard and it did occur. Rural students, rural teens coming into the big city and going to the high school, not being challenged because they had challenging personalities — that was the way it was described to me at the time. My friend and colleague at the time, Jeff Teasdale, prepared me for this. He taught previous to me in these classes and he talked about the character of these students.

I was given no curriculum materials. In the science lab that I had, the cupboards were bare. There were no Erlenmeyer flasks and there were no Bunsen burners. I went down to the administration office about two weeks later. I spent the first two weeks getting to know these kids — amazing kids. I was told at that time that if these kids miss more than 20 classes, then you can let them go. That was pretty much the instruction that I was given. That was an interesting approach to education — and I didn't let them go. I continued to try to get my best out of my students and engage with them. Like I said, these kids flourished and did very well in that class. I think 18 of the students in there at the time were First Nation boys. They all challenged the academic exams and passed with flying colours.

Not a day went by in that class where I didn't witness the damage that was done and the scars left by residential school. A lot of the students had inherited a tragic legacy. I look back at my early days of teaching and I realize how much that group of students meant to me, but I didn't know at the time what I know now as far as the legacy of residential schools.

They made me acutely aware of how divided this country is. It is long overdue that we work hard to mend this divide. We much acknowledge its causes and we must learn from past mistakes. We must move forward, working closely with aboriginal people, in that effort of reconciliation. We must place great value on these efforts, the same value that my students deserved but did not receive.

Developing healthy relationships with Yukon First Nations has been a priority for me in my years as an MLA as it has been a priority for many MLAs in this building. In June 2016, I was honoured to attend the Council of Yukon First Nations General Assembly. In the week prior to the General Assembly, I was home in Dawson City and I was able to share National Aboriginal Day with Chief Joseph and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people. Sharing that important day with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens was a highlight. I was glad to share my feelings about National Aboriginal Day with those who gathered soon after the general assembly. I made it clear that, by the time we arrived at June 21, 2017, I hoped to be standing beside Grand Chief Peter Johnston as Yukon marked the day for the first time as a statutory holiday. I confirmed for those gathered at the general assembly that a Liberal government would be committed to making that happen. I am honoured to be here today serving as Premier of the Liberal government and keeping that commitment.

As Premier, I have had opportunities to meet with all of the Yukon First Nation chiefs, and I am grateful for the conversations and look forward to continuing to work for the benefit of First Nation communities and for all Yukoners.

I would like to make special mention of the contributions of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in my riding of Klondike. I was warmly welcomed by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people when I moved to Dawson City, and that welcome is not one that I take for granted. The traditional knowledge that has been shared with me has greatly contributed to my experience as a Yukoner, as a teacher and as an MLA. As Premier, I am incredibly grateful for the positive working relationship that I maintain with Chief Joseph. I would like to extend my congratulations to Chief Joseph on her re-election and also congratulate educated counsellors: J.T. Taylor, one of my ex-students; Darren Bullen, one of my ex-students; and Babe Titus and Simon Nagano. I look forward to officially celebrating National Aboriginal Day — that holiday — with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people for many years to come.

Renewing government-to-government relationships with the First Nation people of Yukon is a priority of our Liberal government. We have been vocal about this priority since our campaign, and Bill No. 2 is an excellent representation of our dedicated commitment. We have already made remarkable progress in repairing the Yukon government's relationship with Yukon First Nation governments. We have committed to holding a Yukon Forum four times a year and enjoyed the opportunity to meet with all Yukon First Nation chiefs at the first forum. Yukon chiefs joined our minister at Yukon Days in Ottawa and presented not only the perspective of Yukon First Nations to federal ministers, but also a united front with the Government of Yukon.

The recent intergovernmental forum is another reflection of our positive working relationship as chiefs joined our ministers in conversations with the federal Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Carolyn Bennett.

Our Liberal government has clearly made working with Yukon First Nations a priority, and already our efforts have provided us with a positive and encouraging relationship. We look forward to continuing partnerships and we know these partnerships will benefit all Yukoners.

When surveyed by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics in 2016, over 1,400 Yukoners responded with incredible support for National Aboriginal Day: 88 percent of the surveyed respondents supported the idea of recognizing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday; 90 percent of First Nation citizens who responded believed that there would be benefit to National Aboriginal Day becoming a statutory holiday; more than half of the survey respondents identified Yukon's ability to celebrate, respect, acknowledge, understand and recognize First Nation history, culture and traditions as the reason why they support the creation of this new holiday.

Of course we also recognize the concerns from employers surveyed — 26.9 percent of employers said that they would be negatively affected through loss of profit and increased cost.

We understand these concerns but are confident that in the long-term the benefits will be financial as well.

The Official Opposition, the Yukon Party, has raised concerns about the cost of the holiday. Our government believes that this is a priceless opportunity to celebrate aboriginal people. Much of the feedback from the business community surveyed was very encouraging as well. With regard to how recognizing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday will affect their businesses, 48.7 percent of employers responded that they would only be slightly affected or not at all, and 22.2 percent of employers felt that they would be positively affected by the holiday. Multiple employers reported that they thought the holiday would increase profit, employee morale and First Nation community support.

Yukoners have spoken. Our people, culture, traditions and history shape who we are. We recognize the immeasurable contributions made by our aboriginal people. This government is proud to join Yukoners in recognizing those contributions by making National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday.

It may be only recently that we have started to hear about reconciliation efforts in this country but our actions today will set the path for our children tomorrow. Let us set a path forward that leads to healing. Let us be leaders in reconciliation. Here in this Legislative Assembly today, on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, it is an absolute honour for me to express my unwavering support for Bill No. 2.

Ms. White: It's a great honour to be standing speaking to this bill.

I was thinking a lot about my friend, Kevin Barr, the previous Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, because he really got us here. It started off with a conversation in caucus and it was an easy conversation. I mean, of course, it makes sense. The part that wasn't easy was trying to get it off the ground. We started with a petition. We circulated the petition, we took it around and people were really keen.

It was a proud day on December 9, 2015 when he tabled that petition. We had more than 500 signatures at that point — some were electronic and more were coming in. To have Kevin be able to table it was phenomenal. That's what started the conversation and that's what got the ball rolling toward this. I wanted to really make sure that I acknowledge the work that he did, because he laid out the groundwork.

It's fascinating because the Premier will remember that when we were here and we debated this motion in the House and we had people in the gallery, it didn't go like we expected. We thought it was going to be a no-brainer. We thought that it would be an easy conversation, that we would talk about all of the reasons why this was great. At that point in time, we had pretty strong opposition from government. We had people in the gallery. We invited First Nation leadership and people from the communities and they came in and it was amazing to have them here. It was really hard because we thought this would be something that we could agree on. This

goes back to when I said that I'm a natural cheerleader and this just made sense.

I listened to the Premier and I listened to him talk about his experiences as a teacher. Well, I can tell you, as a kid who grew up in the territory, we didn't talk about residential schools. We didn't talk about the effects. When I was in Whitehorse Elementary, I didn't understand why some of the kids I went to school with had the struggles that they did. Then as an adult in Corrections when I went through training, I thought, oh my gosh, how is this the first time I'm having these conversations? I was lucky because I got to spend time with elders like Martha Snowshoe, Agnes Mills and Pearl Keenan and they taught me a lot when I was in Corrections.

They would come once a week and if the ladies didn't want to spend time with them, then I got to have tea. I had to let conversations start naturally, but they taught me a lot of things. What I learned within Corrections is that intergenerational effects of residential schools exist and they will continue to exist until Canada, as a country, has a bigger conversation about it.

We have this ability here, as legislators, to take some first steps toward saying that we acknowledge the importance of your ongoing contribution to our society and we apologize for the mistakes of the past. Having this be one of the first bills brought forward by the new Liberal government is a beautiful step. It's the reason why I voted positively on the first reading of the budget, because I have faith, right? I have faith that we won't make the same mistakes of the past.

I'm incredibly proud to be able to talk about this and I am also really, really proud about the work that my team did in the previous Legislative Assembly. We worked really hard at bringing this forward. We took it out to communities, we took it out to streets and we took it out to gatherings. We took it to general assemblies, we took it to meetings and we took it everywhere. When we had conversations in communities it just made sense, so a big thank you to Jim Tredger out of Mayo-Tatchun, to Lois Moorcroft of Copperbelt South, and to Jan Stick in Riverdale South, because without them, the groundwork wouldn't have been laid because that happened from the NDP opposition at the time.

I thank the Premier for recognizing the importance of this and taking that motion in the debate that we had in this House previously and moving it forward. We asked questions again — we asked questions in May 2016 — and we continue to ask questions about it because although the government at the time had said that they would move forward on it, it wasn't going to be without extensive consultation. When that consultation came back and said it was positive, there was still no motion to move it forward.

I am so pleased and so grateful that the Premier has taken this as one of the first big motions — big bills — in his government, because this lays out the expectation and the groundwork for future decisions. When we look at the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations, they are nothing unless we breathe life into them, and that is our job as elected officials. It is our job to take those recommendations and figure out how we can weave them into government, because

we are only one of the many governments in the Yukon. When it comes down to it, we're not even the most powerful government in Yukon. Depending where we are with the final agreements, we're not the top of that pack, but what we do have is the responsibility to make sure that we lead with what we can and Bill No. 2 is setting that out.

I have great faith that in the next number of years, you will take those recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and that you will breathe life into them. By making this one of your first acts of government, that's huge. That broadcasts to the territory that you're serious and that's important. It's lovely to have a couple of members in the gallery because the first couple of times we talked about it, it wasn't so positive. Now we can say it's going to happen — on June 21, it will be a statutory holiday and everyone will get to participate and that's amazing.

I thank the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes for following up where the previous member left off. I thank this government for not just saying they would do it, but doing it, and for making this June 21, 2017 the first day in the territory that National Aboriginal Day will have the recognition and the importance that it deserves.

I look forward to it. We all go out anyway, but it will have a different feeling this year, because we will have told the rest of the territory that this day is important and that this day matters, not just for our First Nation members and communities, but it matters for everybody — it is part of our Yukon. That is broadcasting that it is an important thing.

I thank the Premier and people who have spoken to it previously. It's great to be able to talk about this motion with a different feeling, knowing it's not going to be amended, knowing that the intent is going to stay the way it is and knowing that this year, we will celebrate National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday.

I thank the government members who made this an important first step. I thank them, because they are saying that they will breathe life into these recommendations. I am grateful for that. I absolutely support this bill and it's a pleasure to be here. I do want to acknowledge the work that got us here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the government for this.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, honourable members, friends, people of the Yukon — before I go into my talk, I just want to thank the member opposite for her words and for everyone else who has spoken to this bill so far. I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to speak in support of proposed legislation to create a new statutory holiday in the Yukon.

We would ask that you join us in celebrating Yukon's First Nation heritage and honour the many contributions First Nation people have made to our territory. The *National Aboriginal Day Act* will make June 21 a new statutory holiday in the Yukon.

Today is particularly important to acknowledge that we are gathered today on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. I thank

them every single time I get up to speak in any other gathering for allowing us to be on their territory and to be so generous and be our hosts. I thank them today.

First Nation people recognize the power of consensus in decision-making. That is something I hope this House begins to operate by. I know it's certainly something I aspire to every day — to find a place of consensus. I hope we are able to come to a consensus in full support, with all parties in support of this proposed new legislation.

June 21 is summer solstice and it holds a very sacred place for us as indigenous people. The meaning of the day is well understood by First Nation people. It is the longest day of the year, when here in the Yukon, we experience a very long period of daylight and celebrate the beginning of summer. It's a time when we hold ceremony; it's a time when we honour the Creator and we honour our seasons. It's a really important day for us as indigenous people. We share that culture, and we share that experience with other Yukoners. Wherever we may be throughout the country, it's a very important day for us.

The calendar that nature provides us is marked by summer and winter solstices and spring and fall equinoxes. For time immemorial, these natural markers were the traditional calendar, which identified the change in the seasons that dominated indigenous life. That's how we lived. Throughout the year, there was a time for all seasonal activities and a rhythm being revitalized. June 21 is an appropriate day for the celebration of First Nation people and has always been marked in some way in the Yukon.

More recently, there have been a series of events planned and implemented. First Nation governments recognize the day and provide time off for their employees to attend celebrations. First Nations' time on the land goes back before recorded history. Our First Nation ancestors were capable stewards of this land. Living with the land, in tune with the seasons — that's how our ancestors lived. The generations were challenged by a harsh climate and interruptions in food supply. There were tribal conflicts and problems to solve. Our experience did not prepare us for the challenges of contact with newcomers. There were waves of contact that affected Yukon indigenous people, including the building of the Alaska Highway 75 years ago, an anniversary being marked this year. That was a very big turning point for Yukon First Nation people. I feel that not only during the 150th anniversary of Confederation, but also the marking of this anniversary — of the Alaska Highway — it is very fitting that this is the year that we celebrate National Aboriginal Day as a holiday in the Yukon.

The modern-day treaty process in the Yukon was launched by the delivery of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* in 1973. Throughout the years that followed, the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and subsequent final land claims and self-government agreements were concluded by 11 of our 14 First Nations. We are proud of all our self-determining nations, our treaties and accomplishments.

Our Liberal government has committed to building a stronger government-to-government relationship with all 14 First Nations in the Yukon. The Yukon Forum is on stronger

ground today because of the work that we have done together with our First Nation partners. The passage of the *National Aboriginal Day Act* reinforces that commitment to building stronger connections.

I would just like to acknowledge Councillor Sean Smith to the Legislature. Thank you so much for coming.

The marking of an important day in the First Nation calendar as a day to celebrate and remember First Nation people and their contributions is important. The action taken in this House today sends a powerful message to First Nation people. The message from all Yukoners — that's all of us sending a message — to First Nation people in setting aside this day is: "We respect you, we honour you, we celebrate you and we see a bright future together." We mark Discovery Day as a statutory holiday and it is time to mark all that came before that day in the same way.

Culture, I believe, is at the foundation of everything we do. It's our identity. It's our strength. It is going to save our people. I believe that. I've seen it in action. I watched the land come alive and bring healing to our people. Those are the things that we're celebrating. When we celebrate National Aboriginal Day, those are the things that we're celebrating.

I would like to also acknowledge Chief Doris Bill. Thank you so much for coming here today.

We have committed to the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and we have heard a lot of discussion in the House around the calls to action. I agree with the member opposite that they are only words unless we breathe life into them — that we commit to seeing through the commitments that we've made and that Canada has made to our indigenous people and to all of us.

We have begun the work of building the capacity to work with First Nation governments and of moving forward. There are initiatives underway and being launched by this government that are in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. We are fortunate to have the strength of all nations and our treaties to build from. We have a framework for reconciliation, and they are alive within our self-government agreements.

The National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is also a national initiative that we are fully engaged in with our First Nation partners. The telling of the truths and the planning for action that builds a better, safer and stronger Canadian society is a shared vision of both documents. I believe the passing of the *National Aboriginal Day Act* in Yukon is a powerful statement and an important contribution to the spirit and intent of this national work.

After a nine-year delay, on May 10, 2016, Canada finally removed the objector status on the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. On September 13, 2007, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the declaration — 144 states voted in favour, and four voted against, with 11 abstentions. Canada was joined by Australia, New Zealand and the United States in voting against the declaration.

The other three objectors, to varying degrees, have also turned their vote. While the General Assembly's declaration is not a legally binding instrument under international law, it does represent the dynamic development of international legal norms and it reflects the commitment of the United Nations member states to move in a certain direction.

The UN describes it as citing an important standard in the treatment of indigenous peoples that will undoubtedly be a significant tool toward eliminating human rights violations against the planet's 370 million indigenous people and assisting them in combatting discrimination and marginalization.

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* codifies indigenous historical grievances, contemporary challenges and socio-economic, political and cultural aspirations. Further, it is the culmination of generations-long efforts by indigenous organizations to get international attention to a secure recognition of their aspirations and to generate support for their political agendas.

Federal Minister Bennett was quoted as saying, "We intend nothing less than to adopt and implement the declaration in accordance with the Canadian Constitution." We in the Yukon align with our federal Liberal counterparts in our commitment to the declaration. I believe we are all just beginning to fully understand the impact of Canada's commitment to improving relationships with indigenous people of Canada.

I believe that by declaring June 21 of every year Aboriginal Day and marking it as a statutory holiday honours the profile of First Nation people in this territory. I ask that you join me and my colleagues in supporting this proposed legislation and all that it represents.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I would like to also acknowledge William Carlick, an elder representative of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Silver: I also want to recognize in the gallery — with Chief Dickson of the Kluane First Nation is Lisa Badenhorst, who is the governance director for the First Nation, and also former Chief of the Kluane First Nation and the current caucus strategic analyst extraordinaire, Mathieya Alatini.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: It is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill No. 2 today. Last week, my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, outlined the Official Opposition's position on this bill. While I believe that he did do a thorough job, I would just like to take a moment to reiterate some of what he said and maybe expand on it a bit.

As he indicated, the Official Opposition does fully support National Aboriginal Day, and we think it is incredibly important to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding achievements of our

aboriginal people, both here in the Yukon as well as across the entire country. We believe that here in the Yukon, the celebration of Yukon First Nations enriches the lives of all Yukoners. It is for this reason that we believe the Yukon government has an important role to play in taking part in this recognition and celebration.

During our previous time in government, we tried to ensure that recognizing First Nation heritage and cultures or celebrating the outstanding achievements of aboriginal people wasn't something that was confined to a single day, but occurred throughout the year and throughout the lives of Yukoners. Some of that work included the actions from the Department of Tourism and Culture in helping Yukoners engage with First Nation culture and the resulting cultural resurgence that Yukon has experienced of late. It included work done to help preserve and teach First Nation languages in Yukon communities and schools. It included our earnest support for the Aboriginal Employees Forum and the Aboriginal Employees Award of Honour that showcases the talents of individual aboriginal public servants, strength and pride in public service and called attention to the good work of aboriginal employees in the Yukon public. We believe that government can and should take action to help in this celebration and recognition. Those are just a few examples, and we know that there is more to be done.

We of course would be happy to support the government in taking further action and, indeed, we would certainly support the Yukon government in increasing its support for celebrations, activities and events on National Aboriginal Day. If the Liberal government has other ideas of ways either the Yukon government or the Legislative Assembly can aid and support the celebration of National Aboriginal Day, we would be more than happy to engage and offer our support as well.

While we will be supporting this bill at second reading, as the MLA for Copperbelt South said, we do have concerns about financial impacts on the business community, and we will have questions for the minister in Committee.

As I stated, the core of our concern is the fact that this government doesn't seem to know what the economic impacts of the bill will be. We haven't seen any study that would indicate how much it will cost Yukon businesses, families or even the Yukon government itself. Of course, those costs are on Yukon taxpayers.

I think that asking these questions is responsible and it's how legislators exercise the responsibilities given to them by the good people of the Yukon who elected them. As members of this Legislative Assembly, it would be irresponsible of us not to ask these questions. We are trying to understand the implications of the bill. No one should take offence to us asking questions. Further, as the Official Opposition, it's our job to hold the government to account for its actions and ask the questions about how and why it makes the decisions that it does.

Creating a new statutory holiday will increase costs — costs that will be carried by Yukon businesses big and small and in all sectors. It will also create a significant cost for the

Yukon government and other levels of government, including municipalities. Now, the creation of these costs may be acceptable, and just because a cost is created, that does not mean that the bill isn't a good idea. But we wouldn't be doing our job if we didn't ask these questions. At this point, it seems that the Government of Yukon doesn't know the answers.

In his second reading speech, the minister said that he believes the benefits of this bill will outweigh the costs and that's great news. It really is. But we would like him to share with us the analysis that shows that. Indeed, as the Minister of Highways and Public Works put it, perhaps there is a cost in not moving ahead with this bill, and he may be right. So let's look at the economic analysis so we can truly decide that. That is why we are here in this Chamber — to debate and discuss these issues and make decisions on behalf of all of the people who we represent here today.

As my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, indicated, we look forward to asking these questions in Committee of the Whole, and today, if it comes to a vote, we will be voting in favour of the bill at second reading so that we can move forward to that next step and debate the bill further.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I offer my complete support for the tabling of Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*, which amends the *Employment Standards Act* by adding National Aboriginal Day as a holiday in Yukon. Today we make another commitment that the Liberal government campaigned on.

Mr. Speaker, this day is extremely important for reconciliation. This is a day to recognize and honour contributions of First Nation people here in the Yukon. This day is to celebrate the diversity and strength of our First Nation community and to recognize their perseverance and commitment for a better life for their community and for all Yukoners alike. It is a day for First Nations to share in their culture and tradition, a chance to educate and a chance to build relationships.

I've heard concerns about higher wages, resulting in an increase in operating costs and reduced profits from those in the business community and I understand those impacts. Certainly I have an obligation. It's not to take away from the importance of the conversation, but I have an obligation — and certainly it was brought up — as Minister of Economic Development to speak how this potentially affects our economy or how it affects business. I have to say, I have also heard that businesses feel this day has the potential to stimulate positive economic growth by encouraging spending through tourism and recreational activities and have to say I tend to agree with that statement.

When you think about our economy and you think about how reconciliation affects our economy in the Yukon, really what I've heard the opposition say and what they're digging at is that they want analyses and numbers. What I have at least been able to see in the short term — and not directly impacting just on this one point — is that as we've had discussions with the resource sector over the last five months,

we've seen — whether there were decisions to be made previous to this government coming into place, or there was a course of action by companies — that they stopped and took a breath after the election. Certainly the meetings that we had an opportunity to have — whether at the Prospectors and Developers Association Conference in Toronto or at Roundup, what they said over and over is: "We like many of the things that happened, but right now we really like what's happening and we're so happy about this new relationship and reconciliation."

We talk about numbers — the number that I've seen at least, just on resource development, in five months is \$130 million. That is what has been committed for future expenditures. Many of those agreements are signed and they have been put forward to the Securities Commission, so we talk about economic impact.

As my colleague here stated — when we talk about Discovery Day, it's interesting that when you think about who gets celebrated. When you go to the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference, one of the biggest nights now is when they give out the Skookum Jim award, so the reason that there is a Discovery Day in many ways — maybe it wasn't Skookum Jim. Maybe it was Kate. I don't know if it was Kate Carmacks; I don't know if it was George. But those are the three people who were there, and so when we think about why we have these industrial effects in the Yukon, it's based on First Nation individuals. A little-known fact is that Chief Jim Boss was a prospector and is attributed with some of the finds of some of the copper just outside of Whitehorse. The slant I want to talk about is that, when we think about economy and business — this is an important day because I get to stand here and I get to be on the right side of history. I hope that we don't have a ton of debate after we get by the second reading. We have confirmation now that we're going to get support to move this through.

I want to be able to look my kids in the eyes and understand where I was on this particular item. When you think about how we celebrate in the Yukon, our great history and commerce of ships moving up and down the Yukon River and things such as that — I know there are a lot of stories that will be shared and they'll be focused on the atrocities of residential school. I just want to share one little tidbit under this idea of business. My youngest son's hero whom he never knew is his great-great grandfather, Frank Slim. I can still remember when he was really young — he's 10 now. He was about five years old and there was a showing of the last voyage — I think it was the *Keno*. It was Frank Slim guiding that ship. We went down to watch it, and in comes the little guy. He walked in, and for some reason they decided that they were going to change up the films that day. He walked in and Andy Connors, who was there putting on the film festival, said they were going to change it up and Calum was like, "No, no. I came to watch a movie about my great-great grandpa and he drives ships and he drove that ship down there too" — the *SS Klondike*.

As he continued to study the history of it — part of the history of this gentleman — we celebrate him. The City of

Whitehorse celebrates him. It's the Frank Slim Building. He's a hero to many — and here's a First Nation man who, in order to help to build the commerce of the Yukon, had to give up his First Nation status in order to get his licence. His licence to this day sits in the hands of his grandson, Glenn Grady — I've seen the licence — and that was given to him by Transport Canada. It was a licence so he could actually drive these steamships.

I think we can go over and over about why this is the right thing to do. I'm glad that we have the forum to do it. This process really brings me back to my memories of city council. In some ways, it reminds me of when Lillian Nakamura — and I appreciate her for even connecting me to this process — and Heather MacFadyen came to see me and talked about the anti-racism and discrimination bylaw. There had never been one passed north of 60. There had been across the country in many municipalities. They had gone to the municipality before to try to gain support on it and they couldn't gain the support.

I want to be polite and I don't want to be aggressive as I speak through this, but I couldn't understand why we wouldn't move forward on this. We talked about how to table that bylaw. I had tremendous amount of resistance as I tried to even craft the language on it. You do go through all kinds of different emotions as you're taking this forward. I don't need to share all those emotions here today. But we brought it forward and at the same time, I remember people saying there is no reason for this.

Shortly within that period of time or just after that time, there were election signs that were grotesquely written on — one individual who was running and I can't even imagine — that's tough. It hasn't happened to me. When it does — I'm sure it will someday, but I hope it doesn't. It's a hard pill to swallow.

Anyway, we tabled the first reading. I was at PDAC in Toronto for first reading. I put it through. I couldn't help but not be there. I was going to be there for second and third reading. They tabled it. I didn't think it would be a big deal, but I had a commitment in the mining sector so I was in Toronto that night. I remember that they let me call in. With the time change, it was late that evening and, to my shock, when it came to a vote there was one positive vote and I was standing alone. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe that I sat there on this particular topic. We were doing the right thing, and cost was something that came up. It was: "Well, what's the cost to the city on this item of having a committee?" That's what they had to do.

After some discussions, we went to a second vote and, surprisingly, at the second reading it was unanimous support — once people started to think about the magnitude and impact of these things.

Sometimes there is a time to do the right thing. There is a time to be brave. There certainly is. There is a time to put politics aside. I respect the questions to me. I will tell you what. As Economic Development minister, let me carry you. You can tell every business person who is not supporting this that the Economic Development minister in Yukon is the

person that they should call and talk to. I have had one e-mail so far.

I sat today at lunchtime with the leadership and ownership of the largest manufacturing company north of 60 and one of the largest construction companies, and my question to them was: "Is this an issue?" They said to me: "We haven't even had it come up, and if it did, we would be completely supportive of this."

The member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, knows very well that your community is the showcase of reconciliation — absolutely — at least one of them. Your mayor is a First Nation lady who is cherished in the community. The community, as it works together through the community corporation, has shown that reconciliation and people coming together lead to economic growth, and that's why everybody wants to try to do what you guys have done, because you have done those amazing things.

For some companies, there will be some effects. What I have always experienced on National Aboriginal Day is that, in Whitehorse, the downtown is booming. Most First Nation offices let their staff out. Many companies that are owned by First Nations, which is a tremendous number, let their people out.

If you look at what happened in 2009, the mining sector and what happened was a huge driver. When you sit and look from one side of this community to the other, and you figure out where the money came from to build and build and drive that growth, we all know that comes from those very progressive First Nations and how they have invested in this community.

At this time, as I said, let me wear that. We can go through a series of numbers and we can debate. I don't think we should even take that approach to things here. I think we should stand behind this. I think we should do the right thing. I think that, as we look at where we want to stand, as people in this country — it's true that we have an opportunity to set a standard that the rest of this country will look to. We have an opportunity, and we can do it here, all of us together. We can debate a whole bunch of other stuff. You can pick me apart on numbers on things in Energy, Mines and Resources, and in Agriculture, Economic Development and the Yukon Development Corporation — go at it. I know we'll have those discussions, but on this one, let us pass this and set a right path forward for the rest of this country.

I'm going to leave it at that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is my privilege and honour to rise today to speak in favour of Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*. With the exception of the discussions we have had on the budget, this is my first opportunity to speak to a bill in this Legislative Assembly. It is an exciting moment for me, having worked my whole life and career as a lawyer to now be involved in the making of a new law, my first law. It is doubly exciting to be involved in the making of this particular law.

This country is changing. The recognition and celebration of the rich heritage and culture of Canada and Yukon's first

peoples is long overdue. The recognition of First Nation contributions to our way of life here in the Yukon and across Canada is long overdue. Recognition and respect of our First Nation governments as leaders of their communities is long overdue.

One of the true highlights of my career occurred a few years back when I got to spend a day with Mr. Justice Murray Sinclair, as he was then. At the time, he was the Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I know him to be a thoughtful, articulate and eloquent man.

I know that in drafting the truth and reconciliation recommendations, he and his colleagues chose carefully the words: “calls to action.” Think about how succinct and powerful the words are — calls to action. Mr. Speaker, it’s time. It’s time to act. It’s time to make a new law. Proclaiming National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday is but one small step on our reconciliation path, but its time has come.

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the truth and reconciliation calls to action can’t be just words any more. We need action. I look forward to celebrating National Aboriginal Day this June 21, 2017 as one Yukon community and I am proud to speak in favour of this Bill No. 2.

Mr. Gallina: Mr. Speaker, I’m honoured to stand here today on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta’an Kwäch’än Council to speak to you, the members of this Assembly and the members of the gallery on Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*. I’m going to take this opportunity to reiterate the significance of this important day here in the territory and throughout the country to highlight what this day means to me and my family and to show how this day is a tool for reconciliation.

Our government is committed to improving relations with First Nation governments across the Yukon. Renewing government-to-government relationships with First Nation people of Yukon is a priority for our team. Through the establishment of National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday here in the territory, it sends a clear message that we have taken decisive steps to live up to this commitment. Our government is proud to table Bill No. 2, a bill to make National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday in Yukon.

Presenting this bill honours an important campaign commitment that we made to move to establish National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday. Every year on June 21, we celebrate the diversity and strength of Canada’s aboriginal peoples, their cultures and traditions.

National Aboriginal Day is a tool for reconciliation. June 21 is a day that sees my family and me regularly enjoying National Aboriginal Day festivities at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. On this date, we’re usually in full Yukon summer, which often sees mixed weather and blustery conditions along the waterfront. Through my work as a community investment manager here in the territory, I would help to set up the annual feast hosted by Northwestel. I would work with other volunteers to serve up to 1,000 people, including elders, families, visitors, dignitaries and the community at large. It’s incredibly fulfilling to be able to have

this connection to the community and be in a position to serve. Mr. Speaker, these actions foster reconciliation.

A few years ago on a particular National Aboriginal Day, with the feast concluded, I joined my family to celebrate the rest of the day. We visited exhibits and crafted jewellery. We danced and sang songs together. We listened to traditional stories from elders and youth, who gave life to their characters through movement and wonderful descriptions.

On this particular day, it wasn’t the stories or the songs that struck me most. On this day, as we moved through the exhibits and displays, I looked back to do a quick family head count. This is a common act when you have four daughters and are at a public event. I looked for them through the crowd and saw my daughters had found a quiet space among the grass with the sun shining down on them, and they were playing with some other children. I slowly made my way over to them, trying to figure out what they were playing. It turns out, Mr. Speaker, the children had gathered some paper and pencil crayons and were making flash cards of our northern lifestyle in Southern Tutchone and were practising with their new friends. What a special moment to bear witness to.

My children attend Whitehorse Elementary and learning Southern Tutchone is part of their core curriculum. I have to say they are doing well in this course and are enjoying their time in class. Mr. Speaker, I was proud to see how these children were playing together, but, as I look back on that day and on that situation, I think to myself that me, my family and the people at the Cultural Centre — we were taking part in reconciliation.

As Yukoners and Canadians, we all have a role to play in reconciliation, and National Aboriginal Day is a tool and is one way, one day, where we can strengthen our bonds with and among the First Nation community. All of us here today are stewards of the land and champions of the community and will set the foundation for future generations to benefit from our positive collaborative actions.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to begin by thanking all the members of this Legislature for bringing their words forward on this important issue. I would like to again acknowledge the House leader for her comments that this is the first bill that we are seeking to pass. I am honoured to be the person who has this portfolio and has this opportunity to lead. Thank you all.

Before I get too far into it, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to acknowledge that I was recently gifted with a tie, which is from Brenda Asp. I’m very proud to be wearing it here today, so it’s a nice moment.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Well, there you go. I didn’t know that.

Establishing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday is a key commitment of this government and supports the goal of a modern Yukon with strong government-to-

government relations, vibrant and healthy communities, and a society that is both diverse and inclusive. Eighty-eight percent of respondents to the Yukon government's National Aboriginal Day survey, conducted last spring, supported the creation of a statutory holiday to recognize National Aboriginal Day.

Yukon is leading the way on many reconciliation initiatives and it is important that we continue to lead in recognizing and celebrating First Nation culture together as a community. Celebrating National Aboriginal Day on June 21 as a statutory holiday contributes to reconciliation by allowing Yukoners the opportunity to learn more about indigenous peoples and participate in cultural events.

We believe that all Yukoners benefit from a unified society that celebrates and shares in the culture of indigenous people. I emphasize: all Yukoners.

Along with Discovery Day, National Aboriginal Day will be the second holiday that is unique to Yukon. The rest of the holidays we recognize are national. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our bringing in National Aboriginal Day here in the north would pave the way for it becoming a nationally celebrated holiday?

I would like to thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for saying that his party fully supports National Aboriginal Day. We agree that there are some economic costs and that there are also economic benefits and we look forward to that conversation in Committee of the Whole. We also need to consider the social, cultural and wellness benefits that so many of our colleagues here have articulated in their speeches on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reached out to Mr. Kevin Barr to invite him here today and, again, I will acknowledge that it was in his role as MLA for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that he brought forward the initial motion to this House to introduce National Aboriginal Day. I thank the members opposite who took this out to the public to get their viewpoints. He wrote back to me — and I quote:

"It is a step for us all to move forward with respect and further our understanding for future reconciliation. I will be out of the territory but will be there in spirit.

"Kindest regards, Kevin Barr"

Celebrating National Aboriginal Day provides Yukoners — all Yukoners — the opportunity to recognize the rich heritage, culture and significant achievements of aboriginal people in the Yukon and across Canada.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: 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. 2 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day 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: Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 2: *National Aboriginal Day Act*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*.

Is there any general debate on this bill?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If you could just give us one moment here, please, to welcome our staff — thank you.

Mr. Chair, I would like to welcome to Committee of the Whole today from the Department of Community Services, Ms. Louise Michaud and Mr. Shane Hickey. I don't know what is appropriate here, but I would like to welcome them.

Mr. Chair, I'm rising today to speak to Bill No. 2 — and I'm pleased to do so — entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*. This bill establishes National Aboriginal Day as a general holiday in Yukon for all employers and employees regulated

under the *Employment Standards Act*. June 21 is a special day to recognize and celebrate the culture, heritage and achievements of indigenous peoples. In Yukon, National Aboriginal Day will be a day for Yukoners and visitors to celebrate Canada's indigenous peoples by bringing together talented artists and performers to celebrate the unique, vibrant and rich culture of Yukon First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

Celebrating National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday contributes to reconciliation by allowing Yukoners the opportunity to learn more about indigenous peoples and participate in cultural events. Yukon's current statutory holidays include: New Year's Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Discovery Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day and Christmas. Including National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday will make Yukon consistent with British Columbia, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories, all of which currently have 10 statutory holidays. This new holiday will apply to all territorially regulated businesses and organizations. First Nation governments, the federal government and employers in federally regulated sectors, such as aviation, finance and telecommunication industries, will not be affected.

I note that First Nation governments have been recognizing this as an important day, even before it becomes a statutory holiday, by providing their employees with a day off. When we talked with First Nations, my understanding is that 100 percent of them give this day off already as a holiday, with pay.

Over a year ago, this Assembly unanimously passed Motion No. 1039, urging the Yukon government to seek public input concerning the possibility of declaring National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday. From May 15 to July 16 of 2016, local businesses, First Nation governments, development corporations, labour organizations and the public were invited to provide feedback. We got quite a few responses.

The survey results, both the full report and the summary of results from the 1,400 participants who responded, are available on the Community Services website. They show that this government is acting in a transparent manner and listening to Yukoners. Overall, 88 percent of Yukoners who responded to the survey were in favour of making National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday. Support for the holiday was received from a variety of respondents including 68.1 percent of the business community, 54.3 percent of employers and 90 percent of First Nation citizens and employees. That was support for it, Mr. Chair.

We know that this endeavour will have some cost implications to varying degrees for employers and local businesses, including the Government of Yukon. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics calculated that, for Yukon government, the average statutory holiday payroll cost was approximately \$1.16 million and the estimated overtime pay to Yukon government employees for Canada Day as a statutory holiday was approximately \$117,000. We used Canada Day as an example because of its proximity to June 21 for National Aboriginal Day. It should be noted that these numbers are

based on an average and are subject to change should there be a natural disaster or an emergency event.

We acknowledge that there will be some loss of production and some additional costs for 24-hour operational programs, essential services and seasonal sectors. It is challenging to determine the full economic impacts of this initiative on all sectors, even for the Northwest Territories, where National Aboriginal Day has been celebrated for 15 years. When recently asked about the cost-benefit analysis of National Aboriginal Day, the Government of Northwest Territories confirmed what the research has shown — that undertaking such an economic analysis requires a very broad scope and significant resources. I note that there has not been a full-cost analysis done in the Northwest Territories, so we didn't have something exact to go back to. We also need to note, as I have noted in other speeches, that there are economic benefits and also social benefits celebrating the diverse cultures of Yukon across our eight language groups and 14 First Nations, 11 of which are self-governing First Nations under modern treaties. I still think that is the majority in Canada. It isn't just about the economics, Mr. Chair.

We recognize that there are financial implications and that is why we provided advance notice of our intentions to table the legislation and provide regular updates so that employers have time to prepare. I sat down with several of the chambers of commerce here in the territory to discuss just that, and I gave them as early a notice as I could — encouraging us to announce publicly that we would be seeking to bring in National Aboriginal Day as one of our first bills.

From the outset, establishing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday was a key commitment of the Liberal platform during the election. I also note that it was given to me in my mandate letters from the Premier. On March 2, we announced both our intent to reconvene the Yukon Legislative Assembly and the proposed changes to the legislation that we would be bringing forward, including legislation to establish National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday beginning this year in 2017.

When I stood and tabled Bill No. 2, Mr. Chair, newspaper advertisements notified employers and the public of the government's intent with this initiative. Just last week, notices were sent to municipalities, First Nation chiefs, development corporations, chambers of commerce, the Yukon Federation of Labour, and contractors through the Highways and Public Works tender management system. When I attended the quarterly meeting of the Association of Yukon Communities, and in my first meeting with the president of the Association of Yukon Communities, I alerted all present to National Aboriginal Day coming forward this year here in the Legislature, and everyone was appreciative of that.

That said, we are confident that these costs will be offset by social and economic benefits, including forging and enhancing respectful relationships with aboriginal peoples, employee satisfaction and increased spending in tourism, hospitality, First Nation small businesses and recreational sectors.

We agree with the majority of the public and the business community that responded to the survey that the benefits of this holiday outweigh the challenges. Feedback indicates that the cultural and symbolic importance of recognizing National Aboriginal Day and the contributions of First Nations is an important, concrete recognition of First Nation culture and heritage within Yukon.

The results of the survey and the response at the polls for this government's platform commitment to establish National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday speak volumes to the wishes of the people of the Yukon. This government is listening. Enabling Yukoners to recognize, respect, understand and celebrate indigenous peoples' history, culture, traditions and continuing contributions is a key to a modern Yukon that can build on its strengths of diversity and inclusivity.

Celebrating National Aboriginal Day on June 21 allows Yukoners to recognize and celebrate the contributions of, and partnerships with, indigenous peoples across Canada and here at home. This government is building strong government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations. We are, together as governments, responsible for a healthy, vibrant, tolerant and inclusive society that rises to meet the needs of all its citizens today and into the future.

Our strength lies in our abilities to reconcile past injustices with integrity and humility, forge and bolster partnerships, celebrate our differences, capitalize on our strengths and inspire innovation and collaboration.

Mr. Chair, this government is privileged to listen to and serve the people of Yukon, to work collaboratively and respectfully with others and to lead the way toward a progressive, inclusive, multi-faceted and contemporary society. As a government, we are honoured to debate this bill with members of the Assembly and Yukoners in order to establish June 21, National Aboriginal Day, as a statutory holiday. We know that it is the right thing to do. We look forward to responding to questions that may arise.

Mr. Kent: I would like to congratulate the Minister of Community Services for bringing this bill to the floor of the House. He has mentioned, as well as the Government House Leader, that this is the first bill that we are able to get into Committee. I am certainly pleased that we are able to bring this forward. As mentioned by colleagues and as witnessed in the vote at second reading, the Official Opposition Yukon Party does support this bill.

We do, however, have some questions and, to echo the minister's welcomes, I too would like to welcome Ms. Michaud and Mr. Hickey to the Legislature here today, as well as Ms. Michaud's service dog. I think that is a first for the floor of the House — that we have had a service dog.

I would also like to thank the minister's officials who were present at the briefing. It didn't take very long. The legislation is very straightforward. I did mention to them at the time that I would have some questions on the floor just to get on the record and just to give a little bit of an outline of what those questions will be for the minister.

I'm going to be bringing forward questions on behalf of business organizations and individual companies that we have

heard from. I will also follow up on a letter that I sent to the minister, as well as his colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, on March 9, 2017. He has provided some responses in his opening statement, but we will look to explore some of the other responses as well.

I think I will just get right into it. My history in Committee of the Whole is not to put — it's my first time asking questions in Committee of the Whole, I guess, but when I was on the answering side working with the Premier at the time, we went back and forth rather quickly, and I found the flow was a little bit better.

I guess the first question that I would like to ask is with respect to the economic analysis aspect. I know that this was something in a discussion I had with the Yukon Chamber of Commerce that they requested of the minister, and I believe what they mentioned to me was that the minister told them he would take that under advisement.

He did mention in his opening remarks that the Northwest Territories was asked to do an economic analysis. I think his words were that there was a broad scope and it would take significant resources.

I'm actually as interested in the benefits. I have a couple of questions for the minister. Was there any consideration given to doing this economic analysis before implementing this platform commitment and item from his mandate letter? If not — there's obviously not time to do it prior to enacting the statutory holiday this year, but would the minister consider conducting an economic analysis over the next year or two, when we get some decent data surrounding that day, so he can report back to the House what the benefits are in particular? I think that is something we would be interested in hearing and it would help us in conveying that story to the business community.

Those are the few opening questions I have for the minister.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: That's a great question and I thank the member opposite for it. We are certainly supportive of evidence-based decision-making and I think it's great to do some analysis on it. I know we reached out to the NWT and we looked for any analysis they had. I mentioned that in my comments. We are interested to understand what the economic costs and benefits are to having National Aboriginal Day. I would happily consider that and I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Mr. Chair, I am looking at the clock, and I notice that the time is 5:25 p.m. I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Chair report progress on Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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. Monday.

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 10

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, May 8, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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| Hansard Administrator | Deana Lemke |

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, May 8, 2017 — 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 Emergency Preparedness Week

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Emergency Preparedness Week.

One year ago, a fire began in the Alberta boreal forest. It quickly spread and forced the immediate evacuation of Fort McMurray. We all held our breath as we watched the citizens run a fiery gauntlet to get out safely. It was a testament to the citizens and the firefighters that no one was killed. Nearly 600,000 hectares — that's one-and-a-half-million acres — burned. The remnants of that fire smoldered all this past winter.

I think we are all aware here that it could have been us and I thank all Yukoners for our generous donations through the Canadian Red Cross. We sent dozens of our firefighters to go and help the community of Fort McMurray. By the way, May 8 — today — is the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day. That was one year ago.

One week ago, we had the largest earthquakes I have ever felt here in the territory. Within minutes, our emergency measures operation emergency command centre office had spun up. Our thanks go out to them for their swift and coordinated response. We are still looking at some of our building stock to make sure that it is safe. However, the best news of the day was that there were no injuries. We got a look at how well our response systems can and would come into play. That was one week ago.

This week, our neighbours across the country are dealing with emergencies due to flooding. First responders are acting quickly to ensure safety. Fifteen hundred troops have been called out in Quebec. People are leaving their homes and their valuables behind — sometimes by canoe — to get to higher ground. Fifteen hundred people have had to leave their homes in Quebec. Three hundred people have had to evacuate in Kelowna. Montreal and other municipalities have declared states of emergency. Our hearts go out to those across the country who are facing emergencies in these flooded regions. We are reaching out to the provinces.

Timely and tragic incidents highlight the importance of Emergency Preparedness Week. As a government and as citizens, we need to be prepared when incidents like this happen. Natural or man-made disasters may be beyond our control, but there are actions every Yukoner can take to

reduce the risks and impacts of emergency situations. Emergency Preparedness Week is an annual reminder for each of us to be prepared, to ensure that we can cope on our own for a minimum of 72 hours during an emergency while rescue workers help those in urgent need.

Basic emergency preparedness starts with each individual. It starts with awareness of the risks that face each of us and our families. It requires plans to manage those risks whether we need to evacuate from a wildfire or a flood or respond to an earthquake or, if we need to, to shelter in place. Preparedness requires that we have the supplies we need to care for ourselves, our families and even our pets in the days after an emergency.

During this national week focused on emergency preparedness, I encourage each of us to take concrete actions to prepare for events I hope we never face. Practise your family escape route in case of a house fire. Pack an emergency kit for your vehicle and one for your office in case you can't go home. Remove materials from your yard that would help wildfire to spread. Replace the batteries and refresh the food in your 72-hour kit so you can be self-sufficient. Update your family emergency contact numbers and designated meeting place in case you and your family are separated.

To help Yukoners plan, prepare and be aware, the government has mailed a booklet on emergency preparedness to homes last week. The information is also available year-round at preparedyukon.ca and I know most community offices have copies as well. I encourage everyone to bookmark preparedyukon.ca and to follow Protective Services on Facebook and Twitter. You'll get timely information during an emergency and prevention and safety information all year long.

Emergency management across Canada is a shared responsibility. Everyone has a role to play — individuals, municipalities, First Nation governments, communities, the territory and the nation. When each of us does our part to reduce the risks and impact of an emergency, we contribute to our community's resiliency and to the territory's ability to respond and recover.

Emergency preparedness is not something that the government focuses on only during this important week. The Protective Services division of the Department of Community Services is crucial to preparedness response in the territory.

On behalf of all of us in the Legislature, I would like to acknowledge and thank all of the staff and volunteers who work to keep us safe in our communities across the Yukon. Full-time and volunteer responders with Yukon Emergency Medical Services provide pre-hospital care to the sick and injured. Career and volunteer firefighters in the Yukon fire services don't just respond to fire. They educate us on fire prevention and ensure that the buildings we use meet the National Fire Code of Canada.

Building Safety's standards keep us safe by ensuring that the structures in which we live and work are safely constructed. Wildland Fire Management protect lives, property and community assets from wildland fire and supports community efforts to reduce fuels.

The Emergency Measures Organization leads the government's emergency preparedness coordination planning. It helps ensure that Yukon government staff receive emergency measures training and share information with neighbouring jurisdictions. It provides guidance and training to Yukon government departments, municipal and First Nation governments and unincorporated communities on emergency management planning. During an emergency, it brings together the people and resources needed to support the First Nation governments, communities, municipalities and agencies that are responding.

For individuals, the Emergency Measures Organization provides advice and public information related to emergency preparedness. It coordinates the territory's Great Yukon ShakeOut earthquake preparedness drill each fall. It works with the volunteer organizations for ground, inland and civil air search and rescue and amateur radio.

The prepared yukon.ca website has information about planning, creating emergency plans and building an emergency kit. While we can be confident in the people and services in place to mitigate and respond to emergencies, Emergency Preparedness Week reminds us that each of us has a role to play. Each of us can plan for our family's safety. Each of us can take concrete steps to ensure we are self-sufficient during an emergency. By preparing for emergencies, each of us can help protect lives.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to acknowledge that in the gallery today we have one of our own EMS folks, Mr. Devin Bailey. I would like to welcome him here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Emergency Preparedness Week.

In light of last Monday's early wakeup call of an earthquake followed by aftershocks and another tremor two hours later, it serves as a good reminder to all of us to be prepared in the event that we're faced with an event of a significant and unexpected nature in the Yukon.

This year, the Government of Canada has attributed the theme of "Plan. Prepare. Be Aware." to Emergency Preparedness Week. There are few people in southern Yukon who did not feel the tremors last week. As my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, noted, the events in Fort McMurray last year with the wildfire as well as flooding going on currently across the country are other good reminders of the types of natural events that we could be faced with, either with warning or without warning. Again, that serves as a reminder for all of us to plan, prepare and be aware.

Here in the Yukon, we're surrounded by a vast expanse of wilderness. Our communities are located in the midst of a large network of rivers and lakes. We're also surrounded by hundreds of miles of trees and mountains. One of the best things about being a Yukoner is having the opportunity to enjoy and take advantage of our beautiful wilderness

surroundings. We have access to some of the most remarkable wilderness in the country but are also, as a result, exposed to risks year-round in our daily activity.

Emergencies can happen at anytime, anywhere. It is important to be prepared for something that is minor, such as a power outage, or more extreme events, such as a large district wildfire. Efforts in the past have included Operation Nanook. The Canadian Armed Forces have done work in areas of preparing for events such as a large wildfire or earthquake response. It is important for each and every one of us to recognize our responsibility to take a leadership role in our own homes and with our own families in preparing ourselves to protect ourselves and our families during an emergency situation.

Everyone is encouraged to ensure their family has an emergency kit available that contains supplies, water, personal and any medical items and pet supplies. This kit should be easily retrievable in an emergency and able to sustain a family over a 72-hour period. It's also a good idea to have emergency kits in each vehicle in the event of a roadside emergency. Again, we would also encourage people to consider creating an emergency plan for your family, which will help you be aware of what needs to be done in an emergency situation and ensure that your family is taken care of during that critical period immediately following an emergency.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge and thank the many people in Yukon who work and volunteer in emergency response roles. To staff and volunteers, including firefighters, the Fire Marshal's Office, Emergency Medical Services, Search and Rescue, Emergency Measures Organization, Wildland Fire Management, the RCMP, RCMP auxiliary constables and Victim Services auxiliary support, and many more across the territory, thank you for your dedication to the safety and well-being of the Yukon and all its citizens.

Ms. White: I rise today on behalf of the NDP caucus to pay tribute to Emergency Preparedness Week and to the many staff and volunteers across the Yukon who work so hard to keep us safe.

We acknowledge that a great number of people and organizations across the country and around the globe work hard to keep people safe during the most stressful of times. We have only to look toward Quebec to see those groups in action right now. We thank them for their continued dedication and hard work, but today we choose to look closer to home.

It was a literal wake-up call last week for many of us when we experienced our first larger-scale earthquake. Luckily there was very little in the way of property damage and no reported injuries. It's fairly easy to talk about our own personal responsibility about being prepared, but how many of us are really prepared for a 72-hour emergency? I certainly am not, Mr. Speaker. Every household in Yukon has just received a pamphlet with helpful hints and checklists to help us become more prepared, and hopefully last week's earthquake will be the catalyst to help us take our responsibility more seriously. It's a great pamphlet, but what it doesn't do is inform the

public about the where and how to get to there, should a disaster strike us.

Whitehorse is a prime example of a place with few exit or entrance routes, especially if you are in the downtown or Riverdale areas. Do you know where the muster points are for your neighbourhood or in the City of Whitehorse itself? Where should you go? Should you make your way to the Canada Games Centre or is it somewhere else that is a safe spot? Did you know there is a second emergency exit from Riverdale over the hydro dam?

In our office, we spend a lot of time thinking about seniors and people with disabilities. What happens with them during an emergency? What happens with a senior living on the third floor of an apartment building or a Yukon Housing building when the power goes out and they can't navigate the stairs? What happens with a person living independently but without transportation? What is the government's plan and responsibility to make those emergency plans known to all community members, and how do we make sure those plans are communicated and carried out during an emergency? How can we, as a community, better understand what to do in the case of evacuation due to fire or earthquake?

We saw the confusion locally when the downtown core and schools were evacuated during 9/11, and I'm sure there are lessons we can learn from last year's Fort McMurray experience. Unfortunately, disasters and emergencies rarely come at convenient times. Mr. Speaker, I truly hope that, in the very near future, another pamphlet will be sent out to every household that indicates escape routes, muster points and other important information.

Again, thanks to the staff and volunteers across Yukon working to keep us safe.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Pursuant to section 97(6) of the *Workers' Compensation Act*, I have for tabling the 2016 annual report of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

Further, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 97(6) of the *Workers' Compensation Act*, I have for tabling the amended 2015 annual report of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. This report corrects the 2015 annual report tabled in the Legislative Assembly last May, in which certain financial statements were mistakenly, entitled "Notes to the financial statements". An explanation of the corrections are provided on the inside cover of the amended annual report.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees to be presented?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to allow direct sales from local beer and liquor manufacturers to bars, restaurants and consumers, eliminating the markup on local products.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consider expanding the proposed amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* so that all workers covered by the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board benefit from presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder or injury (PTSD or PTSI) legislation.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide a land grant at no cost and provide a low-interest loan toward the construction of the Vimy Heritage Housing facility.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consider a bipartisan mission with the Official Opposition to Alaska and Washington, DC, to lobby the United States government on reinstating Shikwax funding.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education in collaboration with the Minister of Health and Social Services to instruct their departments to begin work to develop a health curriculum for use in schools that educates on the dangers of prescription opioid abuse for all students in the Yukon education system.

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

THAT this House supports the work of, and the individuals appointed to, the Electoral District Boundaries Commission.

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: Tax policies

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, during the 2016 election campaign, the now-Minister of Economic Development said that eliminating the small business tax would help grow the economy and create jobs. He also said it would help local contractors to compete. Some Yukon businesses believed him and indeed some may have even voted for the Liberals

because of this promise. My question is very simple: What caused the Minister of Economic Development to change his mind?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, speaking to that question, I don't think it was just me changing my mind. We have really looked at a one-government approach, so certainly there was a collective conversation with my colleagues. First and foremost, we looked at the financial situation of the government. We have discussed that over and over, and I think when we looked at the financial impact with the change, the discussion was to make the change at this time as much as we could — and that was the one percent.

The member opposite is correct. It is something that I said and we certainly campaigned on it. We also had a series of data in front of us that wasn't quite what we saw after taking office. To the member opposite, those are some of the reasons why we made the decision that we did.

Mr. Hassard: The Liberals broke their election promise to Yukoners to eliminate the small business tax. Unfortunately, this isn't the only promise that was broken since the election. They have also promised to increase the ceiling for the small business tax credit from \$1 million to \$5 million and increase the asset limit to allow larger companies to qualify.

The announcement was made by the current MLA for Copperbelt North who, during the campaign, said that increasing the credit will allow more Yukoners to invest in local businesses and increasing the cap will allow larger companies to take advantage of this program, yet we see nothing at all in this budget that reflects that.

Can the minister tell us what action this government has taken to fulfill this commitment made to Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Overall, as we look at this theme concerning our taxation and the programs that we're implementing, first and foremost, I think that, politically, it's an easy decision. You can walk in — certainly we campaigned on it and had those discussions. Likely, the easy political decision would have been to just say, "You know what? We're going to reduce it and eliminate it as stated." Then I wouldn't be sitting here and I wouldn't be defending the decision to only reduce it by one percent, but what you have to do is take into consideration the information in front of you. Like we've talked about, sometimes you have to make those tough decisions. That's for the small business tax.

As for the other programs that we're looking at, we have multi-year mandates. These are the first pieces that we have looked at. We're going to continue to make the business environment and the business ecosystem more friendly. That's not just within tax and financial triggers and programs, but also working to communicate with our contractors better, which we've continued to do, and looking out and understanding through planning where we can see the best bang for our buck when it comes to the economy.

Mr. Hassard: There is a growing gap between what the Liberals promised during the 2016 election and what they're actually doing. This government promised to get contracts out

by the end of March. We've seen them amend that campaign promise. This government promised to eliminate the small tax rate — again, a broken promise. This government promised to increase the small tax credit, but again they've broken that promise.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us: Are there any other campaign promises they intend to break?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. We do have a five-year mandate and we will be getting to a lot of the commitments. You don't put everything in your first budget. I believe it was the fourth budget in a row by the time the Yukon Party finally said, "We've done it; we've accomplished all that we set out in our campaign promises." Now the member opposite wants us to complete everything in the first four months.

What we are committed to is creating the economic conditions that allow investors and employers to invest in marketing, training and investing in innovation to create more good jobs. We've committed to encouraging economic activity in the territory by creating a favourable corporate tax for those who are looking to do business in the Yukon. We've reduced that tax rate from 15 percent to 12 percent to get us within sight of the national average or just below it. We've done the same with the small business tax — cutting it another 33 percent.

What we want to hear is more solutions. We've said in the media that we're not done with this campaign promise. We want to take a look at sole proprietors; we want to take a look at how our actions affect not only small corporate businesses but small businesses in general. We will open that up to a conversation this summer and we're looking forward to hearing from the opposition as to where they think we should be focusing our initiatives.

When it comes to procurement as well, Rome wasn't built in a day. We have committed to having these plans, we will have them in place and we hope to get to that by the next means budget.

Question re: Mineral staking

Mr. Kent: I have a series of mining-related questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Mr. Speaker, what is commonly known as the "free-entry system" for staking claims is extremely important for individuals who are involved in the mining industry, and the Yukon Party has long been a strong proponent for maintaining this as the preferred way of acquiring mineral claims.

Is the government contemplating changes to the quartz and placer mining acts under the successor resource legislation? If so, will the minister commit that any changes to the QMA and PMA will not include changes to free entry?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think what we are really getting into is class 1 notification, and then we are talking about legislation as well. Just a bit on the notification piece — the consent order — a legal case, of course, that was in motion and that we inherited coming into this job — was prepared by the Government of Yukon and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and was filed in the Supreme Court Yukon on March 2, 2017. This

agreement that we put in place gives us more time to have discussions over the next year when it comes to notification.

The people we have to work with to come up with resolutions to these challenges — the previous government really didn't get that clarified. It just continued to escalate and then there was a legal challenge, of course. Working with prospectors, first of all — they have done some of the most intense work, really looking at what a class 1 looks like, which has really been the bone of contention. Listening to industry — I sat with them for an hour and a half in January and they said it was the longest that they have ever actually had a meeting with a minister. Having those discussions with them and being able to take that information and then work with First Nations, such as Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, to come up with a regime over the next year — I think those are going to be some of the key pieces, but I am willing to answer the rest of those questions as we go along.

Mr. Kent: Free-entry staking and that method of acquiring mineral claims is not something that's captured in class 1, so the minister in his answer is incorrect, but I will follow up with some class 1 exploration questions for the minister.

Class 1 exploration has been described to me by a number of prospectors as their bread and butter. Notification for this activity has now been in place in some parts of the Yukon and may be Yukon-wide by the next year. Much of this activity has a very low impact on the environment. The Yukon Prospectors Association has proposed revised thresholds so that some activity can take place without notification.

Can the minister tell us if he is considering these revised thresholds in his discussions with First Nations as we move toward Yukon-wide notification? Perhaps he can tell us if he is considering including free-entry staking within class 1, because that would be something certainly very new to the Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Absolutely — you are correct. We are looking at the difference between either the work that has been done after staking or the staking — and I apologize. The reason I went down that road is that it really has to do with impact and activity on land. My discussions with the Prospectors Association — they have done some great work. We were just in Dawson City about a week ago. My discussions with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in — if they are willing to look at some of that early work. They absolutely are looking toward that early work.

Having industry work with First Nation governments, I think we can build some platforms in between so that we can have those conversations. To my critic across the way, I haven't been looking at changes within legislation for that; I am just trying to come up with a remedy that can get us to the right place.

Mr. Kent: My final supplementary is a follow-up on a question raised by the MLA for Watson Lake last week.

Mr. Speaker, we now have over 50 percent of the Yukon off limits to new staking. The latest extension to the ban in the Liard area put us over that threshold. In the past, when a staking ban has been put in place, relief from assessment has

been granted to existing claimholders as the uncertainty created often makes it difficult for some of them to raise the necessary capital to keep their claims in good standing.

Since this was raised last week, has the minister had a chance to confirm whether or not relief is in place, or consider providing relief for claimholders in this area?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you for bringing that up. I owe the answer to the Member for Watson Lake.

Yes. Relief from assessment work has been provided in the Ross River area previously. So relief from assessment was granted to the Kaska Dena Council/Liard First Nation area for a period of one year. It's ending on January 31, 2018. The answer I don't have for you is when it was put in place but I can find that out. But absolutely, there is relief — to answer that question.

What I find intriguing too — to my critic — I think that we should continue this discussion, because what you've talked about is the free-entry system but, certainly in 2015, as you know — you made some pretty strong statements. I have some communication pieces that have gone on as we looked at this. I think it was on June 18, 2014 that a letter from the previous Premier was sent to the chiefs of Yukon First Nations that had settled land claims committing to have in place a class 1 criteria table and thresholds prior to the 2015 field season. Then, on October 2, 2014, the previous Premier sent a letter to all self-governing First Nations inviting their participation in the class 1 thresholds consultation. I'm going to continue on that road.

I think you wanted to get it done because you knew that this would solve a lot of problems. We will continue to work with prospectors. We will continue to work with First Nations on that path but we are trying to come up with a remedy so we don't see more legal challenges.

Question re: Energy retrofits

Ms. Hanson: In the 2016 election, this government promised to invest \$30 million annually in energy retrofits. Last Thursday, the minister was clear that the Liberal platform commitment was for an annual \$30-million investment in new money for energy retrofits, not simply funding for ongoing projects.

This year's budget includes little new money for energy retrofits, other than the \$200,000 investment — less than one percent of what they promised.

The minister said the decision was based on the financial pressures this government is under and that he is confident that Ottawa may come to his government's rescue with energy retrofit funding in future years.

Mr. Speaker, will this government only fulfill its promise to invest \$30 million in energy retrofits per year if Ottawa foots the bill?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Most of what the member opposite stated was accurate. There were a couple of things. First of all, I think what we would like to see happen is, depending on how criteria is built for the green programs — we had a good discussion about them here last week. They were identified by the member of the Official Opposition. Would I like to see

that money move in this fiscal year? Absolutely. Are we going to see that happen? I'm not sure. Our goal is to move dollars into proper criteria. There were different questions that were asked last week: Would we use it for infrastructure?

I think your colleague asked me if we would use it for infrastructure and capital builds in communities. I don't think that's where we're going, but our goal is to see that money move, hopefully, in the next year and be able to roll it out. Within this framework right now, do we have \$30 million to fill that program need? You know where we sit right now from a financial perspective.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and indeed I do, but I didn't campaign on this commitment. You did and I'm asking the question: Is the government committed to spending \$30 million new every year? Energy retrofits create local jobs and reduce energy consumption, which in turn help save money. Whether they are targeted at government, industry, or residential buildings, the long-term benefits of energy retrofits are well-documented. In short, energy retrofits are sound investments. Yukon's commitment to these programs should not be dependent on Ottawa's willingness to foot the bill. How much new money, if any, will this government allocate to energy retrofit programs aside from any potential federal funding?

When can Yukoners expect to see new Yukon government funding — next year or five years from now?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we have to take a look at the whole financial framework of the government. As much as I would like to say that we have all of this money that has been created here — and I apologize if I'm off, but I think we're at nine- or 10-percent own-source revenue.

First and foremost, this is all money that's coming from the federal government — whether it's a new program or what we have in our financial framework. I'll touch on a couple of things and a couple of the pieces that we've looked at. The previous government had put the residential energy incentive program in place. We have committed to keeping that in place. It's a \$1.6-million spend. Yes, it's an old program, but we're going to continue to have that in place as it was over-subscribed.

We have about \$2 million for HRV upgrades in the Yukon main building and then we're going to continue on with the airport, the schools, Grey Mountain Primary School and Whitehorse Correctional Centre as well. There is \$250,000 for the good energy incentive program, which rebates Yukoners who have purchased energy-efficient appliances and heating systems for their homes.

When you prepare a platform, you look at the data that's in front of you. I certainly wasn't here to see where we were from a financial perspective. You use the best numbers that you have. You come up with a plan that meets that. You saw the platform that we built. There wasn't grandiose spending. We looked at some simple programs, like you said. I agree with you completely — the retrofits are a smart piece. They're good for local contractors, not just big contractors. Small contractors can take on a lot of these jobs. It saves people

money at home. We're committed to it. I hope to see us being able to roll a program out through our partnership with the federal government.

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know the financial pressure this government is under does not give them a free pass to break their election promises. The fact is that the government chose to fulfill certain promises, like a 20-percent tax cut for corporations, and then they chose to break other promises, like investing in energy retrofits. It's a question of priorities. Contractors and workers in the building trades shouldn't be left on hold while this government waits for a callback from Ottawa.

If this government's support for energy retrofit programs is, as we've just heard from the minister, largely dependent on funding from Ottawa, can the minister at least tell this House what, if any, funds have been requested from Ottawa and when he expects to hear back from Ottawa?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the member opposite that energy retrofits are sound investments in the territory and that's why we put it in our platform and that's why we're going to get to the \$30 million a year.

It is important that at the same time we build up the capacity within the territory in terms of trade and in terms of local governments. By the way, last week when the Member for Takhini-Kopper King asked about how this will be afforded by individual homeowners, one of the things that we have been discussing is using the rural well program as a way in which to put the money up front and allow for those homeowners to pay it back over time — sort of as a loan against their property.

The way that this will happen is allowing for local solutions to local problems. That investment will pay back in the territory because it will make us more energy efficient. It is the one place where we use energy here that we really have local solutions, which is using insulation to not have to heat our homes. We're not dependent on money from Ottawa for this; however, we will certainly seek it in partnership with Ottawa.

To answer the question: When will we know? We anticipate that within the next several months we will be getting more details that came out under the green fund and other infrastructure funds.

Question re: School structural safety

Ms. White: Last week's earthquakes resulted in temporary closure of two schools — both the Elijah Smith Elementary School and Ross River School. Both have since been deemed safe and reopened. These two schools were not assessed in the last two seismic evaluations of Yukon schools.

Can the minister inform this House of the extent of the damages at the Elijah Smith and Ross River schools and tell Yukoners why these schools were not previously assessed in the last two seismic evaluations?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much to the member opposite for the question. The earthquake was a

surprise to everyone. I actually don't have the answer to the second part of her question, which was why they weren't included in the seismic evaluations, but I will find out and return to her with the answer to that question.

I can indicate with respect to the schools after the earthquake last week that all the schools in the territory were checked. Ross River, as all members of this House know, is an issue with respect to the permafrost that the school is built on. Evaluations are being done of the Ross River School all the time, not the least of which was immediately after the earthquake, which is why the students were out of that school for a few more days than the other locations.

I can indicate that the engineer who was brought to Ross River was the same engineer who has been doing the assessments of that school for at least over the last year. For consistency's sake, we wanted the same person to evaluate that school, so it took some days to have that particular person attend Ross River and make the evaluation. The report was done afterwards that the school was all clear and the students were returned.

I should also note with respect to the Leader of the Official Opposition's comments that he made last week that the field trips that were planned for those students were pre-planned for that week.

Ms. White: It's interesting to note that these two schools are more recent builds than most schools in Yukon. The latest seismic evaluation of Yukon schools was completed in 2013 and the previous one was done in 2010. As I mentioned, neither the Elijah Smith or Ross River schools were included in those assessments. In fact, only eight out of 29 schools were assessed — those built between 1950 and 1961. The report made several recommendations for physical improvements to ensure their viability in case of an earthquake.

Can the minister tell this House if those remedial steps were completed as recommended in those evaluations?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the supplemental question. I should indicate that the Ross River School, as I said, was assessed, a report was done and the students were returned there. I didn't note the issue with respect to Elijah Smith, which the honourable member has also brought up. The Elijah Smith situation — with respect to that school after the earthquake — involved the breaking of some interior windows. Those of you who have been to that school know that the library inside has glass windows. They cracked or were broken as a result of the earthquake. There was also a full assessment done of the structural capabilities of that school. As a result, the kids were only out of that school for one day while they cleaned up the glass and then closed off the library so that the repairs can happen.

As I have already said, I don't have information with respect to the seismic review or assessment that the honourable member is mentioning, but I will get that information for her.

Ms. White: Many here will remember the closure of Ross River School in 2013 due to melting permafrost and shifting foundations. The school was closed for eight months

while repairs were made. Issues with the condition of this school have been ongoing since it was built in 1981, mostly due to permafrost conditions under the school.

Can the minister tell this House what modernizing and remediation work is ongoing at Ross River School to ensure that the students of Ross River don't face another extended school closure?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This government takes the safety of our schoolchildren very seriously. I can assure the member opposite that we don't shirk our responsibilities when it comes to children and staff in our schools.

We know about the problems with the Ross River School. The permafrost that the school was built on has led to a shifting foundation. They have a number of engineering marvels to try to correct the issue. I could go into detail about thermosyphons and insulation and everything else, but the fact is that we are not entirely convinced that these measures are working as expected. We have taken up a much more stringent review process of this school. We had engineers out there on March 8. We have them doing geotechnical and structural inspections to the school twice a year. Following the earthquake in that area, I have actually asked my officials to see if we could step that up and actually do more inspections to make sure that school is operating within acceptable parameters.

Question re: Yukon Energy Corporation 20-year resource plan

Mr. Istchenko: I have an energy question. Yukon Energy Corporation spent the winter travelling to several Yukon communities as part of their consultation for their 20-year vision. In the sessions, Yukon Energy Corporation indicated that they would like the government to borrow \$300 million to help address future energy needs.

Can the Minister responsible for Yukon Energy Corporation let this House know if they intend to respond positively to this request and if they have included the borrowing of money for Yukon Energy Corporation in their budget?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, some of that statement is accurate and some of it is not. They put together an IRP program. The IRP program is essentially the long-term plan for infrastructure. There were three different models. There was a \$200-million model, there was \$300-million, and then, with a high industrial load, depending on how many renewables, it was \$400 million.

As you know, from being in government, it's not just debt. There's a combination of debt. There are two former ministers across the way who can explain that to your team. Essentially there's a mix of equity and debt on some, and some of it goes to rates. We're going to have some long conversations about what has transpired with the corporation, certainly.

But at this point in time, we're looking at what is in place and looking at funds that are available that will deal with green — taking that and putting that into the equation and

seeing if the IRP, as it lays out right now — under the plan, for I think, \$207 million — is the right plan that's in place.

I have also gone back over the work that has been done on the next generation hydro and the \$4.1 million. So, before we say that the \$4.1 million has basically just been paying for studies and we shelve it, I think it's appropriate to go out and talk to some of the stakeholders that were a part of that consultation. So we continue to do that and continue to look at what programs can reduce the cost of this infrastructure.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister opposite for educating me on the briefing that I went to from Yukon Energy.

As part of Yukon Energy's future vision, they are recommending that the government build a third natural gas generator for the territory.

Can the minister let us know if the government is considering moving ahead with this recommendation? Would the minister be able to tell us what the cost of it would be? Also, have they given any thought as to where it would be built?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There are a couple of pieces. When the opposition was in government, they went through a YESAA process — and I think I'm accurate on this. I think the third turbine was part of the YESAA application that had gone through at executive committee. Actually, the site that's in existence right now has the ability to add a third turbine.

What the next steps are — we're trying to make sure that we go through Management Board and we do our spending appropriately and correctly as per the protocol of government. There's an ask that's in place right now. It goes to Yukon Energy, then Yukon Development Corporation and then into a Management Board submission that gets reviewed. I believe that the LNG is one element off a bigger ask, so there are a number of items that they are looking at. That's sort of looking at some of the early work but also the first steps of the IRP.

Mr. Istchenko: I do thank the member opposite for answering the question.

As part of Yukon Energy's plan, they say they will have to undertake what they call "Southern Lakes enhancement". The Yukon Energy resource plan describes the Southern Lakes enhancement concept by saying that it would increase the water storage in the existing reservoir on the Southern Lakes systems by increasing the upper allowable limit to 30 centimetres.

Can the minister let us know if the government is considering moving ahead with the Southern Lakes enhancement by increasing the upper limits of the water levels on the Southern Lakes?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It's an option to look at — on how we can produce more energy. There are two different conversations happening with two different groups. There has been an ongoing conversation with Carcross/Tagish First Nation. I believe that has happened — not just over the last months, but even longer, over the last number of years.

I just responded to individuals within the community in Marsh Lake — the South M'Clintock residents group, I

believe — just this week. They have some concerns about it so we have to make sure that we have those conversations with the people of the affected areas first.

Certainly, there are some we are looking at, and part of it is what's happening just naturally as we look for these opportunities to use existing infrastructure with some changes, but also what's happening actually. When we get into it, we can have some other discussions. There are some interesting things happening just as we see temperatures change, but certainly it is absolutely an option on the table — but making sure we have support to move forward on it.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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 (Mr. Hutton): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. Is it the wish of members to take a brief recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*.

Bill No. 2: *National Aboriginal Day Act*

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to welcome to the Legislature, Ms. Louise Michaud and Mr. Shane Hickey — and regrets from Sephora. I have already heard from colleagues from across the House that they are disappointed that Sephora is not joining us today.

Mr. Chair, we are prepared to answer questions to Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Kent: Welcome back to the officials. A quick follow-up to a question that I raised during Committee last time we were up — and that's with respect to an economic analysis — recognizing, of course, that one hasn't been done yet. I did ask the minister if he would do one going forward. I believe that the language I reviewed in the Blues is they would consider it but I was hoping for a more definitive

statement by the minister that they will do it because I think, as he mentioned, they had some difficulty in accessing any information from the Government of NWT so, as the second jurisdiction that will bring in this day as a statutory holiday, perhaps if we have an economic analysis done that will help inform other jurisdictions as to what the costs and, more importantly, the benefits will be of recognizing June 21 as National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday.

I will follow up with my first question for today as well. I have heard from a number of businesses on the potential costs to them of this statutory holiday. I will give a couple of examples for the minister. One business that will be closing down for the day has six employees. They anticipate that it will cost them approximately \$1,800 in wages for that day, plus the lost revenue for having to not produce any of their services for that day. On the other end of the spectrum, I did hear from a company that needs to work that day, so it will have to pay the requisite overtime to their 60 employees. Their anticipated cost is \$30,000.

My question for the minister is about a couple of things perhaps that they would consider — or whether or not they have considered this — and if he could provide an answer as to why if they won't do it — and that is with respect to deferred implementation, which would mean that we would celebrate June 21, 2018 as the first National Aboriginal Day. That would give these businesses time to prepare and give municipalities time to account for it in their budgets — that type of thing. Perhaps the minister would potentially consider a staggered implementation, where this June 21, the Yukon government would recognize it as a holiday and then bring it in as a full statutory holiday next year.

Again, we heard from some businesses in the hospitality sector that the short time frame — the short window — notification they had doesn't allow them to move some of the events or other things that they had planned so that their staff would be able to have that day off. I am just hoping to hear back from the minister that he would potentially consider some of these options as we look to implement National Aboriginal Day.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Chair, there were several questions there. I will try to do my best to respond to them. If I don't get all questions that the Opposition House Leader has asked, then I would encourage him to ask again. I am not trying to avoid anything.

First of all, as to whether or not we will do a study — the answer is yes, although I want to make sure that I am careful with that. After last Thursday, I did go back to the department and we discussed economic analysis regarding the implementation. We had actually already looked at other jurisdictions to try to understand whether they had done economic analyses, especially those that had recently added a statutory holiday. None of them have undertaken a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis due to the broad scope and criteria that would need to be included in the analysis, the data that would be required and costs associated with doing that analysis. It is not as simple as comparing one statutory

holiday to another on a different date, because there are different factors that come into effect.

We do want to do analyses. We are looking for evidence-based decision-making and we will do some. I just want to be careful, because the scope of what is being requested may be different. For example, the department has informed me that five years of data is useful when you're looking at this type of analysis.

I'll try to get to some of the questions that the member opposite asked. If the question is: Are we considering delaying? No, we're not considering delaying for a period of time; we would like to bring this holiday in. Part of the reason for that is that we recognize this was a platform commitment and we put it out there. Another reason is this year is Canada's 150th birthday and we wanted to celebrate National Aboriginal Day in the same year, so when we gave it that consideration, it was with respect to timing and that now was the time.

We did run on a campaign of bringing it in and we think that has helped to inform the business community. We took steps as well to speak with them directly and let them know that we were going to see it early.

With respect to the question that came last time about how much it will cost, we did some analyses ourselves as well in what I would call preliminary cost estimates of what this might look like. We ran some numbers about overtime on a statutory holiday for ourselves and the business community and, again, these are challenging numbers because it's different between different sectors within the business community. When it comes to how employers can prepare to celebrate the statutory holiday, when the survey was conducted before the election happened, employers and the business community overall said they support the creation of a statutory holiday. For many of them, there would be no impact. While there is some cost to some employers — that is correct — there are also benefits.

We had debate on this issue during the election. The original petition was first tabled in 2015 here in the Legislature and the consultation took place a year ago — May to July 2016. So we feel that there has been time and opportunity for input into debate and now the time is to respond to the people and to act. We recognize that there is going to be some productivity lost over the day itself for some businesses and that there will be overtime costs for essential services. Businesses in other sectors, however, such as tourism, culture and hospitality will benefit. In weighing those out, we took the decision that we would go forward with the holiday this year and we're looking forward to celebrating it with our businesses.

Mr. Kent: Perhaps when the minister is on his feet again, he can comment on the option that came to us of perhaps a staggered implementation where Yukon government would be celebrating National Aboriginal Day as a holiday this year — similar, I guess, to days like Heritage Day — the one near Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous — that is a Yukon government holiday, but not a statutory holiday. I believe Easter Monday is the same. It's not considered a statutory

holiday, but it is a holiday for some individuals, including Yukon government here in the territory.

Would the minister consider staggering so that businesses have a chance to prepare? Is it something that can be done within the way the legislation is written, or would it just have to come into force and effect on June 22 and then give June 21 off as a holiday to Yukon government and then, in 2018, have it fully implemented as a statutory holiday?

Just leading into my next question again, this was a suggestion that was sent to the previous Minister of Community Services on July 8, 2016 during consultations on observing National Aboriginal Day as an additional statutory holiday, and it came from the Klondike Placer Miners' Association. I'm going to take some time to read the letter that they sent to the minister at the time. I believe the current minister has a copy of this as well from the KPMA. That's what they had mentioned to me when I spoke to them in preparation for this debate.

What this is says is:

"Dear Minister Dixon,

"The Klondike Placer Miners' Association (KPMA) would like to thank the Yukon Government and the Department of Community Services for inviting Yukoners to provide input regarding the possibility of National Aboriginal Day becoming an additional statutory holiday in Yukon. We have encouraged our membership to participate in the online survey.

"The KPMA values First Nations' significant contributions to Yukon's rich culture and heritage, as together First Nations and gold mining comprise two of key pillars of the Yukon identity. We therefore support initiatives that recognize First Nations achievement as we feel Yukon as a whole will benefit from such recognition.

"The KPMA does have concerns however regarding the considerable cost borne by its membership should an additional statutory holiday be observed during our short production season. Due to the nature of our industry, our employees typically work long days for weeks on end. This results in overtime costs for our employers which far outweigh regular hours' payroll. Consequently, statutory holidays have substantially higher cost implications for placer mining than sectors which operate using a standard work week.

"Should the Yukon Government amend the *Employment Standards Act* and related legislation to observe National Aboriginal Day as a statutory paid holiday, the KPMA would like to respectfully submit that National Aboriginal Day be exchanged for an existing statutory holiday that is already observed within the summer months. This would facilitate a fitting recognition of First Nations contributions to Yukon society without adding any net increase to employer costs.

"Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

"Sincerely..." and it was signed by the executive director of the Klondike Placer Miners' Association.

My question for the minister is, as we go through — all things being equal, I guess — if this June 21 is implemented as a stat holiday and the staggering isn't enacted, would the

minister and his Cabinet colleagues consider looking at exchanging this holiday for another one that takes place during the summer months as suggested by the Klondike Placer Miners' Association? It was actually further suggested to me by the president of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce in a conversation I had with him — he suggested perhaps just another holiday of some sort be taken off the books, not necessarily in the summer months, as was suggested by the KPMA.

But again, I'll ask if the minister is considering that request from the Klondike Placer Miners' Association as part of his deliberations?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you to the member opposite for his suggestions.

I'll try to answer it in a few parts. Again, first of all, with respect to the question of exchanging this holiday with another, there are two thoughts that I have around that. The first one is: the holidays that exist have specific reasons for being celebrated, and so does this one. What we're looking at is to recognize this as a holiday that acknowledges the deep history of this territory. My question back then ultimately becomes: Which one do you suggest? If there's a notion that we would swap a holiday — one for another — then, quite simply, which one? If you have a suggestion, I'm totally open to hearing it. But when I looked through them, I thought that's not very likely. Again, our reasoning around it is simply that we are celebrating specific things. I do thank the KPMA for their letter. We did receive it, we did discuss it and there were some excellent points that were made.

With respect to how we can offset the effect of an additional holiday during the summer season on seasonal industries — for example, mining, and including tourism — we did, first of all, send the survey out. I note that invitations were sent out specifically to affected employers. We know that the date, June 21, is the one that has been selected by the country — by Canada — as the date to celebrate National Aboriginal Day. It has a culturally relevant significance — being the longest day of the year — so we weren't seeking to try to switch the day around that has been established.

But when we put out the survey, we did seek specifically to get in the catchment of that survey those industries that would be significantly affected — seasonal industries — and we got feedback from the chambers as well, and those seasonal industries.

One thing about the *Employment Standards Act* is that it has some flexibility built into it that can work to offset the effects that statutory holidays might have on business operations. If the holiday occurs at a peak time, the employer does have the ability to provide alternative time off for the employee or employees that can be added to the employees' vacation time later on with the agreement of a majority of employees to shift a holiday to a time that works for everybody. So those are options that are available.

I note as well — can we require those employees to work? An employer can still require employees to work on National Aboriginal Day. However, as with other statutory holidays, an employer is required to pay the employee at the

applicable overtime rate for all hours worked on the holiday or pay the employee at their regular rate of hours worked on the regular holiday and be given a day off that may be added to the employee's annual vacation or grant the employee a day off at a time convenient to the employer and the employee. So, in that way, we hope to work with businesses like placer miners to allow them, when they're in their very high season and they want to stay working at that time, to shift the day off when it works for that business or industry.

Mr. Kent: Just to be clear with the minister, the suggestions of swapping this out with another summer holiday or another holiday of sorts were suggestions that were given to us by the Klondike Placer Miners' Association and the Yukon Chamber of Commerce. They are not our suggestions. If there are some follow-up conversations, I suggest that perhaps he and his colleagues talk to the KPMA at the gold show. I know that the Minister of Economic Development and Energy, Mines and Resources and others will probably be meeting with KPMA executives during the gold show — which is coming up in a couple of weeks — as well as reaching out to the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and getting their suggestions on it. It is certainly not an easy decision if you were to go that route, but again, these are some of the solutions that were brought forward by industry associations. I think following up with some of your concerns and questions with those organizations would also be helpful.

Just a few more questions — and I will start with some of the specific issues for the Yukon government. I note that the minister has mentioned that they feel — and I want to make sure that these numbers are correct that he used either in his second reading speech or his introductory remarks at Committee here — that the extra costs to the Yukon government will be \$117,000 and the payroll costs for one day are \$1.16 million. If he can confirm that I have the correct numbers that would be great. I did ask officials during the briefing this question, but I will just get the minister to confirm as well that there are no effects on the collective bargaining agreements that we have in place with the teachers and the Yukon government employees. My understanding from officials is that they just refer to the statutory holidays and holidays identified in the *Employment Standards Act*.

The final question is YG-related — and I am just trying to get a sense of it and whether he has the answer today or if he could provide this to me — there are a number of contracts that would have been signed and put into place with companies prior to the tabling of this legislation. I just want to make sure that the government will honour any change orders that come forward from those contractors that either have to lose production for a day or have to stay working and pay their employees because when they bid on those specific contracts, they wouldn't have known about this legislation coming forward during the time of the contract. Some of them I'm sure were signed last year or perhaps even the year before. Again, just for the contracting community, I want to make sure that the Yukon government would honour any change orders that come forward for increased payroll as a result of an additional statutory holiday being put into place.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, I will try to answer all of those questions and if I miss any, please just ask me again.

First of all, I did stand up and state that the estimated overtime pay for — we used July 1 just because it is a nearby date and a good comparator. Last year that was \$116,700. Now, I note that on years when there was firefighting happening, those overtime hours go up, so it is a fluid number. It depends on how much emergency response we have going on at that time. I am not sure if I heard the member opposite and I want to be careful. The average pay on that date was not \$1.6 million, but \$1.157 million.

With respect to the question about the collective agreement with the Yukon Employees Union and the Yukon Teachers' Association reflecting the change of the statutory holiday, these agreements have been reviewed and no changes are required.

With respect to the question about honouring contracts — will we be honouring them — I will have to check back with the department, but the note that I have in front of me right now is that they will be dealt with on a contract-by-contract basis. I can't give you a generic response right here, but certainly we're not ignoring the situation and we will be working with our contractors.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for the clarification. I think the number I used for the payroll for the day was \$1.16 million, so \$1.156 million is very close. Thank you for that clarification and thank you for the response as well on the contract-by-contract basis. Obviously some companies may be affected and may have to put in change orders, so they will appreciate hearing from the minister that those change orders will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Just a couple of questions — one on education and one on health care and how this impacts them. I checked the schedule and I don't believe there are any BC provincial exams scheduled for June 21 this year. With BC not honouring this day as a statutory holiday yet — hopefully they do in the future — are there any provisions in place? Would the students, I guess, have to write the exams on that particular day if June 21 is chosen as the day going forward or can the Department of Education make alternate arrangements so that they don't have to write on June 21? If the minister needs to consult with the Minister of Education and get back to me in a letter or in a legislative return, that's fine.

Another question is on the health care side. I would welcome a written response on this just in case there are any Yukoners who may be affected. I haven't had the chance to look to see if there are any affected this year, but the specialists' clinic at the hospital this year — I'm just wondering if there are any appointments booked for Yukoners on June 21 that will either have to be moved or if the specialists' clinic would stay open, just for this year obviously. In years out we can make some changes, but if there are any appointments booked for individuals at the specialists' clinic — obviously the hospital and other primary health care facilities will stay open, but I believe the specialists' clinic does shut down on statutory holidays.

Whether the minister can answer those questions now or if he needs to get back to us in writing after consulting with his colleagues, I would appreciate hearing back from him on those two issues at this point.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I did mishear. I appreciate the member opposite clarifying. I was trying to decide if I heard 1.6 or 1.16, and it was \$1.16 million for the average pay on a stat holiday.

I want to say that the Premier has asked me to go to the gold show a week and a bit from now for this very reason — to talk with the Klondike Placer Miners' Association. I will be there and I appreciate the suggestion.

I will also say that I already had the conversation with the Yukon chamber regarding substitute holidays. They posed the suggestion to me as well, and I asked them the question as to which holiday they would consider. They didn't have an answer. It wasn't an obvious answer for them. I think these are questions that we have explored, and I will continue to follow up with the chamber. I think it is important that we work with our partners in the business community.

With respect to the question regarding education and exams on that date, I don't know of any at this point. What I do know from my colleague is that, in the past, when there have been exams set on dates that don't work for us, there has been accommodation. I am assuming that there will be accommodation going forward. If there is anything different from that, we will check in with the department and we will get back to you.

With respect to the specialist clinics, I thank the member for his question. At this point, I will wait until I hear back more directly from the department officials. I am sure they are on it, but I will get an answer and provide it in writing.

I do note that we also estimated the overtime pay for our essential services in the health care and social assistance sector. Those dollars came to \$16,100 — again, based on July 1. We will have essential services running on the stat holiday, so Yukoners can rest assured that, as with other statutory holidays, we will make sure that Yukoners are provided for. I will get back on the question regarding the specialist clinic and appointments that had been set up.

Mr. Kent: I'm not sure where this would land — whether it's in Community Services or perhaps the Department of Finance or perhaps the new Financial Advisory Panel — but once we get a better sense on what the costs are going to be to the private sector businesses as well as, I guess, to municipalities and others, would the government be willing to entertain additional municipal grant opportunities for municipalities to mitigate these impacts, as well as for the private sector — some additional taxation tools that would help to mitigate the impacts over and above what the government has put in place, which, I believe, is dropping the small business tax from three to two percent and from a 15-percent to a 12-percent reduction on the corporate tax side of things?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, with respect to the municipalities, this weekend coming up is the Association of Yukon Communities' annual general meeting. I'm sure many

of us from all sides of the House will be there. I note that this year we are entering back into a discussion around the comprehensive municipal grant. I have had conversations with the association about that. I think that's where that conversation happens. When that conversation started in my first sit-down with the association, we had already announced National Aboriginal Day and they didn't raise it as a concern. But I do anticipate that we'll get questions and I think that's all part of the back and forth.

With respect to the business community, when we developed our platform, we did so in a way where we tried to balance all of these things out. That was part of the notion that we put in there. While the member opposite is asking for compensation over and above, one of the things that we did when we thought about bringing in National Aboriginal Day and a discussion around corporate taxes — that was all part of that discussion. That is what we have already delivered on.

There is still the question that is outstanding regarding the small business tax. The Premier and the Minister of Economic Development have both noted that, when we started to look at it, we saw that there were many small businesses that wouldn't benefit directly from that tax reduction because some of them are run as sole proprietorships and some are incorporated. There was a discussion that we wished to have. The minister and the Premier have noted that and we will continue those discussions. Certainly, we're happy to stay in conversation with the business community around these things, although we're not out there stating that they are to come back and ask us for further reductions. Those conversations are underway because we established them through our platform.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for his responses that he has provided today and the brief time that we had on Thursday in Committee of the Whole. The final question — and perhaps suggestion — for the government — once we get through third reading and assent today and we start recognizing National Aboriginal Day as a holiday, I hope the Premier will reach out to the Prime Minister to look at making National Aboriginal Day a national holiday. It would be great to see this celebrated from coast to coast to coast, beyond just the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

I thank members opposite for their time and thank the minister and his officials for the time here in Committee of the Whole, and I will turn the floor back to the minister and then over to colleagues from the Third Party.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for his suggestion. In fact, it has already happened. I know that the Premier has begun that conversation with the Prime Minister. We completely agree. We think that we are a great example, and we are hopeful that the country and other provinces will take the lead of the Northwest Territories and now us. We hope that we will create a bit of momentum out of it, and we certainly will work to take the Yukon message to Canada.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gallina: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to take a moment for this House to recognize our guests in the gallery today. Connor Whitehouse is a Porter Creek Centre constituent in the growing neighbourhood of Whistle Bend. Welcome back, Connor.

Laura Cabott has represented hundreds of residential school survivors across the north and I wanted to take this time to recognize her and thank her for her efforts. Thank you.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: I thank the Leader of the Official Opposition and the minister for an interesting exchange. I just have to comment on the irony of encouraging National Aboriginal Day as a national holiday when we have been talking for 35 years — since the first call for National Aboriginal Day to be recognized. If we were to go through the series of requested deferrals or trade-offs or everything else that we are suggesting at the federal level, we would be seeing the federal Conservatives recommending another 35 years of delay.

I think that one of the things that we witnessed this afternoon is that when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its recommendations and calls to action, all of the parties in this Legislative Assembly, and in the last territorial election, said that we embraced the calls to action. The challenge that we faced then was getting at it.

I understand that there is always — it's like how you look at the image. We have heard a lot of discussion this afternoon about costs. The economic analysis that was called for by my honourable colleague from the Official Opposition was asking the minister to talk about the potential costs — the costs here and costs there. I guess I would ask, on the balance: If there is an economic analysis being done, what potential economic benefits would we also see accruing as a result of implementing an opportunity for businesses to expand and to develop that perhaps haven't? It's perhaps a whole series of sectors that may be able to take advantage of this.

I'm asking if the minister could comment on that aspect of what I heard. It sounded like some form of analysis that was going to be undertaken.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks to the Leader of the Third Party for her question and thoughts.

Certainly there are costs and there are benefits. I'll answer the specific part of the question and then I'll try to generalize a bit. First of all, when we did the survey, what we saw was that nearly half of the employers and members of the business community who responded to the survey said that they would see little to no impact on their operations. The costs are not across the board — that is clear — and 20 percent said that they would benefit from the holiday. We have identified those cultural sectors where we think there is opportunity. I think we're excited on this side about those sectors and I know that the Minister of Tourism and Culture is working to place the Yukon in that light.

There was a —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Hanson: Sorry to interrupt, Mr. Chair, but I do want to just take an opportunity to welcome to the Legislative Assembly the person who introduced this motion to the Legislative Assembly, debated it passionately and led the petition call — Kevin Barr, the former MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — and Jan Stick, our former colleague from Riverdale South.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It is with real pleasure that I get to stand today and say thank you to Mr. Barr for not only bringing this forward, but also for representing Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I would like to commend him as well.

To follow up, there was a Harvard business review study, which we took a look at, that talks about when there is a holiday and when there is time off work, it isn't just those sectors that benefit from culture and tourism business; it's also that holidays contribute toward the performance of employees and partially mitigate losses in production and wages. It's not an easy number to come up with. Certainly we will look at this when we try to do the analysis afterward.

I want to be careful because, when we looked at other jurisdictions, we didn't even see some easy way to do the analysis. It might not be as in-depth as some would like, but we will do our best to try to gather what information we can — both on the costs and the benefits.

I would also like to note that when we do the consideration of National Aboriginal Day as a holiday, it isn't just the economic cost. There are social and cultural benefits that we think strongly are in favour of National Aboriginal Day. When we look at the territory as a whole, we see that this is a real opportunity and we're happy to be moving forward.

Ms. Hanson: It's pretty clear to everybody where we stand as a caucus and as a party with respect to the implementation of this holiday. We think the time has come for it and, as we said previously many times in this House, it is largely a symbolic action.

If I may, Mr. Chair, I would just like to quote two paragraphs from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in their section on the challenge of reconciliation. They talked about the need for a paradigm shift. They talked about the notion of public memory and they talked about — and I'm quoting here: "Reshaping national history", I would say equally territorial history "is a public process..." and this is not, if I may say, simply about a National Aboriginal Day holiday for aboriginal people to celebrate their history and their culture. It's about us understanding each other.

On that notion, they say it's a public process — "...one that happens through discussion, sharing and commemoration. As Canadians gather in public places to share their memories, beliefs, and ideas about the past with others, our collective understanding of the present and the future is formed. As citizens, our ideas, world views, cultural identities, and values are shaped not only in classrooms and museums or by popular

culture, but also in everyday social relationships and patterns of living that become our way of life.”

The point, Mr. Chair, as they say, is: “Public memory is dynamic — it changes over time as new understandings, dialogues, artistic expressions, and commemorations emerge. Public memory, much like national history, is often contentious. Although public memory can simply reinforce the colonial story of how Canada ...” — of how Yukon — “... began with European settlement and became a nation ...” — or a territory — “... the process of remembering the past together also invites people to question this limited version of history.”

It’s for those reasons that I think there comes a time when governments make a decision based on values. To me, this is a symbolic exercise of the importance of this value of reconciliation.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for those words. Those are very strong words.

When we discussed National Aboriginal Day as a holiday here in the Yukon, I think what I want us to take away from that is that it is a holiday for all Yukoners. In other words — and I was walking down the street the other day discussing the holiday with someone and they made a comment to me about how they are not First Nation, saying: “Is it a holiday for me?” I said, “Of course it is.”

I thought back to Remembrance Day and I’ve heard some of the tributes that have been given in this Legislature for Remembrance Day. None of us were — well, I hope I’m not incorrect. I don’t believe any of us were fighting in those wars, yet we acknowledge and remember on those days. The reason that we do that is because it is a shared history that we have. In a similar way, when we celebrate National Aboriginal Day, we all as Yukoners have the ability to share the original heritage and culture of this territory. That is critical and I thank the member for her comments.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?
Seeing none, we will proceed clause by clause.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On Preamble

Preamble agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Chair, I move that Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, be reported without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, be reported without amendment.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair’s report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 2: *National Aboriginal Day Act* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 2, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am willing to entertain further debate if there is any. I thank everybody.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate both sides of the House for this work on this act.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have indicated previously, the Official Opposition fully supports National Aboriginal Day. We feel it is incredibly important to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding achievements of aboriginal people, both here in Yukon and across the entire country. We believe that here in the Yukon, the celebration of Yukon First Nations enriches the lives of all Yukoners and, for this reason, we believe that the government has an important role to play in taking part in this recognition and celebration.

Asking pertinent questions of the government on this matter — as with all matters — is how we, as legislators, exercise the responsibilities given to us by the good people of the Yukon who have elected us here in this Assembly today. I think it is important to note that the Leader of the Third Party has criticized the Official Opposition for asking for costs and not benefits. However, I believe that in asking for an analysis

to be done — that an analysis actually takes into account costs and benefits.

While I do believe that the government has left some questions unanswered, I hope that they take all comments into consideration moving forward — not just with this bill but with all bills in the future as well. That being said, the Official Opposition will be supporting Bill No. 2 at third reading.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the government for introducing this legislation as one of the first pieces of legislation to be introduced in this Sitting of the 34th Legislative Assembly. As we have said many times on this side of the House, the celebration, the marking of National Aboriginal Day in the Yukon, is one of those very beginning steps of the process of reconciliation. Hopefully, it marks an understanding that the process is part of a dialogue that we will all engage in as we open ourselves to revisiting that sense of what we think our history is — to developing that shared history for the future based on a completely different set of understandings of the history of the past — and experiences and opening ourselves to the recognition that the need to do that comes from the very real and lived experiences from so many generations of children and adults stemming from the issue of residential schools. But more, Mr. Speaker — it speaks to the very foundation of our understanding of the history of this territory and, indeed, of North America.

National Aboriginal Day, as it will be celebrated on June 21, 2017, is a very good first start. We applaud the government for introducing this bill and for carrying through with it. It is a good sign of a commitment made and a commitment delivered. I also want to say thank you to the many hundreds of people who signed petitions and responded so well to the initiative of the former MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes when he took his lived experiences of working with people who were residential school survivors. He took this to heart and recognized the importance of it.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 2 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 2 has passed this House.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon, in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to the bill which has passed this House.

Commissioner Phillips enters the Chamber, announced by the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

Speaker: Mr. Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed a certain bill to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

Clerk: *National Aboriginal Day Act.*

Commissioner: This is a very historic day for the aboriginal people of the Yukon Territory and for aboriginal people all across this country. I assent to the bill as enumerated by the Clerk.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Bill No. 200: Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17 — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 200, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Mr. Premier that Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is my pleasure to table the supplementary estimates for 2016-17.

In any given year, the tabling of the supplementary estimates reflects changes in circumstance. Unforeseen events can lead to necessary spending, necessary new spending, or impact revenues. This is to be expected.

However, our government found a state of public finance that was certainly unexpected when we took office. The 2016-17 main estimates presented by the previous government forecasted a \$9.5-million annual surplus; however, as the

fiscal year unfolded, it became clear that there was no surplus. There was indeed a deficit — a significant deficit, in fact. The supplementary estimates our government presents today forecast an annual deficit of \$8.3 million for the year that ended March 31, 2017.

Mr. Speaker, this is a difference of \$17.8 million. On a budget of \$1.4 billion, this does not reflect a rounding error or unforeseen expenses. It represents a major addition of projects that did not appear in the 2016-17 main estimates and cost implications that were known but not included. Let me provide one obvious example to start off: the signing of the new collective agreement. That \$7.2 million was, on its own, almost enough to wipe out the previous government's so-called surplus. Now, let me get into more detail to explain why Yukoners are now learning that the previous fiscal year ended in a deficit rather than a surplus as they had been told existed.

Mr. Speaker, today is not the first indication of the 2016-17 main estimates being insufficient. We all know that on January 23, 2017, our government issued a special warrant in the amount of \$29.4 million for operation and maintenance and capital expenses. It has been well documented that I am not a fan of special warrants — and I'm not. While my view of these warrants has not changed, my hand was forced by the spending decisions made after the tabling of last year's budget. With the legislative session now underway, we are now able to share more information. The special warrant captures all increases to expenditures. It does not capture changes to recoveries from third parties or from Canada, and it does not capture changes to revenue. Mr. Speaker, the tabling of this supplementary budget provides a full story. There is a deficit of \$8.3 million.

Let me begin with operation and maintenance. The special warrant authorizes additional spending authority for \$21.6 million in operation and maintenance. This involved increases spanning 11 departments with sharp increases to Education. But there are departments forecasting a decreased O&M as well and those are highlighted in the supplementary budget. The supplementary budget includes \$17 million in additional O&M forecasted expenditures.

To begin, the previous government did not account for additional costs in Education, including \$3.5 million in additional teachers' and educational assistants' salaries. French teachers' and educational assistants' salaries are being paid by the Yukon government, resulting in an increase to O&M of \$3.5 million. However, this will result in an identical increase to the recoveries and accounts for a portion of the total \$4.8 million in increased O&M recoveries.

Costs related to pension solvency within the Yukon Hospital Corporation costs the government an additional \$3.5 million, as well as \$496,000 at Yukon College. Unbudgeted spending resulted in \$2.2 million spent to open additional beds at the Thomson Centre and McDonald Lodge. There were increased costs in home care, additional beds and support at the hospital.

Personnel costs are higher than budgeted in most departments as a result of the new collective agreement. The

previous government did not account for increased costs of \$1.9 million within the Executive Council Office.

This amount includes costs associated with the royal visit totalling \$429,000. These increases are offset by some new operation and maintenance recoveries. As mentioned, these totalled \$4.8 million. Other recoveries include a \$2.3-million rebate of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board payments and \$900,000 from Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency — CanNor — for the Yukon Now tourism initiative. There were a number of other small changes to cost-sharing agreements. Still, approximately \$12 million of the overall \$17 million is unrecoverable. Adjustments under the supplementary budget reflect overall gross increases to operation and maintenance costs in the amount of \$17 million.

I will move on to capital expenses. The special warrant required \$7.8 million for capital expenses. This figure reflects unbudgeted expenses related to commitments made after tabling the 2016-17 main estimates.

Leading up to the election, a commitment made by the previous government was for \$1.5 million in 2016-17 to expand the MacBride Museum, with another \$1.5 million to come later. We have accounted for this cost in the supplementary estimates.

There are cost overruns at the hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City, and within the Crocus Ridge residential construction. These totalled \$2.6 million. An additional \$1.8 million was required for the new Salvation Army Centre of Hope and a further \$1.8 million for affordable housing projects. The previously mentioned beds and home care also resulted in \$1.1 million in capital being spent.

Another approved item — but not budgeted for — was a pilot project to upgrade the wide area network in the communities of Carmacks, Teslin and Watson Lake, to upgrade the municipal area network in Watson Lake. The amount approved for 2016-17 was \$1 million in capital expenses and \$595,000 in operation and maintenance expenses for this pilot project.

The government also had to cover the removal of hazardous materials and demolition costs for F.H. Collins at \$2.1 million; the Art and Margaret Fry Recreation Centre in Dawson City — an additional cost of \$1.4 million; the learning commons and electrical upgrade renovation, which added a further \$585,000 — all approved but not put into the fiscal framework.

As with the operation and maintenance, there were decreases and deferrals in the capital vote. For example, reduced spending at the Whistle Bend continuing care facility of \$24.3 million must be re-appropriated to 2017-18 and into 2018-19 budgets.

Projects under the federal infrastructure program did not materialize as predicted in the previous main estimates, which means further reductions. Community Services is forecasting lapses of \$6.3 million from municipal projects under the federal infrastructure funding programs and another \$2.3 million in gas tax-funded projects that progressed more slowly than anticipated.

Another \$5.6 million is lapsing in Whitehorse land development. As lots are badly needed in Whitehorse, this investment will be carried forward to future years to supply these lots. As a result of these lapses, gross capital spending in supplementary estimates decreased by \$25 million. While this reduces the funds required for specific funding projects in 2016-17, these funds will still be needed and will be largely reappropriated in 2017-18.

Of the lapses I identified, some projects had federal cost-sharing agreements associated with them. This leads to decreases in recoveries from Canada of \$11.6 million. This accounts for nearly all of the decreases in recoveries from Canada, totalling \$12.2 million.

There were also increases to recoveries from third parties, totalling \$3.5 million. Canada Health Infoway, which funds e-health projects, accounted for \$2.1 million. Recoveries offsetting higher expenses in the Salvation Army redevelopment accounted for \$1.1 million. This unbudgeted spending is troubling. We are fortunate that the deficit in 2016-17 will not be greater.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned previously, special warrants do not capture changes to revenues. On revenues, the total changes in the 2016-17 supplementary estimates for revenues consisting of transfers from Canada, taxes and general revenues is a decrease of \$4.8 million. Changes to revenues include a \$1.1-million reduction in transfers under the Canada health and social transfers. In the supplementary estimates, Yukon also saw a \$5.3-million downward adjustment to tax revenues.

One item that our government will not be reporting on is the innovative budgeting initiative, or IBI. This initiative was an interesting concept and definitely had merit; however, the departments could not fully implement this initiative. For one thing, there was a lack of human resources and appropriate systems in place. Progress was also hindered by unbudgeted spending, which I have detailed in my remarks. Clearly there are significant opportunities to find operational efficiencies, but we must provide the public service with the tools to achieve such efficiencies. We are doing this through our strategic investments in Yukon's Department of Finance.

The value of net financing assets is higher. End-of-fiscal-year net financial assets reported in the main estimates were \$57 million. The beginning year balance changed by \$21.6 million. This is to adjust the opening net financial assets figure to coincide with the final 2015-16 Public Accounts closing net financial assets figure. The deferral of some capital projects influenced the change in non-financial assets upward by \$32.5 million.

The supplementary estimates for 2016-17 reinforce the need to establish a budget process that is more thorough, more inclusive and more transparent.

Budgets in future years will be more realistic with respect to the work that can be done and will be done. Much of the additional spending detailed in the supplementary estimates could have been anticipated with proper planning and forecasting. Future budget forecasts will apply more data so that the decisions can be evidence-based. Our government will

integrate fiscal forecasting with budgetary planning as an ongoing process. We will build a stronger capacity for our territorial government to make evidence-based decisions. We will put economic and fiscal policy at the forefront of budgetary development.

We recognize that the budget development process itself can be improved and we are committed to working with the public service to build strong financial capacity in the government. Budgets are about building a shared understanding of our territory's fiscal position so that we can make shared decisions on the best pathway forward.

Our government is committed to doing that work, and I hope that all members of this Legislative Assembly will join us in that effort. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: As Official Opposition Finance critic, I am pleased to rise here in second reading on the 2016-17 first supplementary estimates. In beginning my remarks, I would reference — the Premier referred to his desire to — and I quote: “build strong financial capacity” within government. In fact, what is disturbing to us in the Official Opposition, formerly in government, is that the Premier doesn't seem to be recognizing the financial capacity that exists within government, and in fact has helped, along with the work of ourselves, as ministers — the work of officials within every department of the Yukon government have been key to helping us keep the Yukon in the black and keep us with the healthiest financial resources in Yukon history during most of that time.

I would point out to members that, while they like to talk about a reduction in recent years to some of the cash reserves that we used for purposes, such as, for example, loaning money to Yukon Energy Corporation to install the two generators so they didn't have to approach the bank for financing, we are receiving revenue in some cases from those investments. We actually paid down debts that the Yukon Hospital Corporation had. In fact, in addition to the roughly \$100 million in cash in the bank that this Premier inherited as Finance minister, the Yukon's finances have never been in a better situation upon any government taking office.

I would also note, for those who are left somewhat confused or unclear on the details of a budget and simply hear the debate between the government and the opposition and aren't clear on the details — I would note to the media and anyone listening that I would encourage you to look at what happens in the final supplementary reconciling the 2016-17 fiscal year. There are usually lapses that show the result of the period — the 12-month variance report. Unless something is different from the norm, I think we can expect the so-called “\$8.2-million deficit” to be reduced further when those final tallies are in.

I also have to remind the Premier that a number of the decisions made by this government since taking office have had an effect on the fiscal situation. The Premier referred to the decision to book the additional pension requirements for both the hospital and the college. I would note that, again, while that has been done in the past, we believe that it could

have and should have been done in the 2017-18 fiscal year. That alone accounts for roughly \$4 million of the so-called deficit.

I would note as well that we see here — and for people looking for the information on this, if you refer to page S-8 — that's "S" as in "Sierra" — of the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, you'll see that the reductions in transfers from Canada and the reductions in recoveries from Canada themselves total over \$16 million. Now, some of that — roughly \$1.1 million as the Premier referred to — was a reduction in the Canada health transfer and the social transfer. Contained within the reductions and recoveries is a reduction of \$3.256 million in funding for type 2 mine sites and a reduction in \$11.599 million — roughly \$11.6 million — in infrastructure funding programs.

Now, we will need to ask additional questions to find out the exact details of this, but it is certainly my expectation that much of that \$11.6 million may be due to delays in decision-making by the new government because, in fact, as members are getting themselves acquainted with large infrastructure projects, one of the key pinch points, for lack of a better term, where projects can get delayed is if there is a variance in the project that requires approval, either by the minister or by Management Board — if that signature is not provided in a timely fashion by the minister or if Management Board doesn't review the matter and make a decision on it in a timely manner, that project can easily slip into the next fiscal cycle. While we will have to ask questions to determine the details of which project may be affected, we believe that this has likely been the case when government took not only a month before swear-in, but we note that there weren't very many ministers around during the month of December. We look forward to hearing additional details on delays in which projects have led to that \$11.6 million in reduced recoveries from Canada as a result of the delays of those projects.

I am not going to spend a lot of time talking about special warrants. As we've pointed out — I'm trying to think of a term that isn't unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker. But we've pointed out in the past in a public forum where we can use words that are unparliamentary here that it does seem that the Premier said one thing when in opposition and then, upon taking office, had a dramatic change of heart when it came to special warrants — using not one, but two — and in fact setting the record for the amount of money spent by a Finance minister and Cabinet through special warrants — nearly a half-billion dollars spent via special warrant when in fact the Legislature could have easily sat for a five-day or 10-day Sitting to approve a supplementary budget, as we suggested, during the month of January. Those funds could have very easily faced the scrutiny of this Legislative Assembly.

I know that the assertion has been presented that ministers needed additional time to study the budget, but in fact that luxury is not always available to ministers upon taking office, including finance ministers. As we've noted in the past, every other government in Yukon history has had their first major legislative Sitting quicker than the current government, and every other finance minister has had to get up to speed and

table a budget quicker than the current Finance minister chose to do.

I would also point to my own personal experience. When I was first sworn into Cabinet, I was sworn in on a Monday morning and on the Monday afternoon I had to walk down the stairs in the Legislative Assembly to face Question Period and later that week was defending a budget that had been approved by Cabinet, when I was not a member of that Cabinet, and facing the former Member for Klondike, my immediate predecessor in the role, who was then sitting across the floor, prepared to ask questions and debate me on a budget that he was intimately familiar with, but I was not.

The moral of this story is that I survived and that is in fact the case for many other ministers who have not had a tremendous amount of time to prepare to face the Legislative Assembly and face Question Period on a timeline that meets their preference.

In recapping some of the high points, I would note that the 2016-17 fiscal year was shared almost equally between the Liberal government and the former Yukon Party government.

There are decisions that were made by the government on what to book in which fiscal year, including the choice on booking the hospital and college pension plan solvency. I would note for those who are not clear that this is to some extent an accounting exercise. It is required to ensure that those corporations are compliant with the *Pension Benefits Standards Act* of 1985, and I'm not disputing the choice to book those numbers. In fact, the first time that government in recent history provided additional resources to help those corporations with the pension plan solvency — I was Minister responsible for Health and Social Services and the Hospital Corporation when we extended the offer to the Hospital Corporation to provide them with the funding to cover their solvency deficit. Again, that was a choice that very easily could have been made in this fiscal year.

I would note again that in fact the Auditor General has been quite complimentary of this way government has kept its books. The Auditor General, in certain performance reports, has identified areas of improvements within departments, which we have responded to and listened to, but I would quote from the Yukon Public Accounts for the 2015 fiscal year, which is the last year for which Public Accounts are available.

I'll read from the Auditor General of Canada's letter: "Auditor's Responsibility — My responsibility is to express an opinion on these consolidated financial statements based on my audit. I conducted my audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting standards. Those standards require that I comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements are free from material misstatement.

"An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the consolidated financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk

assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the consolidated financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the consolidated financial statements.

"I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

"Opinion — In my opinion, the consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects — "

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Takhini-Kopper King, on a point of order.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I would like to call attention to 19(d), which is referencing and reading from a document at length that we don't have in front of us. Maybe the member could table a copy for the rest of us while he reads off the sheet or maybe just reference it and move on.

Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: On the point of order — I don't believe there is a point of order, since the Public Accounts have been tabled and a copy provided to all members. I'm reading an excerpt from that document.

Ms. White: You will find in 19(d), it references reading at length from the document, and I believe that this is a great example of that.

Speaker: You are referring to 19(d). Are there any further submissions on the point of order?

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I take the point of the Member for Lake Laberge that this is a public document. Obviously, that public document — it would not have been within the knowledge of the House to have that public document available to scrutinize or review while the Member for Lake Laberge is reading from it. We have two options. The first is that we could stand down and get copies of that report if that is what the House wishes to do, or the Member for Lake Laberge could wrap up his comments in a reasonably expeditious manner.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will, of course, respect your ruling and would reference the member — if she wishes to see a copy, she could look online on the audited Public Accounts as that information is available. I will conclude my comments very briefly.

Again, in conclusion, excerpting the remarks of the Auditor General: "Opinion — In my opinion, the consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Government of Yukon as at 31 March

2016, and the results of its operations, changes in its net financial assets, and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards."

"Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements — In my opinion, the transactions of the Government of Yukon and of those organizations listed in Note 2(a) to the consolidated financial statements that have come to my notice during my audit of the consolidated financial statements have, in all significant respects, been in accordance with the *Yukon Act*, the *Financial Administration Act* of Yukon and regulations and the specific operating authorities disclosed in Note 2(a) of the consolidated financial statements." It is signed by Michael Ferguson, CPA, CANADA, FCPA, FCA (New Brunswick), Auditor General of Canada, on October 19, 2016.

Just for members who may wish to review that — if they have a copy of the Public Accounts, which was tabled in this Legislative Assembly, they will find it on pages 21 and 22. If they have not received or not kept a copy of the Public Accounts, they will find those documents available online, I believe, through the Department of Finance website.

Speaker: Thank you for referencing that document.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I would note in conclusion is that the Auditor General for year after year after year — and I could go on at length because it's for the past 14 years — has given the government a clean bill of health and stated that the financial matters were stated appropriately within the Public Accounts and has signed off and given a clean bill of health to the Yukon government for the way its finances were prepared. I would just refer any Yukoners who are wondering who to believe in this discussion to look to the Auditor General and recognize that the Auditor General is non-partisan and unbiased. The Auditor General says that the finances were good enough for him.

In conclusion — we are not done debating this topic, I am sure, but the Minister of Finance can rest assured as well that we are going to spend more time focusing on the future and on the financial plans tabled in this Legislative Assembly, which are quite concerning to us. They include a significant upward trend on spending, including an annual increase in capital spending of some-\$45 million per year, prior to what was included in the previous government's plans.

Now, the Premier can defend that change, but he should not indicate that it wasn't a change. To suggest that he wasn't aware of the number included for net capital within the five-year projections for future years would suggest that either the Premier was not paying close attention or didn't bother to read the budget before framing the Liberal platform and making some pretty significant commitments. For either one of those, I think he owes Yukoners an explanation. You may not agree with a government's plans, but if you make a deliberate decision to increase spending in a certain area, even if that spending itself is laudable in nature, you need to acknowledge the choice to increase that spending and not indicate otherwise.

In concluding my remarks, we do feel that decisions were made that created the deficit. We look forward to asking some specific questions about infrastructure spending, either during debate on the supplementary or in debate on the budget.

I should just note that, again, in the area where there was \$16.1 million in reduced funding from Canada alone in the 2016-17 fiscal year, including \$11.6 million in infrastructure funding alone, we believe that some of that \$11.6 million would indeed have been able to be spent if this government were a little quicker getting to work.

Ms. Hanson: I guess we've just had a really good example of why the Yukon Party is, after 14 years, no longer in government.

The fact of the matter is that we are talking about the supplementary budget for the past fiscal year — 2016-17. The fact of the matter is that not only were there troubling aspects of that fiscal year with respect to unbudgeted spending, which is troubling, but it's the other side of that, which is the troubling aspect of — it's not just spending but it's the revenue side. So we're not just talking about the transfers from the federal government, which we've already heard some discussion about, but the inability — perceived inability, demonstrated inability — of the Yukon Party over 14 years to accurately predict revenues with respect to various sources of taxation.

Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure the current government did in preparation for the 2016 election, the New Democratic Party did do an economic analysis. We did look at Public Accounts going back. We did look at the pattern that had been established by the Yukon Party government over the course of its many, many years in government. I mean, it will be interesting — we hear the Member for Lake Laberge talking about the assertions around the various sources of federal revenue for infrastructure — but if we look at the fact that over the course of 14 years of this government, from 2003 to 2014, we've actually seen them demonstrate a lack of ministerial oversight with respect to one of the most significant areas of a budget, which has been the type 2 mine sites. The most active area in terms of mining has been abandoned mines and now we're seeing Canada re-asserting its role in this file. So, Mr. Speaker, there's something to be said — and will be said, I'm sure — as we look at and reflect upon some of the situations that the Government of Yukon is going to be putting forward for debate in this Legislative Assembly with respect to that particular area — the type 2 mine sites.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that's clear when we look at 2016-17 — this last fiscal year when the data was available to us — is that Yukon's dependency on the Government of Canada had grown by 15 percent, or \$138.8 million, since 2012-13.

It's one thing to say that the Auditor General says, "You have clean books" — the Auditor General says that what you brought in corresponds to what you put out — but it doesn't say anything about what the value of those decisions were. The fact of the matter is that Standard & Poor's has also

commented upon the kinds of decisions that the Government of Yukon took and has taken over the last 14 years — and commented with concern. The Member for Lake Laberge can speak all he wishes about the transactional aspect of the Public Accounts. He might want to read the notes that accompany each of those areas of each of those departments. They reveal a whole bunch more with respect to some of the issues that the Minister of Finance was describing earlier with respect to the pension solvency issues. There are issues around long-term loans for the Yukon Hospital Corporation and for others that we are collectively on the hook for.

Mr. Speaker, there are other areas that have caused, and do cause, concern. I have raised this before, but I'll put it out there as a marker. We saw, under the Yukon Party government that total tax and general revenue had declined by 22 percent since 2013-14.

When we start looking and see that their 2015-16 total corporate tax revenue had declined by 78 percent, or \$25.2 million, since 2013-14, those are decisions that governments take with respect to foregoing sources of revenue that could be used for the public good. It is one thing to say we don't have the money; on the other hand, as they have chosen not to, the Yukon Party did that, and I'm hopeful the Yukon Liberal Party will not be totally committed to following the Yukon Party's lead on that side. Equally, we saw that, in 2015-16, total person income tax revenue had declined by about 20 percent, or roughly \$14 million, since 2012-13. That's a loss of \$72 million.

There are decisions that are taken that cause governments to see not just on the foregone revenue side — they are the kind of spending decisions made that see a government with a decline in its annual surplus of \$188 million. That's a pretty significant amount, Mr. Speaker.

It's really important, when we look at the supplementary estimates and look forward to the mains, that we are cognizant that decisions are not just about spending — the decisions are about sources of revenue. Are we exploring and are we, as government, taking advantage of all the sources of revenue we can have to grow this economy, as opposed to just saying, for ideological reasons or whatever, "That is off-limits". We need to be able to explore the reasons and rationale behind the decisions to forego revenue, to forego making decisions about, for example, modernizing our mining regime — the white elephant, but it's out there and it's not just the NDP that has been saying that. We look at First Nations who have taken more progressive stances on mining in the territory than the Yukon Party did, and I'm hopeful that the Yukon Liberal Party, as it looks at developing modern successor legislation, is not going to be scared to look at those opportunities.

That's for the future, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the supplementary estimates, there are some specific questions we'll ask but, in general, quite frankly, it is done. It is past. There's not much you can do about crying over spilled milk. We have lessons to be learned from the experience of the last 14 years; there are certainly lessons to be learned from the last year, in terms of the frantic pre-election spending by the previous government. We now need to focus on the next

couple of years and what we can build as a solid foundation for this territory.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we'll be looking forward to further debate on the supplementaries and moving forward.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the honourable members for their comments. I rise in the House today to speak about the supplementary budget 2016-17.

I take the point of the Leader of the Third Party. Supplementary budgets are made up of items that have already been spent, but in this case, because of the timing of the election and the election of a new government, this supplementary budget is made up of items that have already been spent by the former government and not accounted for.

The purpose of a supplementary budget is often to provide for expenses that come up between budget cycles and/or come up unexpectedly. The former government — I say to you today — could have done a supplementary budget to account for many of the expenditures that are in this particular budget now. The expenditures in this budget were known to them at various points during their tenure, and I won't even say during the last year, but certainly some time before that. They were known at some point in 2016, at the very least, and could have been addressed. Certainly, many of the expenses in this budget were known to the Yukon Party before they called the election in October 2016.

Mr. Speaker, there are generally a number of categories, or kinds of expenditures, that live in supplementary budgets. Sometimes there are unknown costs. They are simply not accounted for. An example might be the collective agreement — the collective agreement when it's retroactive or going forward. But I note that, again, those kinds of expenditures could have been accounted for in some way in the main budgets or in a supplementary budget. Negotiations with respect to collective agreements and the fact that there is going to need to be retroactive pay for a large workforce do not surprise anyone, and no accounting has been made for that and so those costs live in this supplementary budget as well.

There are sometimes other categories of expenses that live in supplementary budgets — unexpected costs not known to the government at any point and they do come up unexpectedly, but there are very, very few of these here in this supplementary budget.

Another category of expenditure in a supplementary budget involves expenditures that are made by a government — in this case by the former government here in the territory — but weren't accounted for in any budgeting process. These are, of course, the most troubling. They are commitments and expenditures that are made — in this case, by the then-Yukon Party government — outside of their budget and outside of the budget that is presented and debated in this House. It is particularly troubling when these expenditures come in an election year.

The other sorts of expenditures that live in supplementary budgets are lapses in expenditures. They are also problematic because they may indicate a commitment that has not been

met, but I will leave it to some of my colleagues to comment on particular ones in their departments.

Lastly, there are things like budget adjustments for proper accounting process and they don't tend to be problematic. There are a number of budgetary expenditures that I will note with respect to the departments that are my responsibility — at this point, mostly in Education because they are by far the most troubling — but an example in Justice, for instance, would be that there is \$1.4 million in the supplementary budget for O&M expenditures for Justice.

The vast majority or close to half of that is \$600,000 for the collective agreement I've mentioned earlier that could have been addressed. There is about \$639,000 for enhancing services for victims of crime. That's 100-percent recoverable and I note that because some of the expenditures in the supplementary budget are for projects that arose between budget cycles and for which expenditures are recoverable. No one is too concerned about expenditures that the Yukon doesn't have to pay for, but recoveries are shown separately in supplementary budgets, so it's important for those reading to understand. They are shown, however, in the documents. Another example in Justice, again a 100-percent recoverable piece is \$125,000 going to the Community Wellness Centre for drug treatment court. I mention that because of the recoverability and the ability to understand how they work.

Expenditures that are of much more concern are those that were made without proper authority or process to do so and expenditures made outside of any budgeting process or budgeting debate process. There are several of those that are problematic in the Department of Education. In this supplementary budget, the Department of Education is requesting a little over \$15.3 million in funding, \$12.133 million of which is for operation and maintenance expenditures and \$221,000 is for capital expenditures.

The department's request for \$12.133 million for operation and maintenance is primarily spent as follows: a total of \$5,861,000 is requested for the operation and maintenance for the Public Schools division. The recoverable piece comes in here because \$3.5 million is for the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon — CSFY — school board, all of which is recoverable, but there is an increase of \$3.5 million in this supplementary budget for additional school-based staff, which was required to continue services and partially accounted for by increased enrolment. Of that \$3.5 million, some was for accruals, but the way the teachers are paid through the course of a year — nobody is going to be too concerned about that.

In 2016, the record shows that a little over 19 teachers and almost 40 educational assistants were hired for Yukon schools. Generally nobody would think that is a problem if it is supported by student enrolment and, for the most part, it was; however, those teachers were hired and those EAs were hired without those funds ever being put in a budget. It's a significant increase. It's supported by the enrolment increases, but there is a big "but" here. Once a government strays from the proper process of making such decisions — such very expensive decisions — errors will be made and accountability

will be cloudy and obscured. Consistency will falter and decisions that are not evidence-based will be the result.

The increase of Yukon Education staff, both in teachers and educational assistants, is not, by any account I can find, approved by Management Board and was not included in any budget. An almost \$3-million decision was made with the stroke of a pen with no accountability.

In the Department of Education as well, in the Education Support Services division, there's a request included in this budget of \$4.9 million for educational support services. The vast majority of that is funding that resulted from the custodians, who used to be employees of the Highways and Public Works department, being transferred over to the Education department. This is a good move. It is excellent for education to have the custodial staff as part of our team. It makes them responsive to school needs for the students and staff in a more team-oriented opportunity for all of them. Additional funding for that program transfer, which will be a reduction in Highways and Public Works, is \$3.3 million. There are some additional expenditures in Advanced Education — I would hasten to point out that some of which are recoverable and most of which were known to the former government prior to the end of the budget cycle or simply not accounted for.

There is some \$895,000 that accounts for increases at Yukon College and they're based on their collective agreement. Again, as I've mentioned earlier, that's something that could have been anticipated and included in the budget for full disclosure and accountability.

With respect to education, the capital budget — some \$3.2 million — is also in this supplementary budget. A real concern with respect to that is that \$2.7 million of it was previously approved in a 2016-17 funding request for the replacement and demolition of F.H. Collins Secondary School, but it was not in a budget anywhere. The ongoing demolition and removal of hazardous products and materials from that school site continues. The money was previously spent. It wasn't accounted for, despite the fact that the demolition of that site was supposed to have been completed almost a full year ago in the summer of 2016. It is now over-schedule and it is now overbudget, because the \$2.7 million in this supplemental budget is not nearly enough to finish that project and it's not nearly what will be spent and was spent to properly complete that work. There are additional monies in the main budget to deal with that significant amount — some \$2.8 million to complete the deficiencies and another \$2 million to complete the outside work at F.H. Collins. There simply was not a proper accounting of what it would cost for the demolition of that site or to complete the school itself.

With respect to Yukon College, there is \$50,000 in the supplementary budget to complete some security upgrades — also not a new issue. There is a further \$585,000 to complete two projects — one involving the electrical supply, which is required for the campus area and the buildings at that location, and the renovations of the learning commons for Yukon College — again significant amounts of money that were spent and not accounted for.

There is \$156,000 for the purchase of two activity buses. It is always important to provide services for students in schools. One of those is for Kluane Lake School and one is for Golden Horn Elementary School. I am told that those expenditures were approved in 2015, but did not occur in any recent budget. That again causes concern.

I have not by any stretch gone line by line through this, but I think it is important to highlight, in what is a very large portion of the supplementary budget allocated to education and the Department of Education, what the primary concerns are. I thank you for the opportunity to do so.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The supplementary budget I am presenting today will cover Environment, Health and Social Services, and Yukon Housing Corporation. With respect to Environment, the increase of \$1.399 million — or less than four percent of the \$37.109 million voted previously, the majority of the increase is \$1.274 million that falls under the department's operation and maintenance budget. As noted, 45 percent — or \$580,000 — is required to support an increase in negotiations through the collective agreements. Of public servants, I wanted to make note that, as stated, we do appreciate all the efforts that our tireless public service put in to ensure that Yukoners — as ministers responsible for our respective departments are prepared to answer the respective questions. I think that we are here as ministers to respectfully represent our respective departments with respect to accountability and strategic planning — and with our evidence-based decision models that we have rolled out with a long-term vision to align our budgets appropriately.

I guess what I wanted to say, and the moral of this story is that effective planning around budgets and supplementary assessments have to take into account the long-term objectives on all of these areas that I am responsible for — that we are responsible for on this side of the House. That would not happen without the support of the public servants.

With respect to Environment, the biologists who maintain baseline inventories — and I am going to use this as an example — for species, and the scientists who keep the databases on air quality, water and land quality — our conservations officers — all of the data that is collected will feed into our future plan for building an accountable and fiscally prudent budget regime from this point forward.

The environmental compliance component, with regard to the environmental responsibilities for contaminated sites, is essential and has to be documented as well. With regard to working with the First Nations, the implementation of our respective agreements and our numerous managing partners in the territory — this is essential, and I think it should be noted that our partners must and will be involved in terms of budget planning and fiscal planning from this point forward. The list goes on.

The remaining amount of our operation and maintenance budget is 100-percent recoverable through Environment and relates to projects that could not be completed in 2016 and 2017 — an indication that perhaps the planning is reflected in what we're seeing today, or the lack thereof.

This includes \$110,000 of recoverable funds under the federal climate change preparedness for the north program. This money supported projects like our partnership with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to establish and staff a position that will help develop the First Nation's capacity around climate change. Another \$416,000 of recoverable funds supported an additional contribution to the Wildlife Management Advisory Council North Slope region under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. We also have \$148,000 of recoverable funding that supported a two-year agreement with Canada for the operational flood-forecasting system. This project for water monitoring equipment and software is a robust forecasting tool that will help us make our communities and important areas in our Yukon prepared to face any natural disasters that come our way, such as flooding.

Our supplementary request for capital money is made up of increases and decreases. In balance, it totals out to \$125,000 in Environment. The most significant increase was \$225,000 for equipment and software tools needed for operational flood forecasting. The money is again 100-percent recoverable from Canada, so the majority of expenses and revenues in Environment are recoverable from the federal government.

One thing I wanted to note with Environment is a bit of a distinction, which is an increase of \$25,000 that was needed to complete the demolition and cleanup of a district office in Watson Lake while, on the other hand, a reduction of \$52,000 was related to work in the Whitehorse and Haines Junction offices, which was much needed. Inappropriate planning — you spend over here to tear down a building and you take away from the necessary expenditures or funding required for the enhancement of current and existing buildings, buildings that needed to be addressed.

Now moving on to housing, we acknowledge the work that the Yukon Housing Corporation has put in to prepare me for the supplementary estimates for 2016-17 projects. The primary source of funding for the supplementary estimates relates to funding agreements with Canada — northern housing trust fund, affordable housing initiative and investment in affordable housing agreements. You'll see a pattern here. The collective agreement increase for this particular budget was \$166,000 for negotiations on the collective agreement in 2016 that was not accounted for but is accounted for in this particular budget — our supplementary budget.

Rent supplement program investment in affordable housing — 100-percent recoverable from Canada — is \$184,000 from Canada and \$148,000 through rent revenues from tenants. Here we have shared services to reflect the dissolution of the shared services agreement between Yukon Housing Corporation and Yukon Liquor Corporation. With the division, you now have a \$198,000 deficit, which shows that the Yukon Liquor Corporation, effective July 4, was formerly 100-percent recoverable, but it shows a decrease in Yukon Housing Corporation's expenses here. I just wanted to note here that a few of the projects that make up these capital supplementary estimates — affordable housing, which was the

Salvation Army expense. We have \$1,175,000 that was set aside for the Salvation Army redevelopment project. That is sitting there and has yet to be accounted for in the transfer over to Department of Health and Social Services.

Interestingly enough, the municipal matching rental construction funding through Yukon Housing is showing an unspent amount from 2015-16 of \$417,000 that was not accessed, which is interesting, because we're seeing that we need to start aligning ourselves with addressing housing shortages, the Housing First model, and implementing a housing action plan for Yukon.

Northern housing trust rural projects to cover final payments on the 2014 affordable housing community projects in Carcross and Carmacks — that specific project did not include the urban responsibilities, urban initiatives. It was mainly to address these two communities.

Moving on, we have unspent funds carried forward from 2015-16 due to slower than anticipated uptake in the northern housing trust fund for rental housing allowances of \$165,000. We go on to say that there is a northern housing trust rental quality enhancement — \$422,000 required to complete approval of projects in 2015, \$215,000 of unspent funds carried forward.

Now this is significant because there were some questions posed around mobility and access. The northern housing trust accessibility enhancement budget — there is \$189,000 required to complete projects for the 2015-16 fiscal year and \$50,000 unspent carried forward. This program supported accessibility upgrades in homes in both Whitehorse and in the communities, yet we carried forward a surplus of \$246,000. It is a pattern, so I guess the moral of the story is that proper planning, fiscal prudence, evidence-based decision-making and coming up with a long-term model — a long-term plan — will help to better align ourselves to address the needs of Yukoners.

In the highlights for Health and Social Services for the 2016-17 supplementary budget, it is important to make note of the following points that were not included in the supplementary estimates. It is clear that the previous government failed to plan adequately for what they knew was a growing seniors demographic. As a result, we have additional costs for the following: hospital pension solvency; 10 additional beds at the Thomson Centre, four additional beds at McDonald Lodge in Dawson City; additional home care supports throughout the Yukon; 10 additional beds at Birch Lodge; four additional holding beds to address some of the issues around bed availability and cost overruns for Yukon Hospital Corporation projects for two community hospitals. We are requesting an increase of \$650,000 consisting of \$450,000 for social assistance in Whitehorse due to increased costs per caseload and an increased number of cases, and an increase of \$200,000 related to changes in applying the national child benefit subsidy. The moral behind that story is that perhaps we have a social need in our community that we are not appropriately addressing. There is a need to put a good business plan and a good business model together to start addressing some of these challenges.

An increase of \$200,000 to the seniors income supplement is requested as a result of an increased volume of subsidies as well as an increase of 0.8 percent in the Canada GIS amount upon which the Yukon seniors income supplement is based. The new rate came out effective October 1, 2016. This speaks to the increasing number of seniors in the Yukon, and that goes back to my previous point about the necessity to plan for the older adults in our population base and the need for re-profiling of some of the projects and the deliverables that we are obligated to fulfill — a re-profile of just over \$7 million from 2016 to 2018 to match project timelines; an increase of \$15,000 for the brighter futures program funding for the Watson Lake Food Bank and Soup Kitchen Society to assist with the Watson Lake food crisis. It is 100-percent recoverable from Canada. There is an increase of \$44,000 for a one-time funding agreement with the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer to fund an analysis and placement for the execution of work in areas relevant to the mission of the partnership. This is 100-percent third party recoverable through support work that Yukon is undertaking in the area of cancer education, awareness and evaluation.

We also see another increase of \$2,157,000 in expenses requested for health services and supports, and that's adding additional physician supports of the chief medical officer of health and a newly negotiated contract for physicians in Dawson City — additional physicians there — as well as in Watson Lake — another cost added for housing and overhead expenses related to physicians practising in those communities.

The supplementary budget includes a memorandum of understanding with Canada of \$9,000 to fund the implementation of air quality index in Yukon, which is 100-percent recoverable from Environment Canada.

There is an increase of \$50,000 requested to align expenses to recoveries for the Bell friends program, which is related to the mental health initiative supports. This is another project that is 100-percent recoverable from Canada.

A one-time additional funding of \$56,000 is requested for the Smokers' Helpline, an agreement with Health Canada that is 100-percent recoverable.

As the Premier mentioned, we are requesting \$1,849,000 for additional positions for McDonald Lodge, Thomson Centre, home care to address demand, and supporting an additional four beds in Dawson City and 10 beds at the Thomson Centre. A request of \$354,000 is to provide additional interim continuing care supports around these demands that was not accounted for previously.

Another big cost that was not part of the initial mains is one-time supplementary funding that we're requesting — \$3,579,000 for pension solvency for Yukon Hospital Corporation based on the 2015 actuarial report as per the federal pension legislation.

Revenues and recoveries — we're seeing some revenue recoveries from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada for indigenous children in care. In terms of re-profiling, we have \$24 million for the future years for the new Whistle Bend

continuing care facility to match project progress with budget requirements.

We see a one-time transfer of \$169,000 for the chronic disease management project. Again, as the Premier mentioned previously, we have a one-time increase of \$1.26 million to deal with the Hospital Corporation cost overrun on these four construction projects.

An increase of recoveries in the amount of \$2,100,000 is due to a revote of \$1.4 million in approved supplementary funding of \$804,000 for the client registry information system.

I just wanted to finally conclude that perhaps some of these projects were not accounted for and not planned and we're now seeing them in our budgets in terms of some of the pressures. I can assure you that the members of this House will take that note and, as we move forward, we'll certainly ensure that we plan appropriately and note for definite that we are appreciative of our public servants and the work that they have done, despite perhaps what the opposition is indicating.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: All right, here we go. Here we go, Mr. Chair.

I'm happy to rise today to address the supplementary budget 2016-17 in this Assembly. I'm not a numbers guy; I'm a words guy, so I'm going to approach it from that perspective. This is closure. This is the last piece of business of the former government — the Yukon Party's last financial document. As such, it is important. It is a slice of history, a document that shows an \$8.7-million deficit in 2017 — a deficit. I'm sure the good members of the opposition will want to discuss it. They've shown an interest in talking about deficits.

I will note that my Department of Highways and Public Works and the Public Service Commission present fairly well in this document. On projected spending of \$213 million, Highways and Public Works lapsed just \$2.7 million, and this demonstrates a remarkable accuracy in the spending prediction. I have to commend my officials and of course my predecessor on an accurate budget for spending what it projected spending, for the most part.

Same for the much smaller Public Service Commission, which lapsed just \$877,000 on projected spending of \$47 million — Again, it landed pretty close to the mark. It came pretty close to where it said it would.

I will talk about the spending of both of these departments in a little more detail later. This supplementary document — this Yukon Party budget is really remarkable for what it reveals about the government's plans and what it forgot when it was pulling together its main estimates budget last year. Take the continuing saga of F.H. Collins Secondary School — the school that was designed and launched and then undesignated and unlaunched and then redesigned smaller to save money. As we know, the school has cost more than the \$49 million original school design — the one that was abandoned because it was too expensive. It has now cost more — much more — for less.

This saga is Homeresque in its length and detail, Mr. Chair, and it continues to be reflected in its supplementary

budget — the last document of the Yukon Party government. The school's budgeted replacement cost in the last 2016 capital estimates almost doubled in the supplementary, rising to \$5.1 million from \$2.9 million. As my colleague from Riverdale South noted earlier, despite that spending, the grounds at F.H. Collins were not completed.

They have serious problems; there are deficiencies. There is yet another \$2 million needed to complete other deficiencies in the grounds and the school itself. This money was never budgeted until we came along. It is necessary. It wasn't in the budget, in the Yukon Party budget, or the supplementary budget.

Another \$2.9 million is needed to complete the demolition and remediation of the old school site, to put in parking stalls and a bus loop. This stuff doesn't just magically appear. Was the project completed? No. Was it properly funded? No. That's another \$4.8 million not accounted for in this supplementary — money just flowing out. Everyone remembers the \$6 million abandoned when the original design was tossed on the embers of the last government's end-of-year bonfire. Add another \$4.8 million to the flames.

That's the Education department's capital budget. There is also a \$12-million addition to the last government's operation and maintenance budget — in the Yukon Party's last supplementary budget. Again, that's about an eight-percent rise. Some of that, about one-third, is the price of taking on 47 custodians from Highways and Public Works. It is a transfer. That leaves another huge jump of about \$7 million flowing into Public Schools, Advanced Education and Yukon College — additional money that wasn't anticipated when the budget came down. This will make for an interesting discussion in Committee, Mr. Speaker.

We discovered more new teachers hired last year — 19 new teachers and 40 education assistants, among others. Those were a lot of bodies in the run up to an election. As my colleague has noted, we have not come across any evidence this large human resources decision came from Management Board. This has cost us about \$3.5 million. Were they in the original budget? No, they were not.

We also found promises of continuing care beds at the Thomson Centre and McDonald Lodge — \$2.2 million. Are they in the former government's original budget? No, but they are part of the deficit. Whistle Bend continuing care cost of operation — \$36 million. Budgeted? No, not in the budget. Pension increases at the Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon College, total of \$4 million — budgeted? No, not budgeted. The previous government announced a major fibre redundancy project. Is it in this supplementary budget? No. Have they formally applied for federal funding? No, not again.

As the Member for Klondike noted, they did approve but didn't budget the wide-area network pilot project. That cost \$1 million and \$600,000 in ongoing operation and maintenance funding that we're dealing with. There was \$1.8 million in cost overruns at the Salvation Army shelter. There was \$1.5 million diverted to MacBride Museum, with another \$1.5 million expected later. Again, this wasn't in the

original budget. I am looking in the supplementary budget for the Dawson City Airport paving project, which was announced more than a year ago — is it in there? No, it's not in there.

So what does this tornado of numbers mean? What are the implications of all of this unexpected deficit spending we inherited? That discussion is coming. But — spoiler alert — it forced us to reassess, to make some hard choices to do the hard work of governing. This document is an important part of that narrative and it shows an important difference. We want to show the true cost of government. We want to make evidence-based decisions. We want to show Yukoners what it costs to run the Yukon government. This is an important difference.

Let's look at the long-range projections. This year, the former government expected to spend just \$215 million on the capital budget. That's far less than in previous years and less than we are spending this year. Through our hard work and through the tough choices we've made, we are projecting spending \$243 million this year. That's a difference of \$28.5 million. That's \$28.5 million that we're expected to spend on our economy this year.

It gets more interesting next year. Yukon Party projected spending \$175 million on capital spending, which would have been the lowest capital budget in years. Apparently they were really expecting that — to spend that little on the capital budget. Much lower capital spending — low, very low — and that's what they were expecting. That's what they put in their documents in the long-term outlook.

It's astounding because the economic capacity in the territory is around an estimated \$220 million this season, and that's a good figure to support the local economy — a lot better than \$175 million projected by our friends on the opposite benches.

That's our target; that's what we're shooting for — an accurate projection. However, if you predict less, the deficit shrinks magically — poof — gone. If you go with the higher, more accurate projection, the deficit grows. Today, Yukoners have a clearer view of where they are headed. The collected difference between the two views — the Yukon Party has understated capital and operations cost and ours is about \$90 million. This is the sharp contrast in our perspectives. I look forward to the coming debate.

As my colleague for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes clearly noted, we inherited a picture drawn in red ink and we plan to finish it with some healthy splashes of black. To put it plainly: we aim to fix it.

The Member for Watson Lake has noted that her community languished under the Yukon Party for years — to quote: "It has seen almost no investment for a number of years." That's terrible. I can understand her frustration, which is wholly substantiated by this supplementary budget. We aim to do better.

Our goal is to work with all Yukoners and all municipalities, using evidence-based decision-making and good estimates so people know what's going on. Our goal is

to work with all Yukoners, all municipalities, for all Yukoners.

Now, as promised, I have a few notes from Highways and Public Works and the Public Service Commission. Highways and Public Works is a large and diverse department. We have a variety of divisions, branches and agencies that provide central functions to government as well as direct services to the public. It's a mixed bag, Mr. Speaker.

The department also has a lot of moving parts. Many of these parts are very public-facing, operating 24/7 every day of the year behind the scenes. In a harsh climate, we keep Yukon's roads, bridges, airports and buildings open and safe year-round. We also keep government departments speaking to one another, communicating internally. I'm honoured to work with a team of more than 800 hard-working civil servants — Yukoners — who work so tirelessly to keep things running in our territory.

The total supplementary budget for Highways and Public Works is a net decrease of \$2.7 million. The decreases are \$1.3 million in O&M and \$1.4 million in capital costs. In operations, our Information and Communications Technology team developed a pilot project. We spoke about that earlier — \$1 million — with \$600,000 in O&M. It establishes fibre services in Carmacks, Teslin and Watson Lake. The transportation team saw collective agreement increases. We talked about that earlier. My colleagues have all noted that. Effective January 1 — \$650,000 — the department was able to absorb most of the other collective agreement increases internally.

As I noted, the department transferred 47.5 full-time positions to Education — custodians. Now the schools are going to take on that job. That decreased our O&M by \$3.3 million.

In capital, the Nares River bridge replacement of \$1.2 million was deferred last year. This government continues to work with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation to bring that project to fruition. We experienced some weather delays on the Alaska Highway restoration project and had to defer about \$850,000 on the highway. Construction near the Pioneer RV Park on the Alaska Highway was completed underbudget, saving us about \$500,000. The Hunker Creek gravel pit and resurfacing project on the Klondike Highway was completed underbudget, saving us about \$150,000. The Campbell Highway reconstruction project is a multi-year contract that will be completed next year. Several projects within this portfolio were completed underbudget, with the rest of the work being deferred to next year at \$1.5 million. The Dempster Highway resurfacing and erosion control project was completed underbudget — a decrease of \$230,000.

Our bridges are aging. As such, they required some tender loving care with \$1.7 million. We focused that work on Five Mile Creek, the Klondike River bridge, Clear Creek bridge, Twin Creek bridge no. 1 and no. 2, Aishihik Road, Canol Road and a couple of others.

The Whitehorse airport apron panel project was deferred to this year, a decrease in the budget by about \$800,000.

About \$700,000 in building development was spent on exterior upgrades to the main administration building. We see it every day on our way into work.

Highways and Public Works will continue to do the good work of keeping our Yukon roads, bridges, airports and buildings open and safe year-round. That of course will not change.

The only significant change in the Public Service Commission's supplementary amounts is a decrease of \$877,000 for the employee future benefits fund. Nothing is more exciting than employee future benefits, Mr. Speaker. It is a subject some people could talk for hours on — I'm not going to do that. I will say, though, that it covers the cost of benefits to be paid to Yukon government employees when they leave the organization or retire. This amount is an estimate based on actuarial review.

If anybody has ever met an actuary, you have never had fun. It varies each year, depending on factors such as accumulated service, wages, rates and demographic factors, such as the rate of retirement. When an employee's future benefits amount is calculated, it has to be based on that actuarial review from the previous year. When a more recent actuarial review is received, the expense is then revised, based on the latest information. We update it. In this case, the evidence suggested that we decrease the employee future benefits fund by \$877,000. The last variation in the Public Service Commission has to do with \$120,000 that was moved from the Health, Safety and Disability Management branch to the Corporate Human Resources and Diversity Services branch. This allowed the Public Service Commission to transfer a position and thereby provide more support across government to manage workplace accommodation solutions.

There we have it, Mr. Speaker, my summary of the two departments and my comments on the supplementary budget. I'm sure we're going to discuss this deficit in more detail in Committee. I thank you very much for your time this afternoon. With that, I will take my chair.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues in this Legislative Assembly today for their comments here on second reading. I'm going to respond to some comments from the Member for Lake Laberge. Other than that, I think we have pretty much covered everything we need to talk about here at second reading and I look forward to some line-by-line conversations in the specific departments.

It is disappointing that the Member for Lake Laberge is, if not denying the forecast future pressures in his government's tenure, at least not putting any credit toward that action being a real thing as far as unaccounted-for spending — millions of unaccounted-for spending.

The member opposite made a comment. He said what they could have done was do a five-day session to showcase the previous government's spending. Again, the Yukon Party

could have had a supplementary budget to defend spending outside of the mains. That didn't happen. They could have done that before the election; they did not.

I will give the Member for Lake Laberge partial points for bringing up pension solvency, but to say that this is merely an accounting exercise speaks to his lack of knowledge on this file. The numbers change often, and we knew that, as the member opposite knew the previous year, this was going to be a large expense coming in 2016-17. This was no surprise to the former government. This is why this government included our best estimates in this pursuit.

It's the same thing as taxes. When you are forecasting taxes year by year, you don't necessarily know what the tax is going to be year by year, but we still try to do our best in forecasting for these numbers. It is called "responsible government". Now the member opposite — his government knew, but chose not to do their best estimates for budgeting for the solvency issue — crisis, almost. Why? Well, one reason, I guess, would be because there goes their surplus.

I will meet the member opposite halfway on this, though. If you take a look at the solvency deficit issue, it's really a function of a monetary policy framework that was probably not envisioned when the pension legislation was originally enacted. I will give that. Funding was proven to be an inefficient tool, I would say. The deficits first appeared in 2004. At that time, the hospital had just under a half-million dollars, going-concern deficit and a \$1.6-million solvency deficit. The college had a small going-concern surplus and a solvency deficit of around \$756,000. Since then, Yukon government has contributed \$21.3 million in extraordinary payments, and corporations have secured \$28.6 million in lines of credit. This is about a government showing the true cost of governance, and we will commit to making sure that the solvency pension issues will not just be "maybe" in this one and "maybe" in the next one like the previous government, but we will actually continually have these numbers for public consumption.

Special warrants — again, the Yukon Party likes to put words into my mouth. I will say that I still don't have any difference in opinion as to special warrants and their use. If we are in our 14th year in office and if we are still using special warrants, I myself will be shaking my head and I will be very disappointed with our government if that is true, because that is not acceptable. I won't waste time this afternoon reading documents that are linked to the Legislative Assembly website and others that define special warrants as being necessary during transitions — like, for example, during elections. That's fine. Again, the member opposite knows that. In 14 years, using your special warrants in your last mains is not open and accountable, in my opinion. In your first year, it is not optimal but, at the same time, that is an acceptable practice. Just for note, Mr. Speaker, in 32 years of governance here in the Yukon, there have been 62 special warrants — 32 years, 62 special warrants.

Moving on, the member opposite also criticized us — that we didn't get sworn in until December 3. Well, we were anxiously waiting underneath the stairs in the basement for the

paper shredding in the main office to finally end. We waited weeks for the Yukon Party to vacate their offices. The member opposite knows that. We didn't complain at the time. We understand that when you are in government for 14 years, it takes time to transition and move out of those offices — totally acceptable and totally understandable on their behalf — but to criticize us for waiting until December 3 as if we were completely in charge of all circumstances and variables as to why that date was when it was, including a late election — but we will leave that. Again, this is me having to respond to at least put our side of the record in the Legislative Assembly here today.

The member opposite was talking about the Auditor General and how, according to the Auditor General, everything is tickety-boo here, I guess. Again, the Auditor General would have no clue of unforecasted spending. If the numbers just aren't in the mains, how could the Auditor General know, as far as we're outlining all of this spending here today? I don't see how the two are related but, anyway, we'll give the member opposite a chance during Committee of the Whole to unravel that.

Let's move on here a bit.

To suggest that solvency and transition are the reasons for our fiscal situation is to completely ignore the millions of dollars I spoke about in my introductory comments, and also to ignore the lack of planning by the previous government on large spends, like the \$36 million a year it's going to take to operate the Whistle Bend continuing care facility.

With all that being said, I agree with the Leader of the Third Party: it is time to move on. The Yukon Party has been telling anyone who will listen that the current situation we're in — seeing revenues over the past few years decrease and our expenses increase, sometimes without forecasting. To say that the Liberal government is to blame is just amazing.

What we are responsible for is to show that the "rosy" fiscal situation that the member opposite still holds on to only rings true if you don't account for a considerable amount of previously unaccounted-for spending and previously unaccounted-for future pressures. We are also responsible for changing how we're going to do accounting moving forward. This is needed. It's needed today. I would suggest as well that it was also needed in previous years.

What we're doing moving forward — we spoke already about the Financial Advisory Panel. We spoke a bit about the business case, reorganization plans for the departments, based out of the Department of Finance. Intended outcomes of this investment of resources and reorganization are to include economic and fiscal policy that is at the forefront of budgeting development and advice to the Management Board on government policy and spending — that is us moving forward.

Evidence-based recommendations and advice to Management Board that balances the needs of society, industry and the economy — that's what we're doing to move forward. Supporting the legislative accountability to the Public Accounts Committee — the Leader of the Third Party has lots of information and opinions on where we should go with the Public Accounts Committee, and she has made these

considerations and concerns available to the government for debate, and we applaud her efforts.

A whole-of-government approach to budgeting and financial data management and reporting that provides evidence-based recommendations to it, and also advice to Management Board — again, this is what we're doing to address the current situation we find ourselves in.

I completely applaud the efforts of the Department of Finance in the conversations that we've had — where we are today and where we need to be tomorrow — so that we do not pass financial burdens on to our children.

This also includes a new division in the Department of Finance — economic, fiscal and statistics department. This new division will provide fiscal policy analysis and advice that has not been available to previous Management Boards. We have seen decisions happen with millions of dollars in spending this past summer — not having gone through Management Board and not accounted for. This division will also operate in a highly collaborative manner with all departments to ensure that all budgetary planning incorporates the latest information and provides an internally consistent fiscal plan, a whole-of-government approach that has been desperately needed for years. This is what we're doing to move forward on it.

Budgeting and reporting process are to be improved and to be streamlined and supported by a consistent set of assumptions across government departments for planning purposes — again, speaking to the need of a whole-of-government approach, not working in silos. One might think that it's easier to work in silos. You have less people to communicate with and less people to ask for directions. We don't agree. We believe that it's a lot of hard work up-front to change how we do business across the government, but I think that investment up-front is worthwhile and I believe that the deputy ministers across the board would agree with me, as would most public servants.

Future budget documents through this new division will be including the economic and population outlooks, thereby improving the sophistication of the budgetary documents, and will also allow third parties outside of government to access these fiscal outlooks and the associated risks and benefits to investing in the territory. All these things we're committing to when we move forward.

I'm very proud of the work that this government has done. I'm very proud of the departments and their willingness to take a look at a new government's approach to the fiscal responsibility piece. We're also looking forward to getting down to Committee of the Whole in the main budget, but again, it's very important to outline where we are today and why we're here.

I believe that we are all putting our cards on the table as to what we believe constitutes how we got into the fiscal situation that we're in today and the forecasting that we're doing that shows a more robust forecast of the current trends. It's hard, if somebody's paying attention to all this, to think that within three months, a government is responsible for the forecasting years without looking at the evidence that we've

put forward as to spending from the previous government that has never been accounted for and pressures into the future that have never been forecasted.

What I'm hearing from the opposition is that the Auditor General thinks we're okay, so we must be. I think it's interesting to hear that from the member opposite. We can talk about Premier Fentie's comments on the Office of the Auditor General, but we'll leave that for another day.

Moving forward, we definitely want to get to our mains, but this is very important for the record — for Hansard — and for the public to have a full accounting of the money that wasn't in last year's mains. There wasn't a supplementary budget. This is the spending situation and the fiscal situation that we found ourselves in.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everybody for their comments here today and I look forward to further debate.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yea, four nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 200 agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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 (Mr. Hutton): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 200: Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly today Deputy Minister of Finance, Ms. Katherine White, who is no stranger to this hallowed hall. I thank her and her officials for helping prep me today.

It is my pleasure to stand today and to begin general debate on Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, more commonly referred to as the 2016-17 supplementary estimates.

Our government found a state of public finance that was unexpected when we took office. The 2016-17 main estimates introduced by the previous government forecast a \$9.5-million annual surplus. However, as the fiscal year unfolded, it became clear that there was no surplus, that there was a deficit — a significant deficit in fact.

I know that members of the opposition have disputed the spending amounts in these supplementary estimates. They have said that it's all Liberal spending. At second reading today, I went through what was actually included in the supplementary estimates, and it is all spending from the previous government. I was surprised to hear only one speaker from the Official Opposition on second reading of the bill. They have repeatedly told the public that they couldn't wait to get into the Chamber and get to work. What did we see today? We saw only one speaker from the Official Opposition. They took a very similar approach to the Speech from the Throne, where no one except the leader got up to represent the constituents. It was the same approach on the legislation to create National Aboriginal Day. I believe there was one speaker from the Official Opposition on that bill as well.

Mr. Chair, we are accounting for every single dollar that was in the supplementary, as we told the public we would. Today we provided detail on all the expenditures so the public could hear who made what decisions and on what items. I expect the opposition to have lots of questions on the supplementary. They had so many questions that they wanted us to sit for 40 days, until July 4, to get them all answered, so we're very eager to hear all these questions.

Our government presented a 2016-17 supplementary estimates that account for the unbudgeted spending of the previous government. I would like to preface these discussions by expressing to the members that this government is already taking corrective action to get Yukon's house in order.

The addition of unbudgeted items from previous budgets will ensure that we have a fuller picture of Yukon's finances when making decisions. It will also help us as we make decisions to return Yukon's financial position to one of sustainability where decisions are grounded in evidence.

The supplementary estimates that our government presents today show a revised deficit of \$8.3 million. The supplementary estimates also show total revised expenditures of \$1.4 billion — operation and maintenance expenditures of \$1.1 billion and capital expenditures of \$282 million.

What is troubling about the supplementary estimates budget is that it represents major additions of projects that didn't appear in the 2016-17 main estimates — cost implications that were known but not included. Let me provide one obvious example at this time: the signing of the new collective agreement of \$7.2 million was, on its own, almost enough to wipe out the previous government's surplus.

Here are a few more, Mr. Chair: renovations for the MacBride Museum, \$1.5 million, with an additional \$1.5 million to come later — not included in the previous government's budget, announced publicly on the eve of an election, but not accounted for. Severance packages for MLAs, Cabinet staff, approximately \$624,700 — of course, nobody can forecast how many severance packages are going to happen, but this is an expense that wasn't accounted for and that has to be accounted for, so that's why it's showing up on the supplementary here today. There is: \$3.5 million in additional teachers' and education assistants' salaries; \$2.2 million to open additional beds at the Thomson Centre and McDonald Lodge; \$429,000 for costs associated with the royal visit; \$1.8 million for the new Salvation Army Centre of Hope; \$2.1 million in demolition costs and the removal of hazardous materials for F.H. Collins, not previously accounted for; and \$1.4 million for the Art and Margaret Fry Recreation Centre in Dawson City.

I remember being in this Legislative Assembly only a few short months ago, having the debate of why is there only \$1 million in the mains for the recreation centre in Dawson when the governments had prepared together, they had planned together, they had talked and the City of Dawson committed that they were going to finish what they could with the limited amount of funds given by the Yukon Party government. That was more than \$1 million — that's for sure. Again, they spent more than was budgeted, even though there were conversations — government-to-government — as far as how much was going to be spent that summer. Still, the supplementary needed to put an extra \$1.4 million for the recreation centre in Dawson.

There is \$585,000 for the learning commons and electrical upgrade renovation — not accounted for. There is \$3.5 million in costs related to pension solvency within the

Yukon Hospital Corporation, as well as \$496,000 at Yukon College.

We had a good debate with the Member for Lake Laberge as to whether or not he believes that's something that should be in the budget — on the books. We believe it should. His government in previous years — sometimes they did, sometimes they didn't.

There is \$2.6 million for cost overruns with hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City, and within the Crocus Ridge residence construction. Those two hospitals were constructed years ago and there were conversations in the Legislative Assembly here about being on budget and on time for those two projects, but we come in and form the government and we find out that \$2.6 million in over costs for years previous — not accounted for.

Mr. Chair, this is a long list and it's one that's made up entirely of expenditures approved but not accounted for by the Yukon Party government of the day. In total, this supplementary budget includes \$17 million in additional operation and maintenance expenditures.

As well as the O&M, there were decreases and deferrals in the capital vote, as we discussed in second reading — for example, reduced spending at the Whistle Bend continuing care facility of \$24.3 million that must be reapproved in 2017-18 and also 2018-19.

Community Services also lapsed \$6.3 million from municipal projects under the federal infrastructure funding programs and another \$2.3 million in gas tax-funded projects that progressed more slowly than anticipated. This results in votes that decreased in some departments by as much as \$13 million in Community Services and a reduction of about \$15.7 million in Health and Social Services.

As a result of these lapses and others, gross capital spending in the supplementary estimates decreased by \$25 million. While this reduced the funds required for specific projects in 2016-17, it's important to note, Mr. Chair, that these funds will still be needed and they will be largely re-appropriated in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 budgets.

Mr. Chair, I would like to go on and talk more on the revenue sides of the supplementary budget, but as I look at the clock, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Premier Silver that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 200, entitled *Second 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 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled May 8, 2017:

34-2-15

Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board 2016 Annual Report (Dendys)

34-2-16

Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board 2015 Annual Report — Amended (Dendys)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 11

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, May 9, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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| Hansard Administrator | Deana Lemke |

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, May 9, 2017 — 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 Westray mine disaster

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, imagine these terrible headlines: “26 dead in Faro mine disaster”; “Tragedy strikes at Minto mine, killing over two dozen Yukoners”; “Placer mining accident kills two Yukon families”. None of us wants to wake up tomorrow or on any day to hear those words, but 25 years ago, Nova Scotians faced just such a reality.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate those who died in the Westray mine disaster, on behalf of our government and the Official Opposition.

On May 29, 1992, just before 5:30 in the morning, a large explosion caused parts of an underground mine to collapse near Plymouth, Nova Scotia. There were 26 miners working at the time and they were all trapped. That began a week-long rescue effort. The media descended on the tiny hamlet and other small communities near the mine. Near-constant coverage of the rescue efforts gripped the attention of Canadians and people around the world, but the story would not end well.

The bodies of just 15 miners were found. As conditions underground worsened, the remaining 11 had to be left entombed forever.

It was an explosion of methane gas and coal dust that caused the tunnels to collapse that day. Some men were killed after being struck by falling rock or equipment. One was found trapped in his vehicle that had imploded and crushed him. Most were burned and suffocated — the oxygen vital for their breath stolen to fuel the explosion. All died nearly instantly. In hindsight, there was never a chance that any would be rescued.

That tragedy struck the very heart of Canada. Its impact can be felt to this day and in every corner of our country, even here in the Yukon. Our Premier and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in fact shared with me their first-hand accounts of the disaster. They had grown up and lived just a community away. They described an eerie feeling shared among people — a sense of collective claustrophobia — knowing the men were trapped underground so close by. Every year on this day, they are both reminded of their close friends and classmates who were directly impacted, some of who suffered losses as a result of the mining disaster.

Tragedies like this can often seem distant, but this year marks a similar anniversary for Yukon. A century ago, on March 21, 1917, 19 miners were trapped in a collapse of the Pueblo mine just south of Whitehorse. Three of those men were rescued — the other 16 were not. However, their final resting place and the location of the tragedy is commemorated with a plaque just off Fish Lake Road. That tragedy spurred the adoption of the workers’ compensation system in Yukon. The first legislation was enacted the following month, on April 24.

A long period of blame and inquiry followed the loss of the Westray miners. There were lawsuits, trials, inquiries and legislation. Those were important things, but that is not where we find the essential lessons of the Westray mine disaster. That is not the legacy of those men. The message they telegraphed to us is one of commitment. What I hear them saying to us through the channels of time is, “never again.” Never again can we permit a worker to die, whether it’s one or 26. Never again can we ask a community, a country, to experience the tremendous sense of loss that the Westray disaster forced on all of us.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and I, as Minister responsible for the Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board, recognize the value of the laws and regulations that we have in place here in Yukon for protecting people on the job. We also recognize, however, that laws and regulations are only the beginning.

The real source of safety and health in workplaces lies with the community, with the commitment of workers, employers, business and labour. We are in this together. It’s together that we’ll prevent another disaster like that at the Westray mine. It’s together that we’ll make sure each of us gets home safe and healthy every day.

Each year on this anniversary, we pause just for that reason — to use the memory of the Westray mine disaster to remind ourselves that we’re part of a safety community — but we can’t let the memory be rolled into a statistic. Yes, there were 26 men who died that day, but they were people, not numbers. They were flesh and blood like you and I. They went to work that day just as we all did today. They had wives, children, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and friends just like we all do. They had names: John Bates, Larry Bell, Bennie Benoit, Wayne Conway, Ferris Dewan, Adonis Dollimont, Robert Doyle, Remi Drolet, Roy Feltmate, Charles Fraser, Myles Gillis, John Halloran, Randolph House, Trevor Jahn, Laurence James, Eugene Johnson, Stephen Lilley, Michael MacKay, Angus MacNeil, Glenn Martin, Harry McCallum, Eric McIsaac, George Munroe, Danny Poplar, Romeo Short, and Peter Vickers.

Ms. Hanson: I too rise, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, to mark today, May 9, a day to commemorate the explosion at the Westray mine near New Glasgow, Pictou. Today, hundreds of people will be gathering in New Glasgow, Pictou County, Nova Scotia to remember and to mourn the loss of 26 men killed when fire, fuelled by

volatile coal-dust, ignited and created a fireball that raced through the tunnels of the mine in the early morning of May 9, 1992. As the minister opposite has said, the explosion killed every man in the mine and tore off the metal roof at the pit entrance. Eleven men still lie buried in those tunnels. It's too unsafe to try to recover them.

Mr. Speaker, the tragedy at Westray, as the minister opposite said, touched people across Canada. I know like many people, my husband and I actually made it a point in a trip to the Maritimes to seek out the memorial and to trace those very names that the minister read into the record today. Because Pictou County is like many rural areas of Canada, it had been suffering economically. The promise of work at what was — quote: a “new mine” was greatly anticipated. As one of the women widowed by the disaster put it, “This was a dream for all of these young men. They had new homes, new cars, friends and...” the hopes of “... a 25-year or 30-year life to retirement” — a working life. She said, “... those men needed to go to work.” However, she also said — and I quote: “... if they spoke up about what was going on (at the mine)” — about the dangers of coal dust — “... they were sent packing.”

Mr. Speaker, after the fact, we all now know that many good people — miners and others tried to address the increasingly dangerous work conditions at Westray mine. Five years after the explosion in 1997, a Nova Scotia Supreme Court Justice concluded the disaster was a result of — and I quote: “... incompetence, mismanagement, bureaucratic bungling, deceit, ruthlessness ... and cynical indifference.”

The public inquiry found Westray management and its owner, Clifford Frame — the same Clifford Frame of Curragh Resources that at the same time owned Faro mine — were ultimately responsible for the conditions at the mine. In 1993, the RCMP charged Toronto-based Curragh Resources and two its former managers with manslaughter and criminal negligence causing death. Mr. Speaker, no convictions were ever pursued.

As a result of the failure to successfully prosecute the mine's owners and managers and in light of the inquiry's recommendations, there was intensive lobbying by labour and others across this country to change the *Criminal Code* to make it possible to hold corporate managers and directors who failed to take steps to protect the lives of their workers criminally liable. In 2004, Bill C-45, the “Westray Bill”, was enacted. Bill C-45 is, by amendment to the *Criminal Code*, in theory, a very powerful piece of legislation. However, to date, there have been only four employers prosecuted under the Westray law. We know that every year, over 1,000 workers are killed in the workplace in Canada.

To mark the 25th anniversary, the federal government has committed to working with the Canadian Labour Congress and its members, and employers, provinces and territories to ensure that the Westray provisions are applied effectively through training, enforcement and coordination. It's the least we can expect. Disasters like Westray are human disasters, but if that alone does not drive us to take action, let us remember that, politically and economically, the Westray mine was

important — and we think about this in the context of the Yukon. It was important, providing many desperately needed jobs in Nova Scotia. It was supported by both provincial and federal loans and, following the disaster, both Westray and Curragh Resources were bankrupted, impacting the economies of Nova Scotia and Yukon. As we know, Curragh had been the largest non-government employer. It also left \$12 million in debt owing to Nova Scotia, \$85 million in national debt, over 100 lost jobs, and families devastated forever.

Mr. Speaker, the Westray disaster stands forever as a beacon — a warning of the consequences of the human, economic and political consequences of ignoring basic safety rules, and of choosing expediency over due process and greed over common good. It happens daily. Together we can ensure that when it does, our enforcement agencies, our police forces and our courts are equipped to fully implement the provisions of the Westray law. We cannot afford not to.

In recognition of Teacher Appreciation Day

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of Teacher Appreciation Day, I rise today to pay tribute to all of our Yukon teachers and teachers across Canada and to Yukon's outstanding principal, Lorrie Peterson, principal of Jack Hulland Elementary School.

On Teacher Appreciation Day, we recognize and thank teachers, principals, administrators and all school staff for the work that they do. Our educators carry an important responsibility in their hands. They are leaders and role models in our communities. Each day, they walk into their classrooms and guide our young people along their learning journeys. They are responsible for passing on foundational knowledge and skills needed to live happy and healthy lives. They teach our youth how to read, how to write, how to solve problems, and how to communicate and interact with others. Our young people will use these tools throughout their lives. They are tools they will use to be successful in post-secondary studies, job training or other programs they may choose, and they are tools that will give them the opportunity to find meaning in their jobs and make a difference in our society and our communities.

Mr. Speaker, this year, Lorrie Peterson, our principal at Jack Hulland Elementary School, was named one of Canada's Outstanding Principals for 2017. The Learning Partnership presents this award each year to 40 principals across Canada. Ms. Peterson has done a wonderful job engaging her school staff in evidence-based decision-making, which yielded great results in improving student progress. Teachers at her school are using math and writing checklists and rubrics to provide students with descriptive feedback and helpful information to encourage improvement. The Jack Hulland way guides students in making good choices to create a positive learning environment.

In February, Ms. Peterson joined Canada's outstanding principals in a five-day executive leadership training program at the University of Toronto's Rotman's School of Management. They are all now members of the prestigious National Academy of Canada's Outstanding Principals with

over 400 members, which provides ongoing network and professional development.

Ms. Peterson and all of our educators in the Yukon and across the country deserve our recognition today on Teacher Appreciation Day. My office spoke with her earlier — and I had spoken with her personally about this award. She is unable to be here today, but thanks this House for the recognition.

Through the work of all teachers with our youth, they develop confident learners and informed members of our society and help shape a better future for all of us. On behalf of my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly, I would like to thank all teachers today, recognizing them, as well as principals and school staff, for their commitment to students and education.

Ms. Van Bibber: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to all teachers, especially as we near the summer break. I love words, and the word “teacher” can encompass a range of terms — educator, tutor, instructor, coach, trainer, lecturer or professor. As I stand before you today, teachers also stand before our children, presenting ideas and facts and encouraging them to create and think about what they are presented. They engage students through their passion for teaching.

Teachers provide our children with the best possible chances in life. They provide them with the skills and vision necessary to make meaningful contributions and build proactive lives for themselves. I too would like to acknowledge and convey my congratulations to Lorrie Peterson, principal of Jack Hulland Elementary School. Lorrie is one of the well-deserving recipients of Canada’s outstanding principal awards — an award to honour her leadership and initiatives within the school. She has not only built a collaborative and strategic teaching environment for her staff, but ensures that this environment has a direct impact on student outcomes. Lorrie has instituted her school’s character education program, which has been successful in highlighting the virtues of empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance and fairness to students and teachers alike.

I know I personally have many stories about teachers who have touched my life and each of us has similar recollections. I do remember each and every one of them. In fact, I am blessed to say that my mentor and my best friend was my grade 7 teacher, and we still hang out today. We laugh, visit and reminisce. I credit her with recognizing and nurturing the character within me that was struggling to emerge from the age of 13. I would encourage all teachers today to take this day as a well-deserved opportunity to reflect on the incredible role they play in the upbringing of our children and the impacts they have on shaping our futures. To quote Maya Angelou: “Don’t just teach because that’s all you can do. Teach because it’s your calling. And once you realize that, you have a responsibility to the young people.”

Thank you to teachers, principals, vice-principals, education assistants, counsellors and substitutes. Thank you for accepting the responsibility of shaping our children to be the best they can be so that we know our future is in good hands.

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to also offer congratulations to Lorrie Peterson for her award as one of Canada’s outstanding principals for 2017. We know that the staff, students and parents alike have benefitted from her dedication to her job, to her students, to her teachers, to the community and to her profession, so we thank her for the example.

In recognition of Law Day

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of our government and the members of the Third Party to recognize Law Day in this House, a national event celebrating the signing of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* on April 17, 1982. This year marks the 35th anniversary of this pivotal document in our nation’s history.

Informed by the 1948 United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the Charter was preceded by the *Canadian Bill of Rights* in 1960. The *Canadian Bill of Rights* was limited in power because it was not part of the Canadian Constitution and only dealt with federal legislation.

Twenty-two years after the *Canadian Bill of Rights*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* constitutionally entrenched many of the *Canadian Bill of Rights* underlying principles and fundamental freedoms. The Charter enshrines freedom of religion, expression, association and peaceful assembly, as well as the right to life, liberty and security of the person, equality before and under the law and equality protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination.

Since the Charter was passed, it has been the law of the land, just as similar documents in liberal democracies all around the world are heralded. A year after the Charter was signed, the Canadian Bar Association started Law Day to commemorate that event. It also marked an annual opportunity to inform Canadians about the law, the legal professions, and the legal institutions that support our Canadian democracy.

Law Day is a yearly reminder of what our laws mean to us. It reminds us that our rights and freedoms are not free and that all of us must strive to maintain and defend them. Canadians have our *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, but we also have obligations to meet if we are to maintain a fully functional democracy.

As a lawyer and active member of the Canadian Bar Association, Yukon branch and national, and former president of the Law Society of the Yukon, I am keenly aware of the responsibility that members of my profession and the judiciary have to ensure that our justice system remains open, fair, independent and unbiased. I also know that many people work in Yukon to ensure that the justice system and our laws are administered well and fairly to all.

To our judiciary, members of the Yukon bar, those who serve on independent board, tribunals, committees and commissions and all the organizations and advocates who provide legal information and services to the public, I thank you. Our community is better for your work.

Elsewhere, Law Day is celebrated on April 18, but here we prefer to have a northern approach and have it on a day when we have a reasonable chance at least — but not a guarantee — that we will be participating in the annual Law Day Charity Fun Run without ice and snow on the path.

The Law Day Charity Fun Run and Walk was started here in the territory. CBA began this local event and it has been copied elsewhere in Canada. It started 27 years ago. This year's event was held this past Friday on a beautiful sunny May 5 here in the Yukon. It started from the visitor centre next door and it had the theme of "Celebrating the rights of the child". Each year, there is a theme and, for the past almost 20 years, the local CBA has chosen a charity. The Law Day fun run is a charity event. This year's theme was "Celebrating the rights of the child" and it was co-sponsored by the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate office. This is so fitting in light of this year's theme.

As usual, the proceeds of the events, which are from the entries of the runners and walkers, went to a charity. This year's recipient was Autism Yukon, which is dedicated to supporting children, families and individuals living with autism spectrum disorder. The walk/run was a total success — sunny days tend to do that here in the territory — and almost 130 motivated runners and walkers participated, as did 20 children from the Whitehorse Montessori school, who often come. Fundraising tallies are ongoing, but I am happy to tell this House that more than \$6,700 was raised for Autism Yukon. This money will support this organization's vital public awareness campaigns and will improve resources for those Yukoners on the autism spectrum.

Autism Yukon offers services, including a resource library and links to community resources and services. Their mandate is to make life better for those affected by autism here in the territory. This year, Autism Yukon is hosting a special one-day conference this May 18 — next week — entitled "See the Spectrum Differently". It is an all-day event featuring Dr. Temple Grandin, the world-renowned autism advocate, and other speakers. For more information on this gathering and all the important work they do, please look at Autism Yukon's website autismyukon.org.

As a former Canadian Bar Association executive member, I'm extremely proud to state that the CBA has supported local charities for the last 27 years and has raised a total of \$89,000 for them during that period of time from this fun run. The CBA has kept up its fundraising tradition this year, as I have noted.

I would also like to recognize that, aside from the sponsorship of the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate office, a host of prominent law firms, local businesses and many too numerous to mention here today supported the run/walk and do so annually. All sponsors deserve a salute.

Thank you to all of the Yukoners who took part this year. The annual event promotes healthy living in a delightful Yukon spring, supports a local charity and reminds us how important our legal system is, all at the same time. It sounds like a pretty great event to me — win, win, win. Thank you again to all who support the Law Day fun run.

In closing, I would like to mention that we have with us today Tom Ullyett. Being a long-time supporter and volunteer for the Law Day fun run doesn't really capture it. It was probably his idea in the first place, and I know he has been an active member. We worked for many years together on that committee and the Law Day fun run, and on other CBA events.

We worked many years together on that committee and on the Law Day Charity Fun Run and Walk and other CBA events. Jessica Lott Thompson, the current secretary-treasurer for the CBA Yukon branch, is also with us. She's the chair of this year's Law Day planning committee. Also in the audience, I think, is Russ Knutson, who is involved with the Yukon Human Rights Commission, and for a long time has been involved with Autism Yukon.

We also have with us Annette King, who is Yukon's Child and Youth Advocate and Annie Blake, who is the administration and communications assistant with the Child and Youth Advocate and also a former student of the Premier.

Also with us today is Kate Swales, the president of Autism Yukon and Leslie Peters, the executive director of Autism Yukon. We thank you all for being here today.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today in also acknowledging this 35th anniversary of the establishment of Law Day and the Law Day Charity Fun Run and Walk. I would like to echo the Minister of Justice's comments in thanking those who have joined us here in the gallery today and particularly acknowledge, if I understand correctly — that Tom Ullyett and Dan Shier, I believe, were the co-founders of the Law Day Charity Fun Run and Walk here in the Yukon and the fact that their idea and their work has spread across the country is something that they should be proud of, and for their ongoing efforts of some 27 years as well in helping to organize the race and to run in it — I know in Tom's case.

I would like to as well acknowledge and thank all of the runners and all of the supporters of the Law Day Charity Fun Run and Walk for their work in making this year's event yet another success and thank the Canadian Bar Association for their work in planning this annual event.

Each year across the country, Law Day is celebrated to recognize the proclamation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which took place on April 17, 1982. This year celebrates the 35th anniversary of the signing of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and its proclamation. The Charter was built on the foundation of the *Canadian Bill of Rights*, which was brought forth by Prime Minister Diefenbaker in 1960. He stated that a bill of rights was required to take a forthright stand against discrimination based

on colour, creed or racial origin. The rights contained in the *Canadian Bill of Rights* include: the right to life, liberty, security of the person; the right to freedom of speech; the right to freedom of religion; equality rights; the right to fundamental justice; and the right to counsel. Each of these rights has been reflected within the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and celebrated annually through education and activities across the country.

I do want to again point out what I believe is a flaw in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which is the omission of a key part of the former Diefenbaker *Canadian Bill of Rights* — that is the right to own property, which is protected in the Constitution, and was also supported through a motion in this Legislative Assembly on November 24, 1982 — moved by Andrew A. Philipsen, after whom our current Law Centre is named.

That motion, which was passed in this Legislative Assembly, read: "... that the Legislative Assembly of Yukon support the resolution passed unanimously the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia on Tuesday, September 21, 1982, respecting an amendment to Section 7 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* so that it would read as follows: '7. Everyone has the right to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property, and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.'", and urge the legislative assemblies of all other jurisdictions and the Senate and the House of Commons of Canada to adopt similar resolutions.

Again, in noting that point, I want to acknowledge the work of Mr. Philipsen, the Legislative Assembly of that day, and also note that, despite that flaw, the *Canadian Bill of Rights* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* are in fact continued protections of the principles of legal rights within our Canadian democracy. They owe their existence and their roots to other important revolutionary legal documents, notably the Magna Carta, which was created in 1215. The Magna Carta and its companion document, the *Charter of the Forest* set the groundwork for many concepts that continue to define democratic life today, not only in Canada, but across many countries. As symbols of justice, they also act as powerful reminders to those who govern. They 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, as there are many enduring principles of liberty within it that still resonate and inspire people today. Some of the examples of the principles that never lose their relevance are key concepts of the Magna Carta, which include: 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 have been widely expanded on since that time. The reference that was first included in the Magna Carta included that a widow 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 the protections for the common man and the protection of the commons, which set clear limits to privatization and the importance of stewardship for shared resources.

I should note that the Magna Carta actually began its life as a peace treaty — a treaty that has motivated people, whole countries and movements, and effected change. As many members may know, one of the copies of it — the original — was available for viewing here in Canada on its 800th anniversary. I know that my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, along with many other Canadians, took the opportunity to view this piece of our history.

The Magna Carta holds a place in our hearts as a first in a series of instruments that are recognized as having special constitutional status, and it is worth noting that even democracies such as the United States use the Magna Carta as an important building block for their Constitution.

Now, in conclusion, I would like to briefly mention a few things about the Law Day Charity Fun Run and Walk. Its purpose is to educate the general public about the law and how the legal system works. Professionals are also able to take the opportunity to educate and inform about the importance of the law and the vital roles that lawyers and the judiciary serve in ensuring that our system is and remains independent, open and unbiased.

Law Day empowers the public at large through a variety of celebrations and activities that bring awareness to the importance of the history of our law and its evolution, as well as the administration of justice. In concluding my tribute, again I would just like to acknowledge and thank both the founders of this run and all who have continued to make it a success for some 27 years here in the territory and indeed across the country.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Speaker: Member for Copperbelt North.

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

Speaker: I'm sorry. The Member for Copperbelt North, I should have recognized you as the chair of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

Are there any further reports of committees for tabling?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to fulfill its election commitment to invest \$30 million annually in an energy retrofit program for residential, government and commercial buildings.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to publicize and update the Department of Environment's online bear incident map for the 2017 season.

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

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Prior to proceeding with Question Period, the Chair will make a brief statement regarding the manner in which members address one another in the House.

The Chair has heard members on a few occasions — particularly during Question Period — use the word “you” in reference to another member of the House. I would remind all members of Standing Order 17(1), which says — and I quote: “Every member desiring to speak shall rise in his or her place and address the Speaker.” In other words, when a member has the floor, the member is to speak to and through the Chair. The member is not to speak directly to the member who has posed a question or the minister who has provided a response. Members should refer to one another by their electoral district or by some other position that they hold in this Assembly. This is primarily, obviously, for members who are new to their jobs. I am not casting any aspersions on members who have been here for awhile, although it's useful to remind everyone.

I thank members for their attention.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD**Question re: Opioid crisis**

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. The opioid crisis in this country sadly looks like it is getting worse. Last week, Yukon's coroner confirmed that, in Yukon alone, there have been five deaths in a little over a year related to fentanyl. Can the Minister of Health and Social Services update this House on what the government is doing to address this growing crisis?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The Yukon, as is much of Canada, is seeing an increase in this crisis. Yukon is no different and we are taking the necessary approaches to address that in an expedient fashion. We are working with the health professions. We are working with our NGO groups and with our health professions to come up with a strategy. We have taken that approach through education initiatives and through the introduction of the naloxone kits into our health centres, as

well as going out into the media, social media and taking necessary measures.

Ms. McLeod: One important way to help address the crisis is to educate our children so they understand the very real dangers of opioids like fentanyl.

Yesterday, my colleague, the MLA for Porter Creek North, put forward a motion that reads: “THAT this House urges the Minister of Education in collaboration with the Minister of Health and Social Services to instruct their departments to begin work to develop a health curriculum for use in schools that educates on the dangers of prescription opioid abuse for all students in the Yukon education system.”

We believe that this issue is something that should rise above political stripes, so would the government consider supporting this motion? We would, of course, be open to a friendly amendment if there are issues within the current wording.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the honourable member for her question. We would love to debate this particular motion because we find it critical that we address the issues around fentanyl — Education and Health and Social Services in partnership. I can indicate that Health and Social Services and the Department of Education have already begun working in partnership. I was happy to hear the motion yesterday, and we're well on our way to a cooperative arrangement between those two departments.

The Government of Yukon is working with the Yukon schools to inform students, staff and families about the risks and dangers of fentanyl. As graduation season is coming up, students need to know the danger of these drugs and how small of an amount can cause serious repercussions and often death.

Fentanyl is sometimes mixed into other drugs and is extremely toxic even in small amounts. We have made take-home naloxone kits and are training staff and students on how to use these kits. We're also sharing information through school newsletters and how to talk to kids about fentanyl, and information for parents, teachers and staff at the schools so that as much education and information as possible, we hope, will save lives.

Ms. McLeod: I appreciate the response from the Education minister. Over the last several months, the federal government has been signing individual health transfer deals with the different provinces and territories. In addition to the health transfer and all the money for home care and mental health, British Columbia received an extra \$10 million to help address the opioid crisis in their province. Alberta also received an additional \$6 million to help address the opioid crisis in their province.

The government previously said that if any other jurisdiction got a better deal than Yukon, then we would be able to match it. I'm wondering if the minister can tell us if Yukon has received extra money to address the growing opioid crisis in our territory. If not, is the Government of Yukon currently in discussions with Canada to amend our health deal to ensure that we also receive money to address this important health issue?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I thank the member opposite for the question. Most definitely — we are looking at all options. Clearly this is not a Yukon-only issue and we are looking at ensuring that we have the necessary resources in place, whether they come from the federal government or from within our own budgets. We need to address it as a major crisis and we are, as expressed, working with the departments, First Nations and the health professions to address the crisis that we are confronted with. As indicated in the media yesterday, we have an indication from our chief medical officer that we have had five verified deaths in our communities, and that is most definitely a crisis. As government, we put that as a highest priority and we will do what is necessary to educate, support and ensure that we have the safety measures in place.

Question re: Bear hunting

Mr. Istchenko: When the bison season closes at the end of March, many Yukon hunters turn their thoughts to the spring bear hunt. It has become an annual rite for many Yukon hunters and provides the opportunity to get out on the land early in the season — it's usually a few weeks before the ice is out. However, there are indeed some Yukoners who don't support this hunt.

Does the minister support the spring bear hunt, or will she take action to restrict it?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. The question, I guess, posed to me is: Do I support it? I personally don't have an opinion, but I will most certainly consult with the renewable resources councils, the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the Yukon Outfitters Association and those who are directly impacted in our communities. As due process and legislation changes, this is a necessary process, so I personally don't have an opinion, but I will seek the advice from the parties that are directly impacted.

Mr. Istchenko: The Yukon is not the only jurisdiction that allows this — the opportunity for hunting bears in the spring. British Columbia has a long history with this hunt. However, hunters and other stakeholders have taken note of the fact that this issue has come up in the BC elections. Both the Green Party and the NDP in the province have committed to ending the spring bear hunt. I have heard from several Yukon hunters who are concerned that this trend will carry on to the Yukon.

Can the minister assure those concerned hunters that the Liberal government here in the Yukon won't follow the lead of the politicians in BC by advocating for the closure of the spring bear hunt?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I guess I'm going to recite that we will go through a consultation process to address any pressures that are coming at us. If there is an indication that perhaps we should change legislation from avid hunters like me and perhaps the member opposite or others — if they or others in our community would like to see some legislative changes, then that due process will take effect. At this point in time, we

have not heard any indication recently — at least I haven't — that this is a direction that we should be taking.

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I do thank the minister for her answer.

Another issue related to bear hunting in the Yukon has been the issue of roadside hunting. In 2014, there was a regulation change put forward to the Fish and Wildlife Management Board process to make it unlawful to hunt bears during the spring hunting season within 30 metres of the centre line of the highway in southwest Yukon. After careful consideration, the Yukon Party government decided to continue to allow roadside hunting.

Does the minister support this decision or will she take action to reverse it?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Recognizing that any hunting in our Yukon — is it a right? Do we have regulations around how these things are managed? We look at the indigenous right to harvest. Those are things that we can't control. They have an obligation and the inherent right to proceed in that fashion.

With regard to the grizzly bear hunting and restrictions to roadside hunting, my opening comments really brings me to chapter 16 of our self-government agreement, where it refers to the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the RRCs and the obligation to develop management strategies specific to any wildlife management, whether it be species at risk or whether it addresses some of the current pressures on respective wildlife, such as bears, grizzly bears, spring bear hunting, the corridor — anything to that effect. I think that we have to follow those processes.

Question re: First Nation and temporary teachers

Ms. White: When the original *Education Act* was created, there was agreement among all stakeholders that the number of First Nation teachers in Yukon schools should be proportionate to the ratio of First Nation people in Yukon. Currently, about one in four Yukoners identifies as First Nation, Métis, or Inuit. While the initial efforts boosted the ratio of First Nation teachers to about 10 percent, that number seems to have stagnated since.

Mr. Speaker, what are the Department of Education's current figures in the number of First Nation teachers in Yukon and what concrete measures will the minister take to increase the number of First Nation teachers in our schools?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the honourable member for her question.

I do not have the figures with me at this time. Fortunately, for a question that was asked of me yesterday, I do have the answer, which I will provide for her later.

Unfortunately, sometimes it seems that for the questions that the member opposite is asking, I don't have the actual figures. Again, I am happy to get them and I commit to doing so. I do not have the actual numbers in front of me. That said, the second part of the question involves: What are we doing to increase First Nation teachers in our schools?

I can assure this House that is a priority. It is a priority for the department that we're supporting programs at Yukon College to train teachers, that we are actively looking for —

there is a protocol in the department of course to hire First Nation teachers and there is a protocol for the opportunities for Yukon and other First Nation teachers to be considered for positions as openings occur. That needs to be maintained. We need to make sure that there are homegrown opportunities here in the territory for members of our First Nations and other First Nation teachers to find themselves in classrooms.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to getting those numbers back at a later date.

Temporary teachers are an important part of our education system; however, their positions are filled with uncertainty. They do not enjoy the certainty of employment that permanent teachers do, which makes it difficult for them to set down roots in our communities. The Yukon *Education Labour Relations Act* clearly states that temporary teachers must be made permanent after being employed for two years, except in exceptional circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us how many temporary teachers have been teaching for more than two years in temporary positions?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I cannot tell you how many teachers, but I can tell you about temporary teachers, because it happens to be a file I have a lot of experience with. I appreciate that this question is somewhat off the original topic, which is about First Nation teachers, but I can indicate that the temporary teacher issue is one that has been dealt with in the last number of years. With respect to the previous practice where a number of people hired as temporary teachers were teaching in classrooms much longer than the two-year maximum, what the member opposite mentioned is correct with respect to what is in the legislation.

That said, there was a marked discussion and collaboration with the Yukon Teachers' Association to maintain a list of those individuals who were in those circumstances, deal with them on a case-by-case basis, and to actually have those temporary teachers made permanent outside of that process so that this practice — if I could say — on the part of the former government wouldn't continue.

Ms. White: It's important to note that precarious employment still happens within the Department of Education. This is a long-standing problem and it's not the first time that we've raised it in this House. In fact, the government has seen many cases of temporary teachers having to go through a long and costly arbitration process, only to be told that the government has to respect the law and provide a permanent position after two years as a temporary teacher. There is no doubt that kids in communities would benefit from permanent teachers who can actually set down roots in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, we understand what the minister has just said, but will she commit to following the government's own law and ensure that no teacher is stuck in a temporary position for over two years without being offered a permanent position?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the honourable member for her question. She will likely know that, in my mandate letter, the Premier has tasked me with reviewing the hiring practices

for teachers, temporary and permanent, and determining how we can move forward to do that in a way that is beneficial to all Yukoners and particularly to students in classrooms.

I'm not aware at the moment that there are the cases that the honourable member has noted. I am aware of them in the past because they were part of something that I worked on. As a result, I do take the comments seriously. If that is continuing to occur, we want to make that this not the case. If the honourable member is asking me if my intention is to follow the law, it certainly is.

Question re: Affordable housing

Ms. Van Bibber: During the election, the Liberal government promised to prioritize federal funding toward the creation of affordable housing. In the recent federal Liberal budget, only \$2.1 million a year was allocated to the Yukon for housing. At the time, this government said it was happy with this investment even though it was only 10 percent of what Nunavut is getting for the same thing as part of their budget.

Obviously with such a little amount per year, resources will be stretched thin. We are wondering if the minister has plans for how she will allocate these funds toward the creation of affordable housing and which communities will be prioritized?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I thank the member opposite for the question. We have a housing strategy, the housing action plan and Housing First models. We have a policy in place that the previous government initiated — a process with respect to ending homelessness and anti-poverty strategies. That will drive a process of how we prioritize and address some of the current pressures that we are feeling and seeing in our territories.

My mandate is really to look at housing shortages in rural Yukon and what can we do differently so that all Yukoners have equal opportunities to the resources that are being identified through the federal budget.

Ms. Van Bibber: With respect to the minister's plan for the funding of affordable housing, is the plan to give the money to municipalities or First Nation governments for them to develop affordable housing, or can the private sector also apply to access the funding?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Yesterday we went through a supplementary budget process. In that budget process and in my presentation, I identified and highlighted specific areas that Yukon Housing Corporation had identified. The previous government had initiated some processes in terms of how funding was allocated to the communities and to the First Nations. Perhaps some of those will stay in existence and perhaps some will change, but that will be done by way of advisement with the housing committee, as well with the First Nations and the various municipalities that we're working with through the municipality matching grant process and through the national housing strategy.

As background, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is leading the development of the national housing strategy. That will form some discussions for us and

some direction moving forward in terms of what we do with a regional strategy. We are trying to look at all avenues and all options that are available to us to address some of the pressures that we are feeling in rural Yukon and in Whitehorse as well.

Ms. Van Bibber: There is a lot of unused government land throughout the territory that may provide opportunities for private developers to create more affordable housing. Can the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation let this House know if the government is currently considering options to develop or make available any unused government land for the development of affordable housing?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am going to go back to my presentation yesterday on the supplementary budget. Any unused funds that were identified in the previous budget — I think that is an indication from the previous government that there was money left on the table for social housing and poverty-reduction strategies. That is not my intention.

My intention is to work with the department and work with the municipalities. Perhaps the opposition may want to have some input in terms of what we do with existing funding that might be left over at the end of the year.

My goal is to ensure that we take every possible avenue and address some of the questions that were posed to us. Aging while in place — what does that model look like? The Member for Kluane wanted to know what we are doing for the Kluane area with respect to some of the pressures there.

We have unincorporated communities in our Yukon that do not have access and that won't have access to resources that are available. First Nation housing strategies, initiatives — those are all things that perhaps we need to have a broader discussion on and we will.

We will have those engagement strategies with the parties — the parties being the municipalities, First Nations and our community members at large, and NGO groups.

Question re: Ross River Dena Council wildlife management

Mr. Istchenko: On July 31, 2014, the Ross River Dena Council filed a statement of claim seeking a declaration that the Yukon government has a duty to consult and accommodate the RRDC prior to issuing hunting licences and seals for big game animals in the area around Ross River and Faro.

At the time, the Yukon Party government disagreed with the claim and put forward the position that the Yukon's cooperative and collaborative wildlife management system — including the direct engagement with First Nations to address limitations on harvesting and develop necessary regulations for wildlife harvest in response to conservation concerns or other wildlife interests — was sufficient to meet Yukon's duty to consult and accommodate. Does the minister agree with this position, or does she plan to change the Yukon government's position?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I thank the member opposite for the question. There is litigation in effect, and I don't really have

an opinion on that because that is not my jurisdiction or my responsibility. That would fall on the Minister of Justice.

I will respond to the question posed — not specifically to the question but the fact that we are consulting and engaging with the Ross River Dena Council on all matters affecting hunting and hunting regulations, as well as outfitters' concessions. We are planning a meeting there next week. During that time, we will have further discussions with the Ross River Dena Council and most certainly take their input and their advisement on how they would like to proceed on certain fronts.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for her answer again.

Last year, we know the Supreme Court found that the Yukon government had substantially consulted and accommodated with the Ross River Dena Council with respect to wildlife management in the area. Essentially, the Supreme Court had agreed with the Yukon government's position that Environment Yukon has made continuing and extensive efforts to consult RRDC about wildlife management.

Can the minister please update Yukoners on the current status of this important case? Has the RRDC filed an appeal and, if so, what will Yukon government's position be?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the honourable member for his question. I can't say too much about this and I know he's aware of that. The Ross River Dena Council, as he knows, commenced another lawsuit against the Yukon government regarding the hunting licences and seals issued in the Ross River area.

The case is, as the preamble noted, substantially similar to the case decided by the Supreme Court of Yukon in November 2015. In that case, the court found the government had a duty to consult with Ross River Dena Council but that duty hadn't been met.

As the matters are before the court, I don't think it's permissible for me or appropriate for the Yukon government to comment any further.

The question of the member opposite does, in my view, ask for details of the litigation that are just not available for me to discuss at the moment.

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you for the answer. To date, both Environment Yukon and the Yukon Fish and Game Association have been very clear and strong in their defence of our cooperative and collaborative wildlife management regime in the Yukon.

It is a system that has been responsive to the needs for continuous change in wildlife populations and respects the integral role of First Nation people and First Nation governments in wildlife management. The RRDC court case has worried a number of our partners in wildlife management, whether they are members of some of the RRCs, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, some First Nation government wildlife managers or even Yukon hunters themselves.

It's important that they know what the position of the current government is, so I would like to give the minister another opportunity to reiterate her position and clearly

explain her thoughts about whether she will stand up for our current wildlife management system.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am going to bring us back to the earlier point that the member opposite had raised with respect to grizzly bear management strategies. The department has an ongoing process of engagement and partnership with First Nations on a number of initiatives. This includes Yukon-wide engagement on the development of a grizzly bear conservation and management plan, which has involved community workshops across Yukon. A number of plans for habitat protection areas are underway that are developed by joint Yukon and First Nation steering committees. This is an indication that we are working with our communities, our First Nations and our RRCs, and we will address the questions that are posed to us.

The outcome hopefully will provide a smarter, more efficient and effective strategy for us that will align with management measures that meet the needs of Yukoners and then has direct input from the community at large — First Nations, NGO groups, RRCs, and the municipalities perhaps. Some of this hunting is happening without jurisdictions that perhaps fall within municipal boundaries or outside of municipal boundaries, but we still need to consult very broadly with Yukoners.

Question re: Campground development

Ms. Van Bibber: Campgrounds are very popular in our territory. Yukoners love the outdoors and spending time with family, camping, fishing and enjoying the fresh air. One issue we know that people who use our campgrounds want to see continue is early openings and late closings of the campgrounds.

Has the minister asked her department to continue with the previous government's commitment to open campgrounds early and ensure they are open later in the season?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thanks for the great question.

Most definitely we want to ensure that Yukoners have quick access and easy access, and that the parks and wilderness areas and our campgrounds are open. Our drive really is to ensure that our families are out enjoying our Yukon wilderness and that there are opportunities during early parts of the season, like the upcoming long weekend, for extended stays perhaps. These are some of the challenges. Things we will address — inappropriate use of the campgrounds. We have put significant resources in our budget to allow for the development and enhancement of our campgrounds to allow for that to happen.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Accessing our campgrounds is an important part of what the Government of Yukon does every summer as we get ready for this camping season. This means ensuring access roads are in good condition and the campsites well-maintained.

Can the minister also confirm that the access roads to campsites will be graded and the sites themselves will be in great condition prior to the opening of the campgrounds?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I will say for certain that in 2017, we are making further investments in upgrading our campgrounds

to ensure that they are safe, accessible and enjoyable for all Yukoners and visitors.

Ms. Van Bibber: Last year, the Department of Environment did a survey on campgrounds and Yukoners' opinions on the matter. We have already seen some results of the survey reported by CHON FM, but I don't think the full survey has been made public yet. I think this information would be helpful and informative and I hope that it is made public.

Will the minister make the results of the survey public? Also, can she provide a timeline for when it will be made public?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Just by way of data, I can reveal that in the last 10 years, occupancy of campgrounds doubled. Yukon Parks provided over 52,000 nights of camping and in 2016 we had 73,000 people engage with our campgrounds in the Yukon. The question about the data — we will ensure that you get the necessary data. That most definitely helps us to better align services in providing services for our campgrounds.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of Personal Privilege

Speaker: The Hon. Premier, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sorry to interrupt the flow here, but I rise on a point of order to correct a statement that I made in Committee of the Whole yesterday on Bill No. 200, *Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Yesterday, I said — and I quote: "Severance packages for MLAs, Cabinet staff, approximately \$624,700 — of course, nobody can forecast how many severance packages are going to happen, but this is an expense that wasn't accounted for and that has to be accounted for..."

Mr. Speaker, the correct figure is \$1.3 million and this does not include the severance costs for MLAs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, May 10, 2017. They are Motion No. 55, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek North and Motion No. 15, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, May 10, 2017. They are Motion No. 52, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre and Motion No. 38, 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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 39

Clerk: Motion No. 39, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It is moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Maxwell Rispin and Benjamin Bruce Warnsby to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective immediately; and

THAT Karen Keenan be reappointed to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective immediately.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As of December 2016, term-end dates came up for three members and one has resigned due to the upcoming appointment of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators.

At that time, the panel of adjudicators had a nine-person membership, which is one more than the normal eight-person membership, leaving three vacancies. All expiring members were notified ahead of time and the positions were advertised. The all-party Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees has reviewed all applications and put forward their recommendations for the appointments to the Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators in their first report, which was tabled on April 20, 2017.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of those who put their names forward. There were many qualified and outstanding applicants. We depend on Yukoners who are committed and hard-working to serve on such boards and committees and we thank them for their willingness to put their names forward and to serve.

By way of a brief introduction, I would like to highlight the recommended applicants.

Mr. Rispin made a career in education while also acting as a senior Justice of the Peace in the Northwest Territories for in excess of 25 years. He has extensive board experience, including two previous terms served on the panel of adjudicators. Mr. Warnsby is a jurist doctor — also known in lay language as the recipient of a law degree — and a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizen who lives and works here in Whitehorse. He currently serves on the Judicial Council and is a young and spirited worker. Ms. Keenan has served one term on the panel and shows great commitment to it. She worked as an advocate worker for the Teslin Tlingit Council, focusing on the well-being of victims, families and the community. Ms. Keenan also served as a Crown witness coordinator for the Public Prosecution Service of Canada from 2006 to 2012.

All recommended applicants have a plethora of skills and are qualified to hold a position on the panel of adjudicators. I look forward to working with each of them and to having

them on the panel. Thank you to the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees for taking the time to make these recommendations.

Mr. Hassard: We as the Official Opposition would like to thank everyone for putting their names forward, whether chosen or not. We especially thank all of the members for their time and commitment to these very important positions. Of course, I would like to make a special note for Ms. Karen Keenan, as she is a constituent of mine. I am happy to see that she has been reappointed as well.

Ms. White: The NDP caucus thanks all applicants to the boards and committees for the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, and we wish the three new recipients well in their work.

Motion No. 39 agreed to

Motion No. 40

Clerk: Motion No. 40, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It is moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(3) of the *Human Rights Act*, does remove Raymond Kokiw, Michelle Mbuto, Elaine Cairns and Darcy Tkachuk from the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, effective immediately.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This is the second motion pertaining to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators that I presented and it has been moved to revoke the expired and resigned members of the panel. I sincerely thank Darcy Tkachuk, Raymond Kokiw, Elaine Cairns and Michelle Mbuto for the time and time and energy that they have committed to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators. Signing up for a panel of this magnitude comes with paramount responsibilities. All four members have contributed their time and their energy to the panel of adjudicators, for which we are all truly grateful.

Mr. Hassard: Speaking on behalf of the Official Opposition, I would just like to say thank you again to those members for their time and commitment on the panel. We certainly appreciate all of the hard work that they have done over the years. Thank you.

Ms. White: We too, the NDP caucus, thank the past members for their valuable contributions and we wish them well in the future.

Motion No. 40 agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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 (Mr. Hutton): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*

Chair: We will be discussing Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm pleased to rise in Committee of the Whole today to present the introductory remarks for Bill No. 201, *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, more commonly referred to as the 2017-18 main estimates.

Our government is grateful to voters who entrusted us with the profound responsibility of governing this wonderful territory and its diverse and vibrant communities. We are determined to ensure strong, sound public finances for Yukoners, and that is what we set out to accomplish within this budget. However, we have a difficult job ahead of us.

Coming into office, we understood the Yukon had a surplus budget, yet there was no surplus. There was, in fact, a deficit. In this past fiscal year, our government needed to issue a special warrant for the last three months of the fiscal year. It provided additional budgetary authorization for up to \$29.4 million. It wasn't needed for new programs or services; it was needed to cover commitments already made by the last government not accounted for in the previous budget.

Mr. Chair, our government presents a 2017-18 budget that is clear and measured because we know sound finances are not simply a government achievement. They are a shared achievement made possible by the contributions of Yukoners impacted by these decisions. Because we respect Yukoners, our budget is open and transparent. We're giving you the whole picture as it stands right now. Because we need the ideas of Yukoners, our future budget process will include engagements. Because we believe in Yukoners, we will deliver a series of budgets that address their concerns and speak to their hopes for themselves and for our territory. Because government-to-government relationships with First Nations are Yukon's future, our budget will include collaboration with First Nation governments.

Mr. Chair, Yukon faces several challenges that demand greater strategic thinking and a better financial acuity. One challenge we face is that our long-term revenues must align

with our long-term expenditures. The money coming in and the money going out must balance. As Yukoners' public capital assets grow, it costs more to operate and maintain them. Yukon also faces challenges associated with aging infrastructure and the need to keep pace with improvements in technology. We can't just replace our infrastructure; we must modernize it as well.

An aging population also brings greater challenges. Our government is determined to present a series of budgets over the next several years that will create an environment for Yukon's people and economy to thrive. We are going to get Yukon's finances back on track. We can make choices now to steer the ship in another direction to a more sustainable financial picture. That is why our government is establishing an expert Financial Advisory Panel. The panel will be chaired by a Yukoner and will include members with backgrounds in businesses, government, and research. The Financial Advisory Panel will discuss facts, options and ideas with Yukoners. The panel will engage with Yukoners, First Nations, municipal governments and businesses so that everyone can contribute to the discussions. We are setting aside \$250,000 to cover the costs of the panel's work, including broad public engagement. This will help us put Yukon's finances on a sustainable path together through open and honest dialogue about our shared future. We know that we're all in this together.

All of this will be done while building on our priorities. These priorities are: our people and their well-being; our healthy, vibrant communities; strong government-to-government relationships; fostering reconciliation and cooperation with First Nations; and sustainable economic growth, providing good jobs for Yukoners.

This year's budget provides funding toward those priorities. This includes total expenditures of \$1.44 billion, operation and maintenance expenditures of \$1.13 billion, capital expenditures of \$309 million, an annual surplus of approximately \$6.54 million and an accumulated surplus of \$1.36 billion.

This budget reflects a clearer picture than any previous budget.

Allow me to focus the members' attention on the unconsolidated figures — the amounts to be appropriated that are supported by Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*. Members will find the non-consolidated summaries starting on page S-5 of the 2017-18 main estimates document.

Focusing on the unconsolidated side, members opposite will observe that the total expenditures identified in the 2017-18 estimates are \$1.44 billion, of which \$1.13 billion is allocated to operation and maintenance and \$309 million represents our government's investment in capital.

Mr. Chair, our government has tabled a budget that will make life better for all Yukoners. Our fiscal position for this fiscal year reflects an annual surplus of about \$6.5 million, as noted. The previous government often spoke of net financial assets as a — and I quote: "pre-eminent measure of a government's finances". These are set to plummet because the previous government did not budget for things like the full

operating costs of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility for example. We have a net financial asset position of \$93 million forecast for the beginning of year but, by the end of the year, projected net financial assets are forecasted to be \$9.5 million, a significant drop as a result of those things that have been left out by the previous government's budget.

The reality is that Yukon's current path leads to fiscal uncertainty. We can't sustain this. As I said before, the longer you go down a path in the wrong direction, the harder the trip back up will be. This is why we need to stop, look around, get our bearings, determine the course of correction and head in the right direction toward a new destination. This is where we will seek the expertise of our panel.

As I noted in my earlier comments that this 2017-18 budget reflects total expenditures of approximately \$1.4 billion, to go through the entire budget on how we are contributing to improving Yukon would be an exercise in patience for all members here, so I won't do that. Instead I will give you some highlights ahead of the department-by-department debate.

Investing in Yukon's aging infrastructure will be one of our most costly initiatives, but also one that is the backbone of daily life and future development in our territory. In 2017-18, we are investing \$35.8 million in highway restoration and rehabilitation projects across the Yukon. We will invest \$30 million in infrastructure in communities, and another \$15.3 million will go toward bridge rehabilitation projects. This includes repairs needed to the Nares River bridge, the Nisutlin bridge and the Fox Creek bridge. A total of \$6.5 million more will go toward restoration and rehabilitation of Yukon airports and airstrips.

In order to find energy solutions for the north, this government will be putting \$1.5 million toward an innovative initiative supporting renewable energy projects, \$1.6 million will go toward residential and commercial energy incentive programs and \$3.5 million will be used to extend the interim electrical rebate.

This government is also committed to making sure companies continue to invest in Yukon and in its workers. To facilitate this, we are reducing the corporate tax rate for small corporations from three percent to two percent and the general corporate tax rate from 15 percent to 12 percent. This will help the private sector create new jobs. This will also help make Yukon a more attractive place for investments in the long term.

To further help develop our local economy, we are also doubling the regional economic development fund from about \$405,000 to \$800,000 and spending \$150,000 to develop an overarching strategy to support Yukon's tourism sector.

We also want to ensure that Yukoners have the skills needed to access these new jobs. We are supporting education at any stage of life by contributing \$4 million to increase school staffing and \$422,000 to implement a new school curriculum and expanding training opportunities for Yukoners. This government will also spend \$145,000, which will go toward operational and activity funding related to the

cultural component of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation learning centre.

Mr. Chair, we are committing \$100,000 annually to host the Yukon Forum four times a year, which helps to advance relations with Yukon First Nations and build a Yukon that is modern, diverse, inclusive and strong.

We are budgeting \$150,000 to support indigenous women's organizations.

This government is providing \$325,000 to support the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle in delivering training to communities and to Team Yukon attending North American Indigenous Games.

We are also happy to report that we will be spending \$1.5 million for the First Nation housing program and will be supporting new housing, renovations and rent supplements as well.

This is just a sample of what is included in this budget. We are also putting money toward seeking local solutions to local problems in order to build stronger communities and support Yukoners' well-being through programs and services.

While this list is long, the budget goes far beyond what I have mentioned here and I do encourage you all to speak to the individual ministers about the spending in their respective departments once we get into the line-by-line debates.

Finally, Mr. Chair, I would like to talk a bit about revenue. In 2017-18, Yukon will see a modest increase in the non-consolidated revenues to \$1.29 billion. This increase is possible, even with changes to the small and general corporate tax rates, with decreases from three to two percent and from 15 to 12 percent respectively. Even with these changes, tax revenue overall will be up slightly once all the changes take effect. Changes to the corporate tax rate plus associated increases to the personal income tax, an increase to the tobacco tax — all of this will net about \$1.5 million more in total.

You will see that Yukon's transfers from Canada are higher, with contributions from the federal government totalling \$971 million. Recoveries from Canada are also up slightly in this year's estimates at \$142 million, while third-party recoveries are slightly lower. Adding it all up, total revenues are 2.6 percent higher than in the previous year.

In my role as the Minister of Finance, Committee of the Whole provides me with an opportunity to speak to some of the commitments, questions and concerns that arose in this House in recent days. There are a few things that I think are worth highlighting and reiterating, both for the members opposite and for the public.

First, to the issue of carbon pricing — carbon pricing, in whichever mechanism the federal government decides to implement, will be a federal price on carbon. We are working with Canada to understand the full impact of their initiative on carbon pricing to understand what the impacts on Yukoners will be and what future efforts can be undertaken to mitigate these impacts. I can assure Yukoners that, once we know the impacts, we will account for costs to our O&M budgets. We can't do that until we know what it looks like. There are many ways a price on carbon could be implemented. We are

working with Canada to figure out what they will look like for Yukon.

Our commitment to returning those costs charged by the federal government to Yukoners has not changed. In what form or in what mechanism — we are still in the early days and we are working through these details. Canada hasn't unveiled their pricing mechanism to date. I will assure the members opposite that we are at the table with Canada. We will continue to advocate for Yukoners, as we committed, but governing is about making choices and setting priorities. We must make decisions based on what we know now and what we can reasonably forecast based on the current realities and the information that we now have. Much has been said about what we are or are not doing with carbon pricing, but I think that it is more important to focus on our overall fiscal picture and not just this one aspect.

The second issue that has taken up much of our time together is the government's forecast for expenditures over revenues in the upcoming years. We have been accused of not having a plan, but that is simply not true. We have shown the real picture — the real current picture in this budget — and we have a plan to change this course. That plan centres squarely on asking Yukoners how they want us to address our future challenges. Our plan and intention with the Financial Advisory Panel is to ensure that, when the time comes to make the hard decisions we will need to make, we are doing so, based on what Yukoners have told us are their priorities. The panel will hear from Yukoners and, in turn, give us their best advice. Because we are committed to taking a non-partisan approach, this panel will be independent. Because we recognize that Yukoners want to enjoy the summer months and not be stuck in meetings, we are going to engage online in addition to face-to-face. Yes, that is not necessarily ideal, but when the chequebook doesn't balance, we can't wait for the ideal time to take action so we are using all of the variables that we can. We must act now.

As I conclude, I would like to reiterate from my speech of April 27 in this House that this is our first budget and we recognize the amount of work ahead of us in the upcoming years. Our commitment to evidence-based decisions is strong and unwavering. Change is already occurring. It's positive and it is in the best interests of all Yukoners as we move forward.

Mr. Chair, I'm looking forward to the discussion that will occur in the upcoming days as go through each of the various departmental budgets. Thank you for your time.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to rise today in my capacity as the Official Opposition Finance critic to discuss the 2017-18 main estimates. I would like to begin by again acknowledging and thanking my constituents for the continued opportunity to serve them. I appreciate their support in this, my fourth consecutive election, and what is now 14.5 years serving as their MLA for Lake Laberge.

I also would like to thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for entrusting me with the critic responsibilities that he has assigned to me, including Finance, Justice, Protective Services, and Sustainable Resources, and to thank him and all of our caucus and our staff for their continued

support in helping me do my job here in this Legislative Assembly.

Beginning to address and respond to the comments the Premier has made, I would note that while we do dispute and we will continue to dispute the Premier's assertion that the government inherited a deficit for the 2016-17 fiscal year, we will be more focused on the future and of course on reminding the Premier that, in fact, having the unprecedented luxury of being a Premier taking over from the previous government with roughly \$100 million in cash in the bank is a far cry from what every other Premier has been faced with.

Certainly the trajectory of spending always requires careful decisions, but we do believe, as I noted in my remarks, that some of the estimates made for future years — the decision by the Premier to increase the net capital amount budgeted for out-years by some \$45 million is a decision made by this government and is not a decision that can be blamed on the previous government. Indeed, other areas in reference to the 2016-17 fiscal year — I believe I heard the Minister of Finance when he rose on a point of order today to correct a statement he made yesterday, and he indicated that some \$1.3 million of the \$8.2 million booked as a deficit for the 2016-17 fiscal year was due to staff severance. Certainly that is not something for which any government can blame their predecessors — failing to budget for the costs of staff severance if they were not successfully returned to government. That is the outcome of an election process and is the type of thing that I think if the Minister of Finance were to ask the question in the last year of a mandate: Would he budget for the prediction of all of the Cabinet staff and others having to be paid a severance package? I'm sure he would not do that either.

In addition to that \$1.3 million number, I would appreciate him noting when he rises the total amount of the deficit booked in the 2016-17 fiscal year according to *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, which can be attributed to MLA severance for those MLAs who were not successful in being re-elected to this Assembly in the 2016 federal election.

Mr. Chair, before going on at great length, I will just note as well that the Premier, when in opposition, was quite critical of any increases to the size of the public service by the previous government, even if those overall increases in personnel numbers were due to meeting vital areas, such as health care pressures and so on. My simple question to the Premier is: Can he tell this House how many new government positions are being created this fiscal year and how many new FTEs in total are being added to government in the 2017-18 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the brief opening from the member opposite. I like to engage in getting the questions answered and debate without a lot of background, so I do appreciate that.

When we talk about the situation and take a look moving forward as to what the pressures are, we've put it on the table what we believe we were left with — the situation that we were left with. In that, it has to be stated that from the 2016-17 last fiscal year, the previous government did table a surplus,

but in the end, by all intents and purposes, this is not a surplus. It is a deficit in the end. Spending happens. The member opposite is correct that you can't blame the previous government for the fact that there are MLAs who are no longer in this room, but there is also money calculated as far as Cabinet expenses and the severance packages that come with those. When you have a government that has been in for 14 years, there is a number that is attached to that and it's a big number. The \$1.3 million, as we talked about before, is on the Cabinet side. The number for the MLAs — we will get back to you with a number, but it's a simple calculation that anybody can do. It's laid out in the legislative rules as far as how many years' service determines how much you get. We will get back to the member opposite with that number. I don't have it right in front of me right now.

Just back to the current situation that we're in, some of the additional spending that wasn't forecast in 2016-17 — and this is just a matter of fact. Let's just start with that. These are the facts. There wasn't money set aside or budgeted in the main estimates for the collective bargaining agreement. There wasn't money set aside or accounted for, but the money was spent for increased staffing for teachers, for pension solvency payments for the college and for the hospital, for the new continuing care beds at the Thomson Centre, the hospital, the McDonald Lodge, increases to home supports, a contribution to MacBride Museum for the expansion — all of this is money that has been spent. That ship has sailed.

We can call on a Monty Python line and say, "Let's not bicker and argue about who killed who", but basically these dollars have been spent and they have been spent by the previous government. They just weren't accounted for by the previous government.

We didn't have a supplementary budget in the fall. There was an election. There could have been a supplementary budget before the fall if we used our supplementary budget properly for unforeseen costs — if we used our supplementary budget for pressures that were not identified or weren't known about by the mains in the spring. Overruns to the rural hospitals — these are millions of dollars in overcosts that happened years previously and just were never accounted for. These are the numbers. We put them on the record yesterday and we put them on the record today as well. Saying that our forecast is some kind of Liberal spending and that's why we're seeing this new fiscal pressure — I respectfully disagree with the member opposite in that as well.

For one thing alone — and that is the Whistle Bend continuing care facility — of \$36 million a year in costs that were never accounted for — improperly accounted for at best. These are pressures. They are known pressures. We have identified the known pressures. We will get back to you with the numbers for the severances.

As far as the individual MLAs, it is good to have roughly about \$100 million in the bank, but again, with all of these pressures, the money has to come from somewhere. We can take a look historically over the last three years, the last five years or the last 10 years at how that money has been spent, when it has been spent, and which pressures — I think we

need to do a better job of forecasting into the future. We need to do a better job of forecasting how much we can build in a particular year. I think that what we're doing with the new Financial Advisory Panel and with the changes in the Finance department, we're going to have a better understanding of forecast pressures. I think what we'll be able to do every year is provide a budget that does a better job of showcasing to Yukoners what the pressures are, line by line — what the pressures are, dollar for dollar. I think that was missing before.

There was a question about growth of government. At the end of the fiscal year of 2016, we had 4,623.1 full-time equivalencies — that's in the fourth quarter of 2016, versus the fourth quarter of 2015, which would be 4,456.9 FTEs, to answer the member opposite's question.

Mr. Cathers: Actually, that wasn't the question I had asked the Premier. I will again restate it. I was not asking about the growth in the total FTE count of 2016 compared to 2015. I am familiar with those numbers.

A reminder to the Premier that his comments as the former MLA for Klondike and Third Party leader are coming back to haunt him. When he was in opposition, the Premier was very critical of any increase made by the previous government to the size of the public service, no matter what the cause of those increases was.

That included when increases were made in vital areas such as health care staff. The Premier and then-Leader of the Third Party was the first to rise and to criticize government for growing the public service. My question for the Premier was: How many new government positions are being created in the 2018-19 fiscal year and how many new FTEs are being added to government?

I will add another question: What would the Premier say to Yukoners and to his former self while in opposition about why his solution to reducing future O&M costs is to begin this mandate by adding dozens of new permanent staff positions, including a dozen new positions in his Department of Finance alone? Again, the question is: How many new government positions is the Liberal government creating this fiscal year, and how many new FTEs are being added in the 2018-19 fiscal year to the size of government?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The question was asked that I asked in opposition — doing my job asking those questions. When we were in situations with a decreasing GDP, I was asking questions about the previous government as far as why the government is growing — and, to be very frank, I didn't get answers from the previous government when I asked those questions. What I got instead from the member opposite's party was, "Who would you cut?" Again, in opposition — that is an unfair thing to ask the opposition because, if you are in the opposition, you don't have access to the knowledge of the departments that the members opposite do. I will commit, in the Department of Finance, to talk to you exactly about the increases and why we are doing it, which is what the previous government wouldn't do. We asked these questions because we wanted to know. We wanted Yukon to know. You are growing the government, so how are you doing it — in what

departments? What are these jobs for? If that is me being critical, I will take the compliment because that is exactly what we are trying to get.

As it relates to the Department of Finance itself, we do have a financial strategic investment. The role and the mandate of a corporate department of the Ministry of Finance in all other provinces and territories is to provide the government with strategic and evidence-based recommendations and advice. Our government made a commitment to evidence-based decision-making and we intend to keep that. The Yukon Department of Finance currently doesn't have the capacity and the systems to effectively meet the needs of the government and to deliver on this mandate. With a conversation with my deputy minister and other officials from the department, we came up with some strategic investments that we are making in the Department of Finance. I'm not sure how the member opposite's team did this, but we meet as a caucus and we discuss these issues. We forensically analyze the data that is coming toward us. We make a determination about these positions and I encourage the members opposite to, as we go into each department, ask each department what increases are there — I am sure they will — and have a conversation as to why you feel we need to justify these particular appointments.

The strategic investment that we are making in the Department of Finance now is in an effort to save money in the long run and to ensure that the Government of Yukon is financially stable now and also into the next generation. One of the areas of interest is a new program evaluation branch. I would like to talk about that for a bit here. Program evaluation is, in the opinion of this government, a cornerstone of sound public management. It allows for government to make decisions about policy and about program and to make program choices that are based on evidence. We're very proud to make this investment for Yukoners for the Yukon's future.

That's part of the business reorganization that we're talking about here specifically within the Department of Finance. We have done other changes as well that I would love to highlight as far as bringing on the Bureau of Statistics and economic research units that are now in the Department of Finance. This is an acquisition that was based on the knowledge that's needed to create a consistent population in economic forecasting. These aren't new jobs. This is a transfer from one department to another, and it's a big process and I'm very proud of having the department of statistics in the Department of Finance.

I'll switch over to more of the strategic investment if the member opposite has more questions on it, but to answer his question as far as the increase, the total increase in FTEs is 201.75 and that's mostly for teachers.

Mr. Cathers: I'm not sure if the minister misstated that or if he's actually telling me that there is an increase of 201.75 FTEs in this fiscal year. I will give him an opportunity to correct that if I misunderstood what he was saying, but if he's actually adding 201.75 new FTEs this fiscal year after being so harshly critical of the previous government any time there were additions to FTEs, I think there are a lot of Yukoners

who would feel that he has a bit of explaining to do about why there has been such a dramatic change of heart on his view toward increasing the size of government. I will give the Premier an opportunity to restate his answer to that question if I misunderstood, but I believe he said that he's adding 201.75 FTE positions this fiscal year, which includes increasing the Department of Finance, ballooning it with the addition of a dozen new positions this fiscal year alone.

Hon. Mr. Silver: No, I believe this microphone is working very well and I believe the member opposite heard me. The number is 201.75, but I need to explain. I do need to explain to Yukoners that 88 of those were from a decision from the member opposite's own party, the Yukon Party, where they hired teachers and education assistants outside of the accounting process, so 88 of those hires were already hired. There were people already in classrooms; there were educational assistants already working in the Department of Education. Those decisions to hire those teachers came from the Yukon Party.

When we took a look at the fiscal situation that we've inherited, we went to all the departments and we said that they need to do more with less. They were instructed to do that. I have to say that the process of watching the departments work day and night to do their overviews of their departments and to try to find money within to make sure that programs and services didn't suffer — I really have to give a shout-out to all the departments and to how diligently they worked to make sure that the departments themselves didn't take on any new costs to be able to accomplish the goals of our new mandate and to keep things running here, making sure we didn't lose programs and services.

That's harder to do when you have 88 hires from the previous government. Really, when you inherit the new government, they come out of the blue. I guess I would ask the same question to the member opposite: When was his government intending to explain it to Yukoners? It didn't come out during the election campaign; that's for sure.

There were a lot of conversations about bridges to Riverdale — I remember that one — and different other commitments that were definitely showcased and highlighted. We had a question today in the Legislative Assembly from the NDP about how the hiring process takes hold. The Minister of Education responded correctly, in my opinion, by saying she has a mandate to take a look at how we do hires, but I tell you, when you come in and you think you know the complete picture — the reality of what has been spent on what — and then all of a sudden you're hit with 88 new hires that were done outside of the Cabinet and Management Board process from the previous government, that does hurt. It does take a toll on the decision-making process; that's for sure.

Mr. Cathers: I would certainly question that statement by the Premier about previous hires. I know, in fact that, contrary to the member's assertions, all hiring, including temporary, was done in full accordance with the law and with Management Board directives. What I would ask the Premier is: In his 201.75 new FTEs that he is adding to government, including ballooning the Department of Finance by adding a

dozen new positions and increasing the department budget from \$8.6 million last fiscal year to almost 50-percent more — \$12.2 million this fiscal year — how many of the Premier's new positions growing the size of government are in Yukon communities?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, it's interesting that we see a narrative with the Yukon Party. They make some decisions and now they're pointing the finger at the Liberals saying they were our decisions and criticizing us for those. If we again take a look at the fourth quarter of 2016 and the fourth quarter of 2015 as far as the sum totals of departments, the fourth quarter FTEs for 2015 are 4,456.9. The fourth quarter for 2016 sum of department counts is 4,623.1, which is 167.8.

Lots of decisions were already made by the previous government. Again, I answered the question. We did our due diligence to make sure that we weren't trying to put a lot of new positions into government. We want to do as much as we can with what we have now because of the fiscal situation that we found ourselves in. I think we did a very good job of that. I really do.

I'll let you in on a little bit of anecdotal information. We had a hard conversation about the Department of Finance and extra hires. The member opposite is right that I do want to look at the new hires and make sure that we're using Yukon taxpayers' money properly.

The way the conversation went — it was unanimous consent from this side of the House — is that you need to spend some money up-front now to make sure the fiscal scrutiny is there for all decisions — not just for this current government, but for future governments to come. I'm convinced that the process that we have set up in Finance is going to help that. We have set up a lot of constraints so that we're going to limit things called "walk-ins" as much as we possibly can. Things aren't just going to come to Management Board or just to Cabinet. We need a process. We have set up two more processes for that where we have committees to make sure that conversations and due diligence is done on the financial piece.

When we put all of this pressure on the Department of Finance, the Department of Finance needs to start working like a Department of Finance as opposed to more like a budgetary consideration office. I believe that, if you take a look at how we've restructured the Department of Finance, this makes sense for a modern government. It wasn't that way for the last five years. We need to put this investment in. We put up money now. We were very critical about how we're going to move forward — what hires are going to be had, and I think we did a good job of spending the money that we need to do now to make sure that the fiscal balance and the fiscal scrutiny is there for decisions for tomorrow.

Mr. Cathers: Again, the Premier didn't answer the question. The question I asked about how many new hires of his — the 201.75 FTE positions he is adding to government — how many of those are located in communities? Again, the former Member for Klondike, the ghost of the then-Leader of the Third Party is standing here in this House and the words that the member stated and told Yukoners prior to being

elected will in fact perhaps be his harshest critic as Finance minister.

Again, the Premier in opposition was very critical of increases to the FTE count. He just stood in this House and he referred to his characterization of his questions of the previous government, talking about when FTEs were added — how are you doing it and what departments and why? Those are the same questions we're asking. Of these 201.75 FTEs that are being added, Yukoners deserve a full breakdown on this and they also deserve an explanation by the leader and perhaps some clarification about whether he feels his previous words and his statements when in opposition were a little rash, and perhaps he made commitments in the election without fully understanding the budget. I know that the member had a lot on his shoulders as the then party of one in trying to understand the budget, but the fact is that the numbers were presented in this House and debated in this House on multiple occasions.

I would actually ask the minister for clarification on a point he made. He was referring to his past remarks in this Legislative Assembly and suggesting that he was primarily critical of increases to government staff in years when the gross domestic product was declining. Now we have heard — we know that the Premier also made contrary statements to that remark on April 4 in front of the federal finance committee where he said — and I quote: "I want to draw the committee's attention to the fact that GDP may not actually be a perfect measure of growth for the territories." Perhaps the Premier would like to expand on those comments again while he is standing up and explaining, in his role as both Finance minister and as Premier, to what departments are these new FTEs being added and why? Also, are any of them in Yukon communities or are they all just Whitehorse based?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you to the honourable member opposite for the question. I can tell him that in the Department of Finance, the 10.6 new staff are all in Whitehorse. That is where the department exists and that is where they are. I could ask the member opposite about the 88 teachers who they hired — if he knows the breakdown of where they are — but we can get that back. All of these numbers we do have, but I would suggest that in Committee of the Whole for each department that this is a conversation for each of those ministers. We do have the totals here and we can give them to the member opposite — not a problem. With the Yukon Legislative Assembly increase — zero.

We are looking at a few increases that are big. Education is the biggest one. That is 135.71 — the increased number — that's the total of this year plus the 88 that was added during the Yukon Party's last year as well. That is the biggest number for sure. The total is 200 and if you take 88 from that — or 135 from that — it leaves the second largest being Health and Social Services. Again, I would ask the member opposite or the Yukon Party that, if they want a breakdown as to who they are, where they are and what community they live in and what their shoe size is — well, I would ask them to ask the minister responsible for that. As far as the Department of Finance, we definitely have the numbers here. They all live in Whitehorse and it is 10.6. Thank you for the question.

Mr. Cathers: Of course we don't want to know the shoe size of any of the employees. I know that might change over time — I am not suggesting they are getting fat feet, but there might be different employees in place.

What I think the Minister of Finance — I have the sense that he is getting annoyed at the line of questioning. What I want to point out to him is that in fact the growth of FTEs in government is not just something that he was critical of in opposition. In past eras when governments were truly short of cash, there was at one point a hiring directive in place that prevented any new FTEs being hired without Management Board approval. That approval — although the directive is no longer in place, there is still reporting to Cabinet and, for the funding of those positions, unless this government has changed it since we handed over the reins of office to them — during our time in government, there was always a requirement for ministers and departments to report on the increase of any new full-time equivalent positions and also to seek funding approval of Management Board.

In some cases, depending on the nature of the program, there would be a requirement as well to receive Cabinet approval. This is not just a detailed question for the department. I would argue that, just as past finance ministers and premiers have accepted personal responsibility for overseeing and being aware of any growth to the size of the public service, the Member for Klondike, the Premier, should — particularly in light of his past statements on the topic — be able to tell us the breakdown of any new FTEs. Considering the fact that he was so harshly critical of the previous government for any increase in the FTE count, he should explain that to Yukoners — not just to this House, but to all Yukoners through this Legislative Assembly.

One thing that we've seen since taking office is that, despite some fairly grandiose claims prior to being elected by the Premier about being more transparent and more accountable, the Premier has had a habit actually recently of not answering questions in this House and ministers not answering questions and then going to the media afterwards — after they have had officials or political staff help them with knowing what to say. That not only is a departure from past accountability standards, but is the type of behaviour that the Premier, when in opposition, would have been the first to criticize.

We would encourage him in fact to ensure that not only he, but also his Cabinet, take a fulsome effort to become briefed before appearing in the Assembly and, if unable to answer the question, to commit to actually getting back to the Legislative Assembly with an answer instead of stepping outside and providing an answer that Members of this Legislative Assembly — even though we represent different parties, we all represent Yukoners and Yukoners in each of our respective ridings voted for us. In some cases, they voted for people because of the party they're running for and in some cases because of the person, but ultimately they chose their representatives in this Assembly. I would suggest to the Premier to ensure that he and his Cabinet actually answer questions here, and if unable to do so, return to the House with

the answer instead of stepping outside and talking to reporters. This would be the proper respectful approach in the context of this House and the Westminster system.

Mr. Chair, the Premier has made claims that there were 88 teachers and educational assistants hired outside the normal process. That's certainly not in line with what we understand. In the past, all hires under our watch, to the best of my belief, were done in full accordance with the law. The Premier is welcome to release the Management Board documents if he wishes to demonstrate that to this House, because of course we don't have access to that information any more. Those records were sealed and taken by the ECO to be put in archives upon us leaving office.

Again, I would appreciate a breakdown of which communities and which departments FTEs are occurring in. Certainly we're not asking for information that would contravene the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* or asking for these people to be named individually, but in fact when new positions are being created, any of the new positions that are truly new hires being created in the 2018-19 budget out of the 201.75 new full-time positions being created, with the exception of the handful that are in place, most of those would be positions that are as yet unfilled, so there should be no privacy issues at hand in disclosing in which departments, in which communities and for what purposes those new positions are being hired.

Hon. Mr. Silver: That's a lot to unravel here. We'll start with in the media as opposed to outside. The member opposite talked about the Westminster system. Maybe as they get used to their new role in opposition, they should realize that when they offer their own answers to questions in the Legislative Assembly, they come dangerously close to impeding certain Standing Orders in the House.

What we said in the Legislative Assembly was exactly the same thing that we've said with the media, which is, "We're not considering any layoffs at the time." The Yukon Party tried to set some kind of a — I don't even know. They are trying to be clever in the Legislative Assembly, trying to ask us some questions. I don't know what their intent was, but we were very straightforward in saying, "Nobody was considering any layoffs." I believe that was my exact quote and you can check Hansard. I went upstairs and said to them the exact same thing: "We're not considering any layoffs."

Anyway, I'll get back to answering the questions based upon the legislative process of doing Committee of the Whole on the budget.

As far as the GDP goes — I do believe that the GDP isn't necessarily the be-all and end-all and the best indicator, but it is an indicator that the previous government kept at. Our point, when we were bringing up these questions, is that you'll take credit when things are going good according to the GDP, but you're not going to take the blame when things aren't going so well. GDP was the number and the way that we answered questions — the way that the questions were asked in the 33rd Legislative Assembly — those were the rules of engagement. We were asking the questions based upon the previous government saying that everything was rosy and

everything was fine. We would find ways to say, "Okay, well, explain this and explain that."

Yes, I stand by my comments as the Minister of Finance. There is a bigger picture. There are unemployment records, there are population records, and, of course, the Yukon Party was very good at presenting those when we criticized the GDP numbers. They would make reference to those things.

That's your job in opposition and kudos to you for continuing down that path.

As far as me not giving the numbers — I would prefer it if the Yukon Party could ask the ministers themselves, but if he wants me to, I'll give the numbers. That's fine.

When you compare mains to mains, there is: no change in the Yukon Legislative Assembly Office; in the Elections Office, there is 0.5 of an FTE less this year; in the Office of the Ombudsman, no change; in the Child and Youth Advocate Office, no change; in the Executive Council Office, there are 8.2 fewer employees there and, of course, that's for changes from department to department — you'll see those numbers appear in the Finance department; then you have Community Services, 4.75 more, mains to mains; in Economic Development, three less; in Education, 135.71 more, and that includes the Yukon Party — as far as I know, because we don't have this information, those 88 hires from the Yukon Party government were not done through a Management Board submission. The member opposite can criticize us for process, but as far as I can understand, there was no Management Board submission for those 88 new hires. Anyway, 135.71 is the new — from mains to mains — increase, which includes the 88 new hires that were done outside the mains and outside the accounting process from the Yukon Party government.

We have: Energy, Mines and Resources, no change; Environment, 2.33 more; Finance is 23.43 more — and again, we talked about the 10 more that are actually new hires, but the other hires are not new hires. Those are from Executive Council Office coming over and from the Bureau of Statistics coming over. I'm hearing the Official Opposition going crazy about these numbers, but again, if we compare mains to mains for the last five years — that would be a whole other story.

Anyway, from the last mains to this mains, we were at 23 for Finance and then we have French Language Service Directorate, 8.5 more. We have Health and Social Services with an increase of 69.74. We have a decrease in Highways and Public Works of 35.51. We have an increase in Justice of three. We have a decrease in Public Service Commission of one. Tourism and Culture — an increase of 1.5; Women's Directorate — an increase of one; Yukon Development Corporation — no change; Yukon Housing Corporation — hey, look, I'm answering questions about the corporations. That's a novel exercise here in the Legislative Assembly. We have Yukon Housing Corporation at eight less; Liquor Corporation at eight more; and loan capital and loan amortization — no difference there. That's the total of the 201 added from mains to mains. As far as any other particular information that the member opposite would like as far as where they live, what their jobs and roles are — absolutely —

if you ask all the ministers responsible, they will give you that information as well.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answers that the Minister of Finance did provide there. I would still ask for a breakdown for the community.

Part of the reason I'm asking is that I know that the member has criticized it, along with other members — including the Third Party — in the past when the increase of government has been primarily in Whitehorse. I think that's the type of thing that, especially considering the past statements in the House — I would encourage the minister in future to briefed on and be prepared to respond to questions of that type. It's not just the standards we're imposing or attempting through our questions; it's really holding the member to account for his own past statements in the Legislative Assembly in criticism of the government. We're just trying to ask questions that the Member for Klondike would have asked himself when he still had the ability to do so while in opposition.

I'm not going to spend a lot of time in debate debating who engages with whom and how in this Legislative Assembly, but I would point out to the Minister of Finance or the Premier that when he was being critical of the rhetorical style in Question Period of members on this side that there are two things. One is that I would point out that in reply, he attempted to ask questions himself. In the past, when he was in the Legislative Assembly as the Leader of the Third Party, the then-Leader of the Third Party and now-Premier of the Yukon was in fact at times — well, let me simply say this rather than risking crossing the line with unparliamentary language. I would encourage the member to take a walk back through Hansard and look at some of the questions that he asked in this Legislative Assembly. I think he will find that none of the questions we've asked to date nor the questions we will ask in future are actually any more aggressive or leading than some of his were in opposition. Just as he said in the past, the view is a little different from this side of the House — I believe those were his words. It's easier to criticize than to be on the receiving end. It's easier to ask questions than it is sometimes to hear those same questions asked of yourself.

We are just trying to get the types of answers that Yukoners want to hear when government is increasing the size of government. As I offered to the minister — with his assertion that the Yukon Party had 88 teacher and education assistant positions that weren't properly accounted for — we would be happy to have him release the current Management Board information about that since we don't have access to that information, and we don't believe the assertion was correct.

When it comes to the question of the Financial Advisory Panel, although the minister may have, and has, characterized opposition questions about whether layoffs are being contemplated as being unreasonable. I would point out to the Minister of Finance that we understand he has now given a fairly definitive answer to that. Based on his statements on May 2, on page 183, when he said that they are going to look

at all options, the government knew what the options were. It was the type of question that we hear from Yukoners who wonder if government is asserting that the trajectory is unsustainable and asserting that change is necessary. Some of the questions that come to the minds of Yukoners — especially those who are government employees — is whether their job is at risk, whether their taxes might go up and whether services and programs that are important to them are potentially on the chopping block.

The minister may see that as being unfair framing on the part of the opposition, but in fact we are simply reflecting the genuine concerns of Yukon citizens. The Premier, as the leader of a government that ran on a platform promising Yukoners that they would be heard, needs to recognize that sometimes when people feel that they are not being heard by government or haven't been given an explanation about what government is doing or why, the way that they are heard is by contacting their MLAs, which include those of us in the opposition. We also hear from Yukoners from the ridings of members of the government who are not hearing answers to questions that they have posed. That is part of our job here as Official Opposition — to bring forward those concerns and questions and to find out so that we can get back to those people about whether or not government is contemplating certain options that spring to the minds of Yukoners that they are concerned about.

Without belabouring the point too much, I would note again that we haven't seen a community breakdown of the FTE increase. In the absence of an explanation about where those positions are going and in which communities, we are left wondering if they are all in Whitehorse. That is the type of thing that Yukoners in rural Yukon are quick to ask — whether as a result of the proposed increases, they will see any increase in people living in their communities or any change in services and so on, or if it's simply growth of government in Whitehorse again. That is exactly why we ask those questions.

I am going to move on to a couple of other areas that are of concern to the Official Opposition. We do care very deeply about the finances and the decisions being made by government and are concerned by the indications we are hearing.

We are also concerned about other areas. As members know, and as my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, asked the Minister of Health and Social Services in Question Period earlier today, we know that lab results from British Columbia have confirmed that five Yukoners have died of a fentanyl overdose in just over a year. Part of the reason for the lag time in information is, as we are given to understand from information that the chief medical officer of health told the media — that the average wait time is four to six months for that information.

The question that I have, as the Finance critic for the Official Opposition, is: Will the Premier task the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Minister of Community Services, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Justice and their respective officials to review and take a look at the

services and the support structure in place for responding to the rise in fentanyl use? That includes the approach suggested by my colleague. I believe it was the Member for Porter Creek North who tabled a motion encouraging government to do more in the school system.

It also involves looking at the support structure and ensuring that doctors, nurses and other health professionals have the information and the supports they need. It includes ensuring that rural EMS volunteers and full-time paramedics are trained and equipped to respond to fentanyl overdoses as well as, of course, staff in nursing stations. It includes ensuring there is effective post-incident support and counselling for EMS staff and volunteers in Whitehorse and rural Yukon.

It includes ensuring there is effective post-incident support and counselling for social workers in Whitehorse and rural Yukon and ensuring there is effective post-incident support and counselling for staff of the coroner's office and coroners in rural communities. It includes as well ensuring that there is effective post-incident support and counselling for other first responders, including firefighters both in Whitehorse and rural Yukon, and ensuring there is effective post-incident support and counselling for RCMP members, victim assistance volunteers and auxiliary constables across the territory, as well as effective post-incident support and counselling for search and rescue volunteers in Whitehorse and in rural Yukon.

As well, I believe that government should assess whether the coroner's office needs a second full-time coroner position to deal with not only the issues around fentanyl, but the recent increase in the number of deaths being dealt with from a number of causes across the communities and assessing whether additional RCMP members are required to deal with fentanyl and other issues, both in Whitehorse and across the territory, and assessing whether additional Victim Services staff are required. I would note — and I hope that the Premier is not going to simply point fingers and say that this should have been dealt with earlier — that the rise of fentanyl is something that every government across the country, particularly in western Canada, has had to respond to. The spike has been hard to predict. It has been of great cause for concern. The Yukon's chief medical officer of health recently — I believe it was this week — made his concerns known about the topic. I believe, although I don't have his quote right in front of me, he made some comment along the lines that he was concerned that people would not treat this seriously enough. In light of that, we have urged the government to take a look at this.

My question — again to recap from the long list of people I cited who may need additional support, in areas where there may need to be additional services — I would again ask the Premier if he is prepared and willing to commit to this House that he will task the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Minister of Community Services, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Education and their respected officials to review the existing services and the existing support structure for responding to the rise of fentanyl use in particular, but also

for the use of other drugs and other problems that exist within Yukon communities.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question from the honourable member across the way. I think my ministers did a fantastic job today of actually answering the questions already. I would again urge the Yukon Party that if they want more knowledge about what the specific departments are doing when it comes to fentanyl, addiction services and mental health, they will get much more information from the departments. To say that I am going to task them now — well, they are already working on this. I agree with the chief medical officer that this is not something to take lightly — up to five deaths. Those are just the ones that we know of. There is a delay because of records and all that. The ministers responsible can talk to you about the delay and the reasons for the delay, but that is the minimum. There could be more. In a small jurisdiction like this, that is huge. It is something that a government cannot ignore and we are not ignoring it currently. To ask us to start looking into it is a moot point. We already are.

Again, when it comes to mental health, the commitment we've made to putting 10 new mental health workers in the rural communities — that alone answers a lot of questions that the member opposite has talked about as to if all the hires are in Whitehorse. Well, no, they're not.

I stood up in the Legislative Assembly for years talking about two mental health workers for all of rural Yukon. There were two mental health workers for all of rural Yukon? Anyway, the whole point is we do need to do a better job of reaching into the communities. We are doing our best with the limited finances we have. I think that's a great initiative from the Department of Health and Social Services.

I do agree with the member opposite that we do need to take a whole-of-government approach when we take a look at the hiring process — and there's more to come on that. We have four more budgets. We can't wait to draw down on "all communities matter". That's one of our campaign commitments.

We're looking into some really interesting initiatives, like secondments and giving opportunities for public servants to go out into the communities — not have to move there permanently, but actually go out and take a look into the communities. I know the Member for Watson Lake is scoffing at that, but I think that's a good idea. She can stand on her feet and she can tell us why she doesn't think that's a good idea, but I think it's a great idea. There are a lot of public servants who have never made it to Ross River. There are a lot of public servants who have never made it to Watson Lake or Dawson, and to give them an opportunity to go on a secondment — I think that's a great opportunity to start looking at the ability to communicate with the leaders and the other governments that are in those communities. We're working on that.

The problem is, the previous government left us with a little bit of issues when it comes to housing. A Yukon-wide look at how we do housing is not working for all of the different communities, so we need to deal with that. We need

to make sure that there are availabilities in the private sector for growing and expanding, housing options, and freeing up some of our Yukon Housing solutions for this type of initiative. I agree that we do have to do a better job as a government to make sure that we do hires in the rural communities. I'm from Dawson. That's my riding, so I would agree that we want to see all communities matter.

It's interesting. We've had this conversation internally with all of the MLAs on this side of the House — when we say "all communities matter", Whitehorse is a community too. Every community is so important. Every community has its own values and its own worth and we need to make sure that the hiring processes that we use as a government reflect the vibrant communities that we have, the initiatives that we're seeing with the private sector, with the municipalities, with the First Nation governments and all of these different communities and, working hand in hand, better those relationships so that we can actually do more to the member opposite's points as far as hiring outside of Whitehorse and into other communities as well.

We're looking forward to doing more on that. I think we've done a good job this time around and I'm looking forward to my ministers having that debate and that conversation with the members opposite as far as our initiatives moving forward compared to previous governments. We talked about this in the Legislative Assembly a little bit today. Tens of millions of dollars in social housing money from the previous government was left in the bank account when that money could have gone toward housing solutions in the rural communities.

We're moving forward and we want to do more in that capacity. I'm very proud of the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation, looking at the situation that she's inherited. Again, she is making commitments not to just the community that she comes from, but to this whole-of-government approach — to all communities and not just all communities on this side of the House. It's our commitment to "all communities matter" and it's an important commitment that we will stand by on this side of the government.

I do have a number for the member opposite as far as severances for the MLAs — this just in — \$627,588 in severances for MLAs in the last election. We all know how that works as far as the severance package. If the government is late in calling an election so that it's five years and a day, all of a sudden there is this huge increase — this massive increase in the severance packages — and it has got to stop. I made that commitment already on the campaign trail. We're going to look into that. So that would be legislation that of course we don't need up-front right now, but we will look into that to make sure there is a better way of offering severance packages to MLAs. If you're going to work five years and then you work five years plus a day and you double your severance in one day, that's just — anyway that is not something that we want to support moving forward, so we will change that.

The member opposite mentioned that they are just mentoring on the MLA for Klondike as far as their approach

to asking questions in opposition. I've got to say, what a great mentor to go with. My personal opinion is that it's a fantastic one. I believe that the other members who were there as well — Jan Stick, Lois Moorcroft, Kevin Barr and also the two members of the NDP who are in the House now — also did a fantastic job of holding the government's feet to the fire.

I'm really appreciative of the NDP's approach now. It's about moving forward and it's about looking at the actual issues. The way that I would describe the NDP's approach right now is taking a look at the Venn diagram where Liberal commitments and NDP priorities cross, but aren't necessarily aligned. I think that is a fantastic way of holding this government's feet to the fire and pushing us and pushing the envelope of the people who voted in these two honourable members. I think that is a great approach and it's a challenging approach. That, to me, is a more stressful approach, because we owe it to the quality of questions and the quality of research that is being put into those questions to have significant answers, so I really appreciate that approach from the NDP. To answer the member opposite's question about whether or not I think it's more stressful on this side or that side — I think it's stressful on both sides if you're doing your job. I think it's a different type of pressure.

It's very interesting to be over here and to have access to so many wonderful people who are in the departments — the public servants who provide the information. In opposition, you don't have that. We're trying our best to change a lot of how we work with opposition in consideration of how we move forward together and the ideas that are shared. I campaigned on the notion that there is no limit on which party is going to have the best ideas. There are good ideas to the left and there are good ideas to the right. I think we'll do a good job in this government if we give credit where credit is due and not be caught up on whose good idea it is. I think that, in opposition, one of the things that we're trying to do that I didn't get from the last government is to say, "You are right." To actually say, "You are right. That is an issue; we need to work on that." I don't remember a time when that actually happened in the last five years and that's what we're committed to.

So again, I would urge the Yukon Party in their new pursuit here in opposition to take us up on that challenge, to work with us as far as where the ideologies between the two parties don't necessarily match up and work with us in finding solutions. We'll do what the previous government didn't offer, which is to, again, give credit where credit is due.

Again, there are going to be a lot of debates as far as the numbers. I urge the member opposite to talk to ministers responsible for each of the departments that I outlined. He now has the information as far as the numbers and increases from mains to mains as far as full-time equivalencies.

Yes — challenge my ministers as to where those jobs are and continue on that line of questioning. We did commit that all communities matter and we do have a plan to try to do our best to make sure that we hire in a way, from the territorial government's perspective, that helps the communities to thrive. It's not only to survive, but to thrive as well.

I think that was all from the questions asked by the member opposite.

Back to education — he started with the education piece. We need to respect the confidence of the Members' Services Board, as the member opposite clearly already knows. It's an interesting line of questioning, so kudos to him on that line of questioning. But here's the thing: when you win the election and then you come in, and the teachers and assistants are already hired — 88 new hires are already there — how on Earth would that be our Management Board process? You would have to go back in time. You would have to challenge the laws of the quantum reality that we're in right now. That's not debatable, really. The teachers were already hired. It's our understanding that the Yukon Party's previous Minister of Education did so outside of the Management Board process. It's my understanding that happened. If the members opposite didn't shred those particular — if they want to show us the Management Board submissions, then that's where that information would be. We don't have that information. When we took a look at the education system, we took a look at how many hires were made last fiscal year, in the last mains — those 88 teachers came from the Yukon Party. It's indisputable because, as I said, they were already in the teachers' classrooms — the assistants were already there. So 88 teachers of the 130-some-odd teachers I quoted — of new hires main to main — come from the Yukon Party.

Chair: Would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Member: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Mr. Cathers: I would just like to continue debate with the Premier on the budget.

Before moving on to other areas, I do have to point a couple of areas where I have to take issue with the Premier's remarks or understanding of things. First of all, in the area of responding to the fentanyl crisis, I would note that, when you compare the number of deaths in the Yukon to our population, it actually puts us in the situation where, similar to British Columbia, those numbers are extremely concerning as a percentage of the population, not to mention the fact that, needless to say, every death is a tragedy for that person and their loved ones.

As my colleagues earlier urged the Minister of Health and Social Services, through a motion and during debate urging more action to be taken by government in responding to this and recognizing that this is a new and emerging problem that needs a proportionate response — again I would urge the Premier to direct ministers and officials to work together and consider formally reporting to the public on what steps they are taking in that regard. This is something that does require a serious and thoughtful response. One thing I can assure the Premier is that you are not going to see us in the Official

Opposition getting into a lot of ambulance-chasing or talk about specific situations that are very sensitive to those families, but, looking at that individual number, we are concerned by that rise and do think that, in addition to the Premier's basic acknowledgement back in December that there were additional health care dollars that they maybe could have gotten but left on the table through not negotiating strongly enough — with the fact that both BC and Alberta have been given specific funds to deal with fentanyl, we believe this government should go to Ottawa and send the message to the federal government that we are facing a similar situation. We are immediately adjacent to both provinces. We unfortunately see people coming up from those areas not just for tourism and employment purposes, but also we see drug traffic coming in via, in most cases, the Alaska Highway — although it's hard to precisely determine the source of illicit substances. The government and RCMP are unable to track these until they have caught someone in the act, and it's difficult to know where that is coming from.

We would just urge government to recognize that, in addition to some of the tragedies that have occurred specifically in certain communities, including within Whitehorse and certain small communities in rural Yukon, there are a number of communities that are facing a lot of pressure. Particularly in rural Yukon, we're concerned about the amount of weight that is being placed on the shoulders of a handful of people, including first responders.

One thing that happened during our time in government — I had been made aware of the fact that rural EMS volunteers were not able to access some of the counselling and mental health supports that they would have been able to had they been employees. We took action at that time, and I believe that is still working effectively, but I would encourage government to look at that and to look at what is available for volunteer firefighters, as well as for others across the system from the list I mentioned.

For the handful of people especially in rural communities, there is often a fairly small nucleus of volunteers who shoulder a lot of the weight of that emergency response. For example, in the riding of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, without naming anyone's name — even when I'm commending them on this topic — I know that in terms of EMS response that one of the volunteers there really goes far above and beyond the call of duty in being available for EMS service and is really, based on the last numbers I had, the heart of that community's EMS response. In other communities, it's often a relatively small handful of people who provide those services in EMS.

In the area of fire as well, I would note that across the territory — again, without bringing specific individuals' names into this debate here this afternoon — I note that for both of the fire departments in my riding and for a number across the territory, the fire chiefs and a handful of other volunteers have really been providing that volunteer service, year after year after year. In some cases, they're going on for over a decade or over 20 years in some cases.

I hope the Premier will take my remarks in this case in the tone that they're intended, which is to simply recognize that in light of the increased pressure and stress that is being placed on the system and potentially on some of these first responders, including those like firefighters or police who may not see it as frequently as EMS or nurses do, to take a look at how well the system is working. Reach out to those staff and those volunteer first responders, as well as the coroner's office, community coroners and staff at nursing stations and just ask if they need more support or if they have concerns or ideas about the system. Engage with those people in recognition of the fact that, especially if there is more than one tragedy in a row that they are being faced with, it really puts a lot on the shoulders of those people, whether they are staff or whether they're volunteers.

We need to take a look at it, in my humble opinion, in a considered manner and simply ensure that there is a coordinated interdepartmental approach and that there is a proactive effort made by staff and by government to reach out to these people who are really the backbone and the heart of our rural services in particular, but also within Whitehorse. Just ask them, "How are you doing? Do you need more resources? What can we do?" Then of course take the information from that and determine what government may be able to do to provide those services. In some cases — such as in the specific example I mentioned of EMS not receiving access to services in the past — there may be a situation within existing government resources where government can simply — with relative ease — extend that service to people in need of it and ensure that they have the support, the resources, the services and the information they need.

I would just encourage the Premier to reconsider that. I'm not going to spend a lot of time belabouring this point, because I don't want to really make a political issue of this fentanyl situation. I am simply and sincerely bringing forward a concern that I think there is increased pressure on our communities and our service providers that requires an interdepartmental approach in reaching out to these people who are the heart of our system, just making sure that we're supporting them to the best extent government can.

I would also note — in the Premier's comments about how all communities matter — and remind him that I hope he didn't forget but just didn't happen to mention it that, when you're looking at all the communities, it's important to recognize that, within my riding of Lake Laberge and within the Minister of Community Services' riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, there are very high populations there outside of any municipality. In the case of my riding, the combined population of the Mayo Road area and Hot Springs Road area is over 900 adults. Information from my riding — and criticism I've had in the past of the stats branch, not anyone else, just the way the information is compiled. In fairness to them, they rely on some of the ways the federal government compiles it but, when the statistics show up, they don't give a clear breakdown. For departments that are looking at that information, it can often lead to a situation where they don't really have a clear picture of the size of those populations.

In this area, although methodology might help in the future, there's actually a fairly simple solution available to every member of the Legislative Assembly based on the changes that were made to the *Elections Act* last time with the establishment of the permanent voters list, in that we have access to information compiled by the chief electoral officer confirming the number of adults in our area who are eligible to vote. It won't encapsulate or incorporate landed immigrants but, as the Premier can confirm with the chief electoral officer if he wishes to check on the numbers on this, if you look in the area of my riding alone, the Hot Springs Road area and the Mayo Road area combined is some 900 citizens. In each case, it would make it larger than most medium-sized Yukon municipalities.

In the case of the riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, I don't have that information at my fingertips, but I know the Minister of Community Services, in his capacity as MLA for the area, would have access to the electronic voters list and would be able to get that information. My simple point on this is to recognize that those people are not always as well captured as those within communities when government is considering services and needs.

I would also just take this opportunity to pitch, as I have previously to the Minister of Community Services in a letter, the importance of completing the civic addressing initiative, especially within rural Yukon. In the case within my riding, as I believe I mentioned in the letter, although there is no local advisory council in the Hot Springs Road and Mayo Road area, the Hootalinqua Fire Protection Society is a group of people composed of long-time firefighters and volunteers who support them. They are well-placed and willing to work with the government in the same way that local advisory councils have in other areas that have received civic addressing.

I would just note that, in a situation like that — and I think the Premier knows very well from the fire chief for his riding, who has been a very vocal advocate on the expansion of 911 service and areas like civic addressing — in an emergency, people forget key details or they get the details wrong. If there are children or visitors, they often don't understand the information they need to provide and all of that information that reduces the potential confusion in a time of emergency, such as civic addressing, is helpful to those first responders and can make the difference between whether someone's house is saved or whether a life is saved in a crisis.

Mr. Chair, moving on to a bit of a different area here, I would just like to recap the fact that, through the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments — and I would like to commend the government for calling the committee to sit. I note that, in fact, we had requested it but I'm glad they also were proactive in doing so. We had at that committee suggested that the committee should conduct a review of building inspections to address not only concerns that we've heard from Yukoners, but the fact that, as we had begun some preliminary review before leaving office, the building inspection structure — there's a building standards appeal board that has been in place since the act was passed back — I forget the year it was actually passed but I believe it was

roughly 30 years ago or it might even be longer. During that time, though, based on the last information I had, they have heard single appeals. We have heard some concerns from Yukoners about how that system operates and how, if they have concerns with a decision of the inspector, they can go about potentially appealing that decision.

In saying that, we're simply suggesting a systemic look at it — an opportunity to talk to Yukoners who have concerns for the committee, to hear from them, and for the committee to make recommendations on whether changes are necessary and what those should be.

Secondly, the other area we suggest that the committee review is how the environmental health structure is working, and that includes the public health act, within their purview. I would just ask the Premier if he is willing to commit to recommending to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments that they review those specific areas that we have brought forward.

Hon. Mr. Silver: That was a lot. I'm going to go back. I appreciate the comments from the honourable member opposite.

He started with fentanyl. Percentages comparisons — it's an interesting road. Absolutely not to belittle five — and again, we're probably looking at a situation where there are more, once more data comes in — but I can't imagine being emergency measures or initial responders in Vancouver where there are 20 a day. It has to just eat at your heart and soul to see so many suffering individuals in that community. I just don't want to get caught up in the comparisons because when you see the number five and then you see what's going on in Vancouver, some might think that we don't have as big of a problem.

We have a huge problem here. This is a big issue and it goes past fentanyl. It goes into addictions in general. It goes into why people feel the need to get out of their sober minds. The illegal drug trade that is going on — we have to do more. We definitely have to do more in education. We have to do more when it comes to our vulnerable people — I agree.

There is some stuff going on here. I have some information here from the Minister of Health and Social Services. On May 31 and June 1 at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, there is a preventing and managing opioid addictions misuse through innovative models of care workshop that is happening. This is being hosted by the Department of Health and Social Services. We have some keynote speakers. Mae Katt, who is a nurse practitioner and a citizen of the Temagami First Nation, is recognized for her experience with community-based models of care including the innovative use of suboxone in rural communities and remote communities. We also have Launette Rieb, a physician, who is also speaking. She is certified by the American Board of Addiction Medicine and the Canadian Society of Addiction Medicine. Dr. Ribe will be leading sessions on addict and opioid prescriptions. The management of chronic non-cancer pain is her background. This is one of the initiatives that is being offered by the Department of Health and Social Services. I hope that the Yukon Party will bring this up in the

departments of Health and Social Services, Education and Justice to make sure that all departments get their opportunity to speak to what they are doing as individuals. I take the member's comments — and as far as getting the numbers back and sharing information, we campaigned on that. We will share information as it comes in.

The member opposite talked about how Vancouver specified this is a crisis in their negotiations with the Minister of Health on a national basis. We had a similar conversation and we reinstated the THIF funding — territorial health investment fund. This was set to sunset. It was going away. The funding was set to expire. We got the federal Minister of Health to commit to five years of funding — \$25.6 million more over top of the money that they are going to be giving for housing and for mental health services. For us to maintain the same quality of health care as other Canadians, a lot of that money has to go to medical travel and medevacs, but nothing stops us from committing certain dollars — THIF funding or from other pockets — for how we are going to deal with fentanyl.

From the preamble, the member opposite might think we are disagreeing on this topic, but I think we are saying the exact same thing. I think this current government is working on solutions for addiction services, including fentanyl. I think that the departments of Justice, Health and Social Services, and Education are doing a fantastic job with this whole-of-government approach when it comes to addictions and issues in general. We are working on it and we will commit to the member opposite that, as information comes forward, we will share that information. I see no problem in that.

We talked a bit about initial responders and the good work done in Mayo-Tatchun. We talked about how we can reach out and make sure that they're involved in the conversation. I completely agree with that statement. For years in opposition, I fought for a coordination of services in Dawson, talking about responsibilities of search and rescue agencies, coordinating with the RCMP, coordinating with the Rangers and opportunities there. I think we have a lot more work to do there — when we talk about engaging with emergency medical individuals, organizations like the Rangers, and also the community leaders — as far as how we can make sure that everybody coordinates services. I totally agree with that statement.

We talked a bit about the stresses on the emergency medical teams that are out there dealing with addictions. I couldn't agree more. When Jeff Dill came up and presented to the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs, he did a fantastic job of identifying that whole concept of making sure that post-traumatic stress doesn't become a disorder, being able to work with the government and Workers' Compensation and initial responders to make sure that the stress doesn't become the disorder. We spoke a bit about this the other day in the Legislative Assembly — of how these special management teams get together and the psychological wing of WCB, as people come in and go through the process. These individuals can't be living in a silo, compared to the individuals who are being affected — the individuals they're doing evaluations on.

They need to go on ride-alongs. They need to understand the daily grind. They need to understand what our initial responders go through.

It is the small, little things that Mr. Dill talked about. If the team is paying attention to behaviours, that can be so helpful. He spoke, when he talked to us as a group, about a firefighter he worked with who started to go to every funeral in town. Whether it was a car crash or anything that they respond to, he was going to every single one of those funerals, internalizing all the damage and internalizing all the pain of the families. In his words, that was an odd response. He doesn't know these families, but he's going to all these and he feels bad because, if he had the knowledge he has now — that was a trigger. He knew that was a different type of behaviour, and that different type of behaviour should have invoked these special management teams to reach out. He said it sounds like a simple thing, but it's such a stoic culture. We're always taught, sometimes improperly, to keep those feelings in and never to share those things. That's what these upfront groups do.

I appreciate the work of Mr. Dill, when he came and talked with the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs. I want to go back to my notes on that. I want to go back to the fire chiefs and talk about that conversation to see what we can do to do more under the vein of what the member opposite was talking about — as far as reaching out to the organizations and agencies that are on the front lines when it comes to dealing with this.

The member opposite also talked about civic addressing and the communities that are sometimes lumped in and associated with Whitehorse as a community. I agree, and we have had great conversations with the member from the beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. We could add that to beautiful Lake Laberge as well.

They are distinct communities. I can hear the Member for Kluane already — you're talking about beauty — okay, yes, everybody is beautiful.

It's a valid point. Sometimes they do get lumped in and I do appreciate the numbers that were shared with the member. Civic addressing is being announced today or continuing, but I think we're finding continuing civic addressing on the north and south Klondike Highway — that has been moving forward. I think that this helps in addressing the statistical issues and relevance that the member opposite is speaking of. He mentioned Jim Regimbal, who was instrumental in helping me understand that we went 20 years where 911 didn't go past the boundaries of Whitehorse and so it was time. We needed to do that. One of the problems with that is civic addressing. You need to have that up-front.

I have a great picture of Chief Roberta Joseph, Mayor Potoroka, Fire Chief Jim Regimbal and myself at my house when I got my civic addressing, because, as of that day, I was "42 Mary McLeod Road". Before that, I was "turn left at the D9 Cat". Again, it helps for the initial responders to make sure that they know exactly where they are going.

The member opposite went on to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. What I'm being told on this side by

members is that they deal with the regulations once they have been finalized in the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. I will take into consideration, under advisement, the two inspectors and the health issues that were brought up by the member opposite as far as his advice, but again, it's good to see this select committee meet. It hasn't met. It didn't meet in the five years that I was in opposition. It met right away and I'm glad that all three parties are working together. The member opposite gave some great suggestions here that I will definitely take under advisement. Again, we look forward to the next meeting of that particular select committee.

Mr. Cathers: I thank the Premier for that response. Before leaving the subject of Search and Rescue and EMS, I would just note, departing from my usual role of not naming peoples' names, I know that one of the Premier's constituents, who I'm sure he's familiar with, John Mitchell — I would encourage him and the Minister of Community Services to seek input from him. There are some areas where further improvements could be made in terms of response, both as it pertains to EMS and Search and Rescue, especially when they are doing a remote wilderness response. I would just encourage them to sit down with him. He has a number of excellent points and suggestions, which I think warrant further action and would help improve our system.

Moving on to elsewhere in my notes, there's just one comment in reference to how all communities matter, I would just bring forward on behalf of the only LAC in my riding, the Ibex Valley Local Advisory Council, I would just note for the Premier — he may not be aware of this, but if he wants to give a response to this, I would be happy.

They have recently written to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources expressing their concern with the fact of recent new placer staking within the area of Ibex Valley. Of course, placer staking is something that is not allowed within any municipality. As occurred within Whitehorse during my time as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, we put in place a staking withdrawal that basically reinforced the official community plan. I would just explain for anyone who is listening who may be confused that placer staking isn't allowed in municipalities, but quartz staking typically is. In 2012, we worked with the City of Whitehorse. We put in place a staking withdrawal affecting new quartz staking within the City of Whitehorse, affecting some 74 percent of the Whitehorse area. If there were existing claims within the Whitehorse area, they did not get expropriated as long as they were valid.

Again, the Ibex Valley Local Advisory Council has written to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and if the Premier would like to give me a response, I'm happy to hear it — but I respect that with that level of detail, he may not have had a chance to discuss it with the minister. I would just simply, on behalf of the local advisory council, who I report to as their MLA, bring forward that request that I support it. I would respectfully encourage the minister and the Premier to take that request positively and work with the Ibex Valley Local Advisory Council as well as others who may wish to consider how staking withdrawals in their area may

prevent new staking conflicting with existing private property or protected open spaces.

Moving on to another area within the budget — and I'm just trying to find my thoughts in my notes here. I would just note as well that as the Premier and others may have heard from First Nations and municipalities in rural Yukon, in considering dealing with everything from obesity to addictions problems, one of things that we heard in our most recent community tour was from community leaders who were emphasizing the importance of recreation facilities and opportunities. For example, both Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and Na Cho Nyäk Dun — I recall vividly sitting down with them and they brought forward a desire for working with government to expand recreational activities in those areas.

In the case of Carmacks, it was a skating rink that was the top priority for not only chief and council, but for the municipality of Carmacks. Indeed, they had some different ideas that they brought forward there. I would just encourage government to work collaboratively with all Yukon communities — First Nation, municipal and unincorporated — to recognize that the ability to expand community recreational infrastructure that meets a common interest in those areas can have a very positive effect in the lives of youth and adults and can encourage active living and discourage riskier behaviour, such as falling into a pattern of substance abuse.

It's by no means a magic wand or a solution in all cases, but it is an important part of the overall picture, and can make a very big difference in the lives of some individuals and keep them out of problematic behaviour in the first place.

In the case of the THIF — the territorial health investment fund — I would congratulate the Premier and the minister for getting that renewed and reinstated. I would note that this fund has in fact taken several names since it was first put into place in — I'm trying to remember the signature date. I know that we actually began spending the money in 2006, but I would actually just take this opportunity to remind the Premier and all members that this fund, which originally began as the territorial health access fund, was itself a time-limited agreement that was replaced with another time-limited agreement and then another time-limited agreement and renamed and rebranded along the way from THAF to THISSI to THIF. That fund, which has provided tens of millions of dollars of health care funding to Yukon citizens since its inception, occurred as a result of the Yukon government not taking no for an answer in dealing with Ottawa. Credit is due to the Premier of the day, former Premier Fentie, and to the Health and Social Services minister of the day, the former Member for Klondike, Peter Jenkins, for their work on that file.

I would just remind the Premier and all members in dealing with Ottawa that it's important to recognize that sometimes you have to figure out how to change a "no" from the federal government to "yes" and, in that case, as a result of a successful pan-northern approach, we were successful in getting the federal government — and the federal government

wasn't very happy about it — to reconsider their position on not providing a different structure for health care funding for the territories. At the time, with the united pan-northern approach, when the three northern premiers walked out on the Prime Minister of the day on national television and refused to sign the agreement, they were successful in taking a united approach and in receiving funding in that area that has stood us in good stead since that time.

To that end, I would just note, both with requesting additional funding for fentanyl, which I would encourage the government to do, and with the issue of the carbon tax, which I know the Premier is probably sick of hearing about by now — but again, in the area of a carbon tax, we see this as a similar situation. The federal government has laid its position down and drawn a line in the sand. But just because the federal government has said “no”, that does not mean necessarily that it's impossible for the three territories to take a united approach to get the federal government to back down from their strong language and potentially recognize the unique needs of the north.

Our concern, as I have indicated and colleagues of mine have indicated — going back to before the election campaign and during the election campaign and in this House — is that a carbon tax not only seems to be an ideologically driven policy, but for a tax that is set to come in during this fiscal year, whether locally developed or federally developed, it's still taxing the same taxpayers.

The fine print on this tax has not been shared with Yukoners. We know from budget briefings that the cost of the carbon tax is not factored into this budget, although it's set to come into effect this fiscal year — that is our understanding. Again, it's not only the fine print that Yukoners have a right to know in terms of what they'll be facing for costs in this fiscal year. It's really easy to say, “Don't worry, we're going to give you all the money back through a rebate”, but to say that a jurisdiction will keep their money and that there will be no net revenue to the federal government as a result doesn't factor in a very important question: Who gets the rebate cheque? It's easy to say, “Don't worry — the Yukon is getting all its money back.” But if you have paid money in a carbon tax and you don't get the rebate, it may be great for your neighbour, but it is absolutely no good for your bank account.

It's important for everyone in this Assembly to recognize that people who are concerned about this are often the typically blue collar Yukoners who have to manage their finances carefully. They have to take a close look at their household budget. They make decisions around when they can actually afford discretionary spending — or not. These are people who are looking down the road through the next 12 months. They are concerned about the fact that they are going to pay a tax. They don't know how much the tax is going to be and they don't know on what. While they have heard that someone in the Yukon is getting the money back, they don't know if it's going to be them.

Another part that needs to be recognized is that when government is looking at things from, in theory, a level of 30,000 feet, it's easy to say, “Don't worry, you'll get the

money back.” If you are someone who is having difficulty making your mortgage payments, if you are someone who is having difficulty putting food on the table, if you are any one of the working poor who go to the food bank for assistance, getting the money back in 12 months isn't good enough for you because you then are likely having to borrow money, go to the food bank or borrow from friends and family while you wait for what you pray will be a rebate cheque at the end of the year.

Again, the fine print on this is something that I believe — and my colleagues in the Official Opposition believe — that government really needs to disclose to Yukoners. They need to acknowledge the fact that, even if there is no net revenue to the federal government, if there are additional administration costs taken out of it, the question of how many millions of dollars are being spent on administration reduces what the rebate is that is going to anyone.

Moving on to a specific example for the carbon pricing, I would note as well that the Premier is probably aware of the situation of the Agnico Eagle, which has warned the Government of Nunavut that a “... carbon tax would not only hurt the company's viability, but could also deter future mining investment in Nunavut.”

For members who are looking for this, I am quoting from a CBC online article that should be publicly available to all members. It was posted on February 24, 2017. The title of the article is: “Gold miner Agnico Eagle warns against carbon tax in Nunavut.”

In addition to that warning, in the article, Premier Taptuna said that the Government of Nunavut “... is working on finding solutions to mitigate the impact of a carbon tax on Nunavummiut, who already pay some of the highest commodity prices in Canada with most goods flown in.

“When pressed in Question Period in the legislature” — on Thursday before the article was written — “Taptuna said they're in talks with the federal government about potentially exempting certain types of fuel from the carbon tax, specifically heating fuel, jet fuel and fuel for ‘generating power.’”

Again, that's an area where we would encourage the territorial government to have a change of heart and to recognize that the Government of Nunavut, the Premier, has said that they are working on negotiating an exemption. If the three territorial premiers were to work together and take a united pan-northern approach in presenting a joint position to the federal government, they in fact might be successful, just as we were in the past on the territorial health access funding and getting the federal government to change from a firm “no” to a “yes”. In this case, we believe that, in the north especially, even if a carbon tax works south of 60, because of the costs that are placed on us with increased costs for heating fuel and increased costs for transportation — most members would agree that we're far too dependent for our liking on goods shipped up from southern Canada and, even with efforts to diversify and to increase local food production, local manufacturing, local forestry, et cetera, the fuel needs to be used for those purposes.

In the case of the agriculture sector, as I mentioned in a motion tabled in the Assembly earlier, there are a number of areas within the agriculture sector that — even those that are successfully significantly increasing our production of local food beyond what it was before — they pay costs for irrigation. In the case of the new privately opened abattoir that is in place, they are currently an off-grid facility. I know from farmers in my riding — in addition to the owners of the abattoir, who are my constituents as well — there are a number of farmers who told me that they increased the number of cattle and hogs that they were raising last year because there was finally an abattoir to take them to, rather than having to deal with getting the mobile abattoir on-site, which also requires a fair bit of paperwork and personal involvement on the part of farmers.

That private initiative — that new abattoir — is having a significant benefit within our farming sector that goes far beyond the owners of that facility. It's really breathing new energy into the beef- and hog-raising portions of the market as well as having a positive effect within the white meat segment of the market.

If they're in a situation where the generators that they are using to run their facility and their freezers — if their costs go up significantly — depending on how much those costs are and whether they are eligible for a rebate or not, it could have the effect of shutting down that fledgling business. I'm not trying to be alarmist. I'm simply bringing this forward to members that private businesses looking at their fiscal year and wondering how much of a tax they are going to have are asking us to ask government, first of all, "Can you at least make an attempt, a sincere attempt, with the other premiers across the north to negotiate an exemption for our carbon tax?" Just as happened in health care funding in the past, they may tell you no, but presented with a pan-northern front, the Prime Minister might change his mind.

Secondly, they are asking: "If we are going to face a carbon tax, how much are we going to pay? Will we be eligible for a rebate? When will we get the rebate and what is this going to mean for our ability to carry on business to feed our families and to continue to employ the people who work for us?"

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you for the comments from the honourable member opposite.

I'll start where he started. He said he wasn't going to mention anybody specifically but then mentioned Sergeant Mitchell. I totally agree. Again, Sergeant Mitchell has always been a great source of information for me. I know that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, as well, holds him in high regard and has had many conversations with Sergeant Mitchell.

When it comes to the whole concept that we've debated in the Legislative Assembly here about saving Grandma from a steep embankment — that all came from the information that was shared by me from Sergeant Mitchell. His concerns with the previous government as far as the oversight and the legalities about his organization going out and actually doing what they do — and that needs to be looked at because you are getting people who are trained in our community of

Dawson who might be in some kind of trouble if they act without some kind of central organization in Whitehorse telling them what to do. Of course the Member for Klwane knows exactly what I'm talking about. It's an issue in his community as well.

There have been times where a colleague of mine — who knows what would have happened to her, as she fell on to the Klondike River from hiking in the middle of winter, if Sergeant Mitchell, the Rangers, KSARA — the Klondike Search and Rescue Association — and the RCMP didn't do what they do, which is saving people.

Again, we have brought this up in the Legislature a few times. We need to do better in coordinating our services to make sure we're not as clunky in the responsibility needed. I mean, if communities don't have the capacity, that's one thing. But if communities are pushing the envelope to get the ability, the training and the ability to go and make decisions on the fly in the communities because they actually have the best available training and resources to do so, I think we need to do a better job of coordinating those services.

I agree with the member opposite. Sergeant Mitchell is a wealth of resource — and also all of the Rangers right across the Yukon, not just necessarily specific to Dawson City.

A very specific question about the local advisory council and the Ibex Valley staking — I am going to defer to my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, to answer that question. I will encourage the Member for Lake Laberge to make a phone call, if he hasn't already, to talk to the minister and to make sure that the concerns of the local advisory council are being presented directly to the minister and to allow a response. If, after that process, he is not happy with the responses that we give as a department, then by all means, bring it up in Question Period and challenge us on our responses, I guess. But that's a very specific question and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will do a much better job of communicating that. You can do that either in the members' lounge or, if you want to, have it in Committee of the Whole when we get into his department or, if you want to, pick up the phone.

The member opposite talked about THIF and gave some thanks and kudos to previous members and talked about how it was being renamed. Well, the new name was going to be "null and void" because that was set to expire. That is the reality that the Minister of Health and Social Services faced. I think that kudos and credit need to be given to the Minister of Health and Social Services for her ability to explain to the federal Minister of Health what the *Canada Health Act* says. There is an obligation there to make sure that we have the same quality of health care. We fought to get that reinstated. It wasn't an obvious "well, we are just going to change the name." No, that was set to expire. It wasn't going to get renamed — it was gone. Kudos to her, to her team and to the public servants in Health and Social Services for identifying that as a crucial component to making sure that Yukoners receive the same quality of care as the rest of Canada as set out in the Canadian health agreements and the *Canada Health Act*.

Moving on here — the member started talking again about carbon-pricing. He prefaced it by saying that I might be sick of hearing about it, but I'm not. Any opportunity that I get to stand on my feet and set the record straight as to exemptions or what the other territories are doing, I absolutely relish that opportunity. I was there at the Council of the Federation speaking directly with all of the premiers and also the Prime Minister. This federal carbon-pricing mechanism was moving forward. There are no exemptions. Premier Wall is probably the most vocal, but again, there will be a tax for Premier Wall. He can sit there and talk about exemptions as much as he wants — there are no exemptions.

Let's say that all three territories said the same thing: "We all want exemptions." It is not going to change the reality that the federal government made a commitment to the environment. The federal government made a commitment to our future when it comes to trying to get us off of fossil fuels. As we take a look at permafrost issues in the Yukon, we take a look at rising sea levels across the world and the storms that are happening — and the catastrophes. Think about the price of the catastrophes across the world. To do nothing, to stick your head in the sand — that is not the approach of this government. I think Yukoners agree with that. The whole concept of going back to ask for an exception — no, we are not going back to ask for an exemption because Yukoners knew that we campaigned on finding a solution and finding a way of working with that federal carbon-pricing mechanism with Yukoners. We have given a revenue-neutral option to Yukon families and businesses. I do feel the member opposite — that when he talks to constituents and businesses that talk about increasing costs — well the good news is that this party campaigned on a promise to make sure that we rebate that money.

I will say that I agree with the member opposite that more details need to come as far as how that rebate happens, and I agree that if you wait too long, then there is money in and money out and all of that. There are issues to be figured out. Again, this is a federal carbon-pricing mechanism and what Premier Taptuna is doing is what we are doing and what Premier McLeod is doing, which is adhering to the annex. In that annex — very specifically in that annex — and I'm going to quote from ours: "Carbon pricing policies should minimize competitiveness impacts and carbon leakage, particularly for emissions-intensive, trade-exposed sectors."

The Member for Watson Lake is shaking her head on this one. That's fine. But when Premier Taptuna is talking about those parts of the mining sector — and he's talking about the mining sector — that's what he's talking about: this part of his annex — very similar language.

When you start talking about people who are marginalized and trying to make ends meet — people with lower incomes — I'll quote again: "Carbon pricing policies should include revenue recycling to avoid a disproportionate burden on vulnerable groups and Indigenous Peoples."

So again, we understand the comments from the member opposite. We agree that we need to make sure that the carbon-pricing mechanism does what it's supposed to do and that it

doesn't overly penalize those who can't make change in certain areas and also that the marginalized individuals don't feel this disproportionate burden. We absolutely agree with that. We agree with it so much that we put it in our annex when we put forth solutions — when we actually worked with the federal government and didn't just say, "Can we have an exemption?" and just stop there and just say we're going to fight for an exemption, when really, everybody knew from the get-go that wasn't going to happen. No region in Canada was going to get an exemption.

When you take a look at making sure that those affected actually are part and parcel of the philosophy of the carbon-pricing mechanism — then sure. But again, we have already said the details from Canada are expected to come in the next few months and Yukon is going to need that clarity from Canada prior to designing a rebate program on how Canada will adhere to the principles that we just talked about that was agreed on in the pan-Canadian framework. I mean, this is for all jurisdictions. Premier Taptuna has his annex and he's making sure that the federal government, when they come up with their response to our annex, listens to the concern of the north. I have had great conversations with all three leaders right across the three northern territories. Again, we're waiting to hear from Ottawa.

Now, all of those details — we would love to have the input of the Yukon Party. We're starting to get it slowly as we start to debate this in the Legislative Assembly as to how they want to see this mechanism rebated. So let's talk about that. How do you want to see it rebated? What is your input? As we already talked about here in the Legislative Assembly, this government wants to get ideas from the opposition and we want them to be involved in that process. So when we hear back from Ottawa as to how their carbon-pricing mechanism is going to unravel, we'll share that with the opposition and we'll look forward to your input to make sure that your constituents' concerns are heard. But again, the big thing to take back here is: our plan was broadcast during the election and that is revenue neutral. That money is going back to Yukoners and Yukon businesses. I didn't hear a plan other than "no" from the Yukon Party. We're now in a majority situation here, so I think Yukoners have told us that they do agree that we need to be on the right side of history as far as not just what Yukon is doing with the federal mechanism, but what all of Canada is doing, and really, what the international community needs us to do to make sure that this planet is inhabitable into the future generations and to make sure that we seize the opportunity here of moving off fossil fuel. As you move off fossil fuel, you create innovation; you create technology; you create opportunities.

You have to take a look at jurisdictions like New Brunswick. Back in the day when people were looking at dot matrix computers and saying how they were not sure about this new Internet community or this fibre optic — that's when New Brunswick seized the opportunity. They got ahead of the curve. Today, they lead the international community in a lot of pursuits when it comes to fibre optic technology.

This was an emerging and new industry that a particular jurisdiction — a small jurisdiction in Canada — seized as an opportunity and, because of that, their economy has — they transformed back in that time in the 1980s and 1990s from a have-not to a have province with technological advances. It's really important to make sure you take a look at what the international community is doing.

The Canadian mining alliance — the Mining Association of Canada — has agreed that a carbon-pricing mechanism is the way forward. We need to have a price on carbon. We understand there have been some organizations that have talked about concerns. We want to hear their concerns. We want to make sure we're working with industry when we're talking about the rebate of this federal carbon-pricing mechanism. Again, I think the Yukon Party should take a look at the opportunities. Revenue neutral is good for Yukon businesses and Yukon people. Switching over to a non-fossil-fuel-based economy — there are opportunities there. There are opportunities in technology; there are opportunities in cold climate innovation. We need to seize this opportunity, and we can do it together or we'll work with the NDP, because I'm sure they're willing to help us in that pursuit.

Mr. Cathers: I do have to point out to the Premier that, while his explanation that Nunavut was doing exactly what the Yukon government is doing and working within the annex sounded good, it's not what the Premier of the NWT said. The Premier of the NWT said that they are working on exemptions. I would also note that we haven't gotten any answers from the government on the cost of carbon pricing to Yukoners, other than hearing the really nice, bland tagline that says it will be revenue neutral.

Again, my point is: revenue neutral to whom? If it's revenue neutral to a jurisdiction, it doesn't mean it's revenue neutral to a family. Yukon families are asking the question that I think, regardless of the ideology of any member in this House, when we're talking about this fiscal year, it's a fair question for people to ask as they're doing the budget for their families or trying to figure out what they can do for discretionary purchases, or upgrades to their home, or the purchase of a new vehicle. Those are the types of things that Yukon families need to consider. The Premier and his colleagues should recognize that, in the absence of details on a federal tax, people tend to be a little more reticent to spend money. It can have a negative impact on consumer confidence and a negative economic impact simply while they're waiting for details on the cost of pricing.

As any careful, thoughtful, logical person trying to manage their family's household budget would do, if you're trying to decide whether you're putting a new porch on your house, if you're trying to decide if you're investing in energy retrofits, if you're trying to decide if you're putting solar panels on your house or buying a new car or buying your kids some additional sporting equipment that you want to buy them — but that they don't really need — if people aren't sure how much more tax they're going to be paying and on what and what's going to be left in their bank account, most people are

going to tend to be a little bit cautious on their spending and focus on core purchases.

I don't have the exact figures on the economic impact — perhaps the Premier may — of the effect on consumer confidence of government not being forthcoming enough for the details on a carbon tax and who is going to pay what, who will actually be eligible for a rebate, and how much, but the Premier should recognize — and the entire government should recognize, as we would hope the federal government would — that if a government is being not forthcoming about the details of an upcoming new tax, it has a negative impact on consumer confidence and particularly the discretionary spending.

I would also note that, in the case of Nunavut, it appears that the Government of Nunavut has been more forthcoming with the mining company Agnico Eagle at least than the territorial government or the federal government here have been with Yukoners, because the company wrote a letter, dated January 26, 2017, to Premier Taptuna of Nunavut. In that letter, the company comments on the carbon pricing scheme and they indicate that the impact to Agnico Eagle will be approximately \$20 million per year into 2023 for its carbon emissions in Nunavut. Again, this is an area where we think that if the government is set on pursuing carbon pricing and not willing to attempt to join with Nunavut and NWT in standing up in a pan-northern approach to Ottawa, they at least should be more forthcoming about the cost that Yukon families will be paying.

I appreciate the Premier's comments when he said that THIF, the territorial health investment fund, was set to expire and there was no funding. That's actually not a new story. That has been the case — the federal government was extremely reluctant to provide what was then the territorial health access fund in the first place. They only did it because the three northern premiers were working together in a united approach and on something that was equally important to the Prime Minister of the day as carbon pricing is to Prime Minister Trudeau. Those three premiers refused to sign his deal and said, "It's not good enough. You haven't recognized the unique needs of the north with our large regions and our sparse populations and the fact that per capita funding is not sufficient to meet our needs. We need increased funding for medical travel and so on." The Prime Minister had told them "no" before they said that.

While I can't claim to be a personal confidant of that Prime Minister, I think that if the Premier ever talks to him, he would find out that he was not very happy with the territories at the time. I know the Premier, in his testimony before the federal finance committee on April 4, mentioned not wanting to bite the hand that feeds you, but I think there is also a need to recognize that in standing up for the real needs of our territories, there are times when it is the job of territorial premiers and territorial ministers to go to Ottawa, preferably arm in arm with other colleagues and take a strong stand.

One doesn't need to be nasty about it. One doesn't need to resort to name-calling or to be unnecessarily confrontational about it, but there is a need sometimes to take a strong stand and say, "We're not prepared to sign on unless

you make additional changes.” That is where we think there is still an opportunity. Again, based on the Premier of Nunavut’s comments, as reported by CBC — Premier Taptuna said they’re in talks with the government about potentially exempting certain types of fuel from the carbon tax, specifically heating fuel, jet fuel and fuel for generating power.

Some of the fairly common language that is used to defend carbon pricing — about the urgency of climate change, how we all need to do our part, et cetera — especially for a government that talks about being committed to evidence-based decision-making, the devil is in the details. The question is: Will the specific proposed scheme you’re talking about actually lower emissions, and how much? Where is the evidence of that, based on reputable scientists or economic modellers looking at it?

It is much easier for governments to defend a new tax if they tell people that it’s the only way to save the environment. But again, as we did when in government and as we argued in the election campaign, there are approaches that we believe are more effective, such as incentive-based approaches.

I would express concern about the impact to our agriculture sector of a carbon price, particularly when it comes to irrigation, off-grid power and farming equipment and whether the government — no doubt with best intentions — would impose a carbon tax that potentially shuts down a small producer or processor. My point on this is that, rather than simply responding with the nice line that, “Don’t worry — it will be revenue neutral”, the government owes those Yukon individuals and those businesses the information on what the cost will be to them.

I have a quote from another CBC article posted on December 15, 2016 and comments by Premier Wade MacLauchlan of P.E.I. Based on those statements made to the media: “Gas used on P.E.I. farms or in the Island’s fishing industry won’t be charged a carbon tax, says Premier Wade MacLauchlan.

“Agriculture and transportation accounts for 65 per cent of P.E.I.’s greenhouse gas emissions, but MacLauchlan said gas in the fishing and farming sectors will be exempt.”

These are again some specific examples where exemptions are being contemplated, even in jurisdictions that have signed on to a carbon tax.

In contrast and contrary to the Premier’s claim that the Yukon Party didn’t have a position on what we would do with the carbon tax — our position is that, of course, no government can guarantee, when you set out to get Ottawa to change its mind, that you’ll be successful in that endeavour. We have been successful in health care and a number of other files in working hand-in-hand with the governments of Nunavut and of Northwest Territories in a pan-northern approach.

The optics and advantage that we have as the territories are that we are far out of the national media — the centre of their world in Ottawa and Toronto. We also, when we have a powerful united appeal, have been successful in the past in getting the sympathy of not only the national media but the

hearts and minds of our fellow Canadians when we make a reasoned, solid, evidence-based case to the federal government, as we did in the area of health care, that the federal proposal was inadequate. In fact, it is possible — and as we have seen in the area of health care — and has resulted in tens of millions of dollars of health care funding that the federal government had said no to. If you actually make the effort, it is possible to move mountains. We have argued and continue to argue as the Official Opposition that investments such as the ones we have made in, for example, the Yukon Research Centre, the Cold Climate Innovation centre, in energy retrofits for both residential and commercial buildings, in solar and microgeneration, in the good energy program — the rebates that were first announced by me as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in 2008 or 2009 and have been added to by my successors in that role. Another example — but not on energy efficiency — is the well program. The well program, the microgeneration program and the changes that we made through Bill No. 80 in the last Legislative Assembly — those changes in expanding the rural well program to Yukoners within municipalities and allowing Yukoners who are on-grid to borrow money for solar projects have had a very positive effect on the system.

I have the figure buried somewhere in my notes here, but the number we heard from officials of the increase in solar projects and the increase in capacity added to the grid as a result of those initiatives is significant. Those are the types of initiatives — more incentive-based than penalty-based — that we think have proven to be successful approaches and will continue to be, in doing our part to reduce emissions here in the territory.

It doesn’t sound like we’re going to get success from the Premier in realizing that there is actually more he can do on this file if he tries. If the government is ideologically committed to carbon pricing, the thing they need to recognize, especially if you have a mishmash across the country of carbon pricing and cap-and-trade and inconsistent models — and no credible economist has done the math on how these systems are working together — you are going to see a situation where, if you have different pricing schemes and different cap-and-trade schemes in different jurisdictions, you’ll end up with businesses making decisions to relocate as a result, because of how it affects their specific industry.

We have also heard examples of cases where, through what is commonly called “carbon leakage”, if the system is set up in the wrong way, government can end up increasing the cost of local manufacture and making goods shipped in from Outside less expensive and result in a situation where products that are actually produced with higher carbon emissions out of the country are then being imported because the local ones have been made economical.

One example that comes to mind is when we’ve seen information on the cost comparison of aluminum imports. It needs to be recognized that if you haven’t thought out the fine print on your carbon-pricing scheme or your cap-and-trade scheme and understand how it’s working with your neighbouring jurisdictions, you can end up with a situation

where you have actually increased global emissions as a result of, quote, “doing your part” while you have killed your local manufacturing or resource-production sector in that specific area.

My point is if you’re doing a complex scheme like this, you need to understand the fine print. If even the Premier doesn’t understand the fine print, how are Yukoners supposed to plan for their budget with a new carbon price?

Mr. Chair, I’m going to move on to a few other areas before we wrap up today. I would just note that, in capping off our comments and assertions made by the Premier about the alleged deficit received from the previous government, the decision by government to book the solvency deficits for Yukon College and Yukon Hospital Corporation in the 2016-17 fiscal year account for roughly \$4 million of the so-called \$8.2-million deficit. I would point out that if the member referred to the 2015-16 Public Accounts — which, for the NDP member listening, is the same Public Accounts document tabled in the House and available online — looking at page 14, you’ll see that the Auditor General acknowledged, for the 2015-16 fiscal year, that the issue was the valuation, if those pension plans were terminated — that as of the valuation date, the deficits that Yukon College and the Yukon Hospital Corporation did were addressed to the satisfaction of the Auditor General by this: Yukon College entered into “a letter of credit in lieu of making solvency payments”. The Yukon Hospital Corporation also entered into a letter of credit in lieu of making solvency payments, as well as making cash payments in that case.

As I noted — and I read the excerpt from the Auditor General’s letter yesterday — when the Auditor General gave the government a clean bill of health — because that relates to the wrap-up of a public pension plan. The minister should know that has often been an issue. A number of finance ministers across the country have taken issue with that actuarial approach because those types of pension plans do not typically wrap up or become insolvent. That is another area where a specific choice made by government was not strictly required.

In closing off, I would also note that, for a government talking about fiscal control — if we look to the government’s transition costs, there is \$111,550 spent for transition costs. I will not name names but would note that, for four of those positions, the amounts that were paid for one month’s work were \$33,000, \$30,000, \$23,000 and \$16,000. If one extrapolates \$33,000 over a year-long period, that’s a \$396,000 yearly salary, compared to an average annual salary in Yukon of a little over \$52,000 per person.

The minister may wish to consider what explanation he is going to provide Yukoners about the very high rates paid to his staff and his failure to take accountability for that.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair’s report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, 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 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled May 9, 2017:

34-2-17

Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees Third Report (May 9, 2017) (Adel)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 12

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, May 10, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

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| Hon. Ranj Pillai | Porter Creek South | Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation |
| Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee | Riverdale South | Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice |
| Hon. John Streicker | Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes | Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission |
| Hon. Pauline Frost | Vuntut Gwitchin | Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation |
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Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, May 10, 2017 — 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 North American Occupational Safety and Health Week

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of all members of this Legislative Assembly. I would like to be frank. Occupational health and safety is a very dry phrase. Some may consider it a cliché. Others may argue that the words get used so much that they have lost their meaning altogether. That's unfortunate and I don't agree. However, I can understand the perspective. When a practice becomes so habitual, its meaning can often erode in our minds. That's why I'm pleased to rise today to acknowledge NAOSH Week. NAOSH stands for North American Occupational Safety and Health. But NAOSH Week is a time to celebrate the success we've experienced to cultivate a universal safety culture.

It used to be okay to build human fatalities into the cost of projects. Five workers died during the construction of the Empire State Building. One hundred perished building the Hoover Dam. To businesses and governments of the time, those were perfectly acceptable, even expected, losses. That's no longer okay.

This week, we celebrate the fact that no worker death is ever acceptable under any circumstance. We were reminded of that yesterday when we commemorated the deaths of 26 miners in the Westray mine disaster.

Another thing to celebrate is the internal responsibility system. That is where people, regardless of a law or regulation, informally agree to look after one another's safety and wellness while in the workplace. It used to be every person for themselves; these days, every person is working together to keep each other safe.

For 20 years, NAOSH Week has been observed annually through Canada, the United States and Mexico during the first full week of May. Through community activities, like festivals and barbecues, NAOSH Week breathes life back into the words "occupational health and safety". It returns their meaning and value to them. It reminds us that occupational health and safety is a community lynchpin. It is what ensures that each of us gets home from work to our loved ones and friends every day, unscathed.

Two weeks ago, we observed a very different event — the National Day of Mourning. I was honoured to participate in that beautiful, somber ceremony on the banks of the Yukon

River. It evoked memories of those we have lost. It reminded us that we must double our efforts to keep one another healthy and safe in the workplace. It bid us to look to the future, toward a time when loved ones will no longer be lost to workplaces.

Occupational health and safety is the key to delivering on the promise of the Day of Mourning, and so NAOSH Week naturally flows into it. In a sense, NAOSH Week embraces the Day of Mourning spirit and its timing is perfect.

We are on the cusp of what is, for many of Yukon's largest industries, the busy summer season. Construction sites are brimming with life, mining exploration camps are erupting with activity, and our tourism operators are opening their arms to an influx of visitors from around the world. NAOSH Week gives us the opportunity to shine a light on the occupational health and safety practices of those and so many other workplaces, to celebrate their efforts in making sure every worker gets through every day unharmed and in good health. NAOSH Week is spearheaded by the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering and its counterpart in the United States and Mexico.

As I mentioned, it is celebrated with community events across three countries. Here in Yukon, there is an annual Partners in Safety barbecue. It is taking place right now at Shipyards Park until 2:00 p.m. It is open to the public and all are welcome. As I speak, dozens of Yukoners are enjoying free burgers and drinks in the fresh air on the banks of the Yukon River. They are also exploring the many exhibits there that present a wide variety of information about how to be safe at work and at home. In about an hour, a free draw will offer up a long list of prizes that includes tickets from Air North.

As well, this year the local PARTY program — PARTY stands for "prevent alcohol and risk-related trauma in youth" — is presenting a car crash scenario to the high school students and the public to remind us of the dangers of distracted or impaired driving.

I would like to recognize and congratulate the organizers of the Partners in Safety barbecue. They represent a diverse range of organizations and businesses committed to safety, like Air North, ATCO Electric, the City of Whitehorse, Northern Safety Network Yukon, Yukon Energy and the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I believe I can express thanks on behalf of my fellow members to these and every Yukon employer for their continued commitment to the health and safety of workers. More to the point though, I would like to thank them for breathing life into the idea and practice of occupational health and safety with this important public event. They're helping to remind us that, even though it's something that we do every day and it may seem mundane, it's an important aspect of our workplaces and links us to our communities and homes, keeping us safe, healthy and alive.

In recognition of National Hospice Palliative Care Week

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the compassionate and dedicated professionals and volunteers who work in palliative care. “Hospice palliative care is about living well. Right to the end” is the theme of this year’s National Hospice Palliative Care Week, which runs from May 7 to 13, and is led by the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association. This is a theme that resonates with me and with my Liberal Party colleagues. One of the commitments we made to Yukoners was to deliver comprehensive and coordinated programs and services that meet their needs at all stages of their lives.

The end of our life is one of those stages and it is an important one, yet people are often afraid to talk about end-of-life issues. It is something that all of us need to talk about and make plans for. We need to do this because hospice palliative care helps relieve suffering and improves the quality of life and dying.

For this year’s National Hospice Palliative Care Week, the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association is calling on all Canadians to face their fear and commit to two things. The first is to learn about hospice palliative care and advance care planning. We need to take the time to think about what we want and what we don’t want as we approach the end of our lives. The second is to make a bucket list of the top five things you would like to do before you die and share it on social media, using the hashtag #Top5WhileImAlive.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Yukoners to join me in raising awareness and taking this good advice. I also encourage everyone to learn more about the palliative care options that are available here in the Yukon. The Health and Social Services palliative care program has been providing end-of-life services to Yukoners since 2008, working collaboratively with family caregivers, Hospice Yukon, First Nations, Whitehorse General Hospital, Community Nursing, and community care staff.

Palliative care in Yukon is not limited to one location, but can be provided in a variety of care settings, including Whitehorse General Hospital, continuing care facilities and at a person’s home. Our palliative care team includes a registered nurse, a social worker, a community liaison coordinator, and a consultant palliative care physician. Once again, I would like to pay tribute and to thank all volunteers, nurses, friends, doctors, Hospice Yukon workers, home care, and hospice palliative care team members who have helped many Yukoners live well right to the end.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. McLeod: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition in honour of National Hospice Palliative Care Week, which takes place this year from May 7 to 13.

I would like to speak for a moment about the importance of hospice palliative care. In Yukon, the number of seniors choosing to retire here in the territory is increasing. It’s important for the government to highlight the plans for the care of those in our community and their families who face

life-limiting illnesses, both in the hospital and in the community. We take this week to recognize supporting and promoting compassionate care for individuals and their loved ones at a time in their lives when they need it the most. Hospice palliative care is a level of care dedicated to relieving suffering and improving the quality of life for persons who are living with, or dying from, advanced illnesses. A main goal of palliative care is to provide comfort and dignity for a person living with the illness, as well as providing support for this individual and their family.

Relief of pain and other symptoms is key and palliative care goes beyond physical needs to also meet the psychological, social, cultural, emotional and spiritual needs of each person and their families. Additionally, hospice palliative care offers caregiver support. Such services include advice and assistance from doctors, nurses and other health care professionals, instruction for families on how to care for their loved ones and home support services that provide assistance for the individual, both medically and with household tasks. These services vary across the country, but the care and compassion for the individual and their families is consistent.

It’s important to point out that in Canada, the terms “hospice care” and “palliative care” are interchangeable when speaking of this specific approach to care. It’s for this reason one will see the terms used either separately or as one term. The Yukon government had this care and support initiative in place when it went forward with the plan to build the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. The plan for this project was to be a centre to provide palliative care and continuing care for those with chronic illness and those requiring end-of-life care. This is going to be a tremendous relief, I suspect, to our Whitehorse hospital, which is currently operating at maximum capacity, largely due to palliative and continuing care patients. We’re proud of this project and look forward to the wide range of comfort, care supports and services that it will offer. We look forward to the completion and opening of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility and what it will mean for continuing care in our community.

Like Copper Ridge Place, I’m confident that this new facility will become an integral part of our community and will be a welcome addition to the vibrant neighbourhood of Whistle Bend.

I would like to acknowledge the people who care for and support those people with severe illness or who are approaching the end of life. First and foremost, their families and friends often don’t receive the recognition they deserve for taking the time to provide their loved ones with assistance and support. It is hard — physically and emotionally — and quite frankly, anyone who undertakes that is a hero. I would like to give special recognition to those who may also form a palliative care team for an individual — nurses, family physicians, specialized physicians, social workers, counsellors, pharmacists and home care support workers.

Additionally, I would like to recognize the services of volunteers within the community who play an important role in palliative care by providing support services, such as

companionship, caregiver relief and assisting in the home and with transportation. Those volunteers should be proud of their roles within our community, and I thank them all for their continued dedication.

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to recognize National Hospice Palliative Care Week in Canada. As a society, we are often afraid to talk about death and dying, so talking about end-of-life care issues is even harder. But hospice palliative care isn't just about dying; it is about living your life on your terms and living it well right to the very end. You cannot know how or when that end will be, but you can get informed about what may be available to you and then share your wishes with your family and your community.

We are fortunate in the Yukon to have dedicated professionals and volunteers who work with individuals and their families who are nearing the end of life. In Yukon, the palliative care programs offer clinical consultation, education and training on palliative care. Palliative care is offered in our hospitals, our continuing care facilities, our communities and, whenever possible, in our homes. Palliative care specialists are a special breed. They are there to support their patients to live as well as possible right to the end. They offer so much more than the just the tools of their trade. They offer compassion and human touch. In our experience, it's a wonder that their hearts are even able to fit in their chests, because they really are superheroes.

The Hospice Yukon Society is a group that works collaboratively with the palliative care program and offers counselling support for people with life-limiting illness, for anyone anticipating the death of a loved one and for anyone in grief. Sometimes it is a hospice volunteer who sits with the dying individual, giving relief to family and friends, but they are also there for individuals who might not have those supports at the end of their own lives.

Part of the message this year is around advance care planning. In Yukon we have kits for individuals and families to begin those discussions and make their wishes clear. It is important to note that you have to have that available — whether it is a copy on a USB stick that you have in multiple places, it's on the refrigerator, or it's at a friend's place — because you never know when you might need that in the middle of the night. It's critical at a stressful time, so make sure it's available.

Some people associate hospice and palliative care only with sadness, but most hospice experiences include times of peace, joy and even laughter. It is a time of closeness and often gives people a deeper understanding and appreciation of life. In a very real sense, hospice palliative care is about living and dying well.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to pay tribute to these staff and volunteers who provide this really important service to us all.

In recognition of Yukon FireFit team

Hon. Mr. Streicker: On behalf of the Liberal caucus and the NDP caucus, I rise today to recognize Yukon's FireFit

team heading to the Pacific regional FireFit competition in Langley, British Columbia this weekend — May 13 and 14.

I would like to acknowledge, based on the earlier tribute, that the North American Occupational Safety and Health Partners in Safety barbecue, which is ongoing right now at Shipyards Park and is hosted by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, has many of our firefighters there doing training exercises with the public to talk about safety.

The FireFit challenge is known as the toughest two minutes in sport. Firefighters in full firefighting gear and equipment compete in a series of tough physical challenges. They run up six flights of stairs, haul fire hoses and rescue an 82-kilogram dummy. This is what they train for on the job and the competition takes it to an elite level. The firefighters, staff and volunteers who compete in the FireFit competition are spending time and effort to become better. Their effort isn't just for the competition — it's to be the best they can be when Yukoners need them. Since Yukon's fire service is largely a volunteer fire service, it means the dedicated volunteers are training for FireFit in addition to their fire hall duties, their jobs and schooling, their families and their personal lives.

To all FireFit competitors, thank you for your dedication to firefighting to better serve your communities. I would like to make special mention of one of the veteran team members — Mr. Boyd Piper is the Tagish fire chief from my own riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. He is a team captain and a coach for FireFit.

Boyd is a fierce competitor, but more importantly, he is a leader in the fire service, a role model to young firefighters and a mentor to all. If you have ever seen the teams in training, you'll know that Boyd motivates the competitors, gets them to believe in their skills and helps them to accomplish tasks they didn't think were possible. Boyd's name is almost synonymous with FireFit. I extend the appreciation of the House for all he does for the Yukon fire services.

There are three teams heading to the Pacific regional competition this year. I'm hoping that some of them move on. Two are men's teams comprised of team captain Jeremy Beebe from Whitehorse, team captain Boyd Piper from Tagish, Kevin Mendelsohn from Dawson City, Shaun Cooke of Mount Lorne, Myron Penner of Tagish, Ray Sabo from Hootalinqua, Thibaut Rondel from Hootalinqua, and Geoff Hann from Ibex Valley.

An exciting addition this year is the first women's volunteer team representing the Yukon fire services. This includes team captain Kelsie Olsen of Golden Horn, Elizabeth Boyd of Mount Lorne, Megan Coyne of Ibex Valley and Sydney Johnson of Ibex Valley.

These men and women are inspirations to us and to their fire departments. They have signed up for a physically demanding job and take the time to train and excel through FireFit training and competition. The FireFit competition and training contributes to the functional fitness of Yukon's firefighters, helping to ensure they are physically capable of firefighting and return safely to their families after duty.

Yukon's Fire Marshal's Office contributes funding, equipment and training to the firefighters heading to the competition. The government is proud to support our firefighters in this way. Volunteer fire departments across Yukon train hard and answer emergency calls in their communities. These teams are about to show us and their regional competitors just how seriously they take their fitness and commitment to the fire service.

Good luck to all the FireFit competitors and to those from the Yukon; you've already made us proud.

Mr. Cathers: On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to join the minister in wishing the FireFit teams good luck at the Pacific regional competition and to thank all of those volunteer firefighters on those teams for their dedication to improving their fitness skills and to making the Yukon proud on this regional stage.

I would like to also acknowledge the ongoing efforts, each and every day, of firefighters across the territory, especially those who volunteer their time to keep our homes and communities safe.

In closing, I would like to note that I know some of the firefighters who came on and are now part of the women's team first joined the fire service following Camp Ember. We would like to commend the Fire Marshal's Office for that successful initiative aimed at getting women, in particular, interested in joining the fire services and providing them with the skills they need to become successful volunteer firefighters.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to acknowledge a resident of Tagish and from Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — if we could all welcome Ms. Mary Ann Lewis.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling a letter from me to the Minister of Health and Social Services, dated April 11, 2017, regarding health insurance coverage for a constituent who contacted the minister's office in January.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to seek an independent audit of the permit hunt system within the Department of Environment and tender its management to a third-party organization in response to the increasing concerns of Yukon hunters with the permit hunt system.

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

THAT this House urges the government to improve access to abortion services throughout Yukon by making available to women the drug mifepristone, or RU-486, at no cost.

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: School calendar

Ms. Van Bibber: On April 26, I asked the Minister of Education to explain why there was a delay in releasing the school calendars this year. As I noted last month in my question, the school calendars were approximately 26 days past the deadline. In the minister's explanation, she stated that the delay was as a result of the school councils. However, we have heard from several school councils that have challenged the minister's remarks.

In reference to the minister's statement that school councils work on their own schedule, a letter from the school councils of Porter Creek Secondary, Jack Hulland, Elijah Smith and Takhini schools states that — and I quote: "... is not a correct statement."

Mr. Speaker, these school councils should be thanked for their work and not blamed for something they didn't do. Can the minister clarify her previous comments and apologize to the school councils?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. The honourable member opposite will know that the letter she is making reference to arrived yesterday, which means I saw it at 6:00 p.m. last night. I have not yet had an opportunity to review it thoroughly and/or respond to it. Of course, I have sent notice to the school councils that I will be responding and that I have received it — and thanking them for that.

More importantly, I guess, with respect to what the honourable member has said, is that it is incorrect that I blamed school councils. What Hansard says with respect to that is that I said that school councils work on their own schedule and that they should, in fact, work on their own schedule. I also indicated that the department was somewhat late in getting those documents for consideration by each school council out to them and that they would be returning them after they had an opportunity to meet.

I guess I want to also mention that Hansard is a bit of a blunt instrument because it doesn't, of course, record intonation or intention. Certainly, there was no intention whatsoever to blame school councils and my review of the

reading of Hansard, which I did last night after seeing that letter, is in fact, that it doesn't do so.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, we have established that a school calendar delay was not the fault of the school councils.

In fact it seems the minister didn't even give the school councils much time to consider the changes. According to the timeline we received, the school councils were only notified of the calendar on March 13 — 19 days before the minister's deadline.

As the minister knows, school councils are volunteers who meet monthly. For context, the minister gave the school councils only 19 days to consider the calendars, but she had 119 days from becoming a minister until the deadline set out in the act.

Why did the minister think it was fair to give herself 100 more days than the school councils to consider, and will she commit to giving school councils more time in the future?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the honourable member for the question. At no time was the intention to hamper the consideration that school councils should give to the school calendars, because it is a critical part of the process. It's required by the legislation. In addition to being required by the legislation, it's good practice.

School councils represent families, they represent parents, and they are a critical part of the liaison between the school community itself, the Department of Education, parents, teachers and students.

The unfortunate situation in which school calendars came about this year was partly as a result of us wanting to do more than one. We now have some feedback with respect to that, and the only calendar that has been set is the one for 2017-18.

Certainly I have been attending as many school council meetings as possible in person. I have had an opportunity to speak with them specifically about school calendars and the other work they do, and I got their feedback personally as well as what they have given back to the department.

My respect for school councils is immense. I have been a school council member. I am well aware of the work that they do and they absolutely must be considered with respect to this and other issues.

Ms. Van Bibber: I also asked the minister about the new school calendar and asked her to explain why next year's school calendar showed the last day of school changing from June 20 to June 8. In her response the minister referenced consulting with these councils. Her exact quote was: "They're the ones who chose the earlier date." However, let me read an excerpt from that letter we received from the four school councils: "school councils did not have a choice in the matter as the department already had the calendars set out. Councils input was not being waited for."

Mr. Speaker, if this is the case, will the minister stop blaming the school councils, go back to the drawing board and truly consult with them?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think I already said that I wasn't blaming school councils, and I'm sorry to actually hear that reference in the third part of this question because it indicates

to me that perhaps the honourable member is not believing what I have to say. I have no reason whatsoever to be concerned about the details of what I said before if I am having the opportunity now to explain it.

I was absolutely not blaming school councils. They are an integral part of this situation.

In addition to the concept of when school councils are consulted, they're consulted on a number of issues — many issues — not the least of which is the requirement for them to be consulted on school calendars. The critical part of this process is to form partnerships and to have the school councils, which are an integral part of what's happening at schools and with the Department of Education, consulted on a regular basis.

I should note that the letter that my colleague is referring to came from four school councils. There are 30 school councils in the territory. They did have an opportunity to indicate what the last date or first date should be. What they got was a draft and they were asked for comments outside of the realm of that draft and we wanted all comments.

Question re: School calendar

Mr. Hassard: Just to follow with that line of questioning, last month we asked the Minister of Education about the shortening of the school calendar. In her response, she said that the school calendar would be reduced from June 20 to June 8 by increasing the length of the school day by a few minutes per day. At that time, the minister told us that she had made this decision based off of consultations with the school councils, but now we've learned that this may not necessarily be the case.

Can the minister please explain how this decision was arrived at?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for the question.

In my view, good leadership requires that much of the work is done out front — in particular, good leadership with respect to consultation. Yes, the Department of Education did work with its officials and, based on information they've had over setting calendars for many, many years, and did draft a number of calendars that were produced for consultation with the school councils.

Various versions of that came about for each calendar for each year. With respect to 2017-18 — we'll make reference to that one. Then that document was sent to school councils so that they could give feedback. At no time were they told, "These are the dates." They were told, "These are proposed dates. Would you please tell us what you think about that?" Much of the feedback that we received from school councils did exactly what was asked of them, which was to provide their comments and feedback about proposed dates for school calendars.

Mr. Hassard: With respect to shortening the school year by around two weeks of classes and making up the difference by adding a few minutes to each day, we've heard from a number of parents who are concerned about the impacts this will have on instructional time for their children.

A lot of people believe that full days of classes are better for our children and students instead of simply stretching out each day by a few minutes.

What does the minister say to parents who are concerned that her changes to the school calendar will negatively impact the education outcomes of our students?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: First of all, I guess I should start by saying that the Department of Education and I, as well as my colleagues, are always very open to hearing from members of our community, citizens — in this particular case, from parents, teachers and staff — and from all of our educational partners in the school system.

With respect to instructional time, my colleague across the way will know that it is set at 950 hours per year in the *Education Act* and that the school calendars must comply with that and other terms that are set out in the act, and this school calendar does that.

Mr. Hassard: Yes, we do know about the 950 hours per year, but that doesn't change the fact that students will now have 11 weeks without being in the classroom. We have heard directly from parents of very young children, in particular, that this is too long a time for a child not to be in the classroom for a number of reasons.

Will the minister reconsider her decision to shorten the school year and go back to the drawing board to consult with school councils and parents?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We have heard some of the concerns that the member opposite raises. We have also heard the opposite comments.

I have heard this from school councils, teachers, families and others — not to dismiss at all the concerns brought forward by the member opposite, but we have also heard that attendance is very low in some schools in June and that an earlier end date is an appropriate way to go. The summer, between the end of June and the beginning of September, in 2017, will be 69 days.

I have looked at the averages over the last 10 or so years, and that is on the low side. It is often 74 days, and it has even been as high as 80 days. In particular, in 2017, that is the length of the summer vacation or break with respect to schools. The other part of the question — and I take this very seriously — is to take a look at the proposed calendars for 2018 and beyond, and to take into account not only the comments that the member opposite has made but that his colleague has made as well, and to consult further with school councils and all of the partners to determine what all of those dates should be.

Question re: Ross River infrastructure

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the community of Ross River has been on the back burner for the Yukon government for far too long. From the bridge, to housing conditions and road repairs, a lot of work needs to be done to close the infrastructure gap between Ross River and other communities.

During their 2016 campaign, the current government promised funding for housing in Ross River. To date, the only evidence of this commitment is a line item in the budget for

new staff housing along with two housing units to be used as transition for homes being renovated. Luckily, the federal government stepped in and committed to fix or build 16 units, although these projects have not yet started. The problem is that 45 homes have been assessed to be affected by mould, radon, sewage or petroleum contamination.

My question is: What is the government's plan to deliver on their election commitment to make sure that the units that won't get fixed with available federal funds are habitable?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you for the question. I want to just maybe highlight a few key points with respect to that question around the care and support that has been given to the Ross River Dena Council and the community of Ross River. We have been working quite consistently with the community to address some of the pressures, and we have a management committee that is working with the federal government — recognizing that responsibility for the Ross River Dena Council's infrastructure and housing falls on the federal government as an *Indian Act* First Nation. However, we have committed to working with the First Nation and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada to identify key priorities. We have committed to working in a cooperative and collaborative manner to address the key pressures, and we are doing that very successfully. In fact, we are meeting with the chief again this week to touch down with them to ensure that the pressures are being addressed with regard to mould issues and other contaminants in the community or in the homes, and the infrastructure. We have had inspectors go in and work with the community of Ross River and their team to identify and verify that in fact there are not current pressures with respect to mould in the current houses that have been inspected.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for her comments and response. I just would point out that although the *Indian Act* does apply to the Ross River Dena Council, the citizens of Ross River, including those members of the *Indian Act* band, are Yukon citizens and they also pay Yukon taxes. I know that MLAs and ministers of this government have travelled and experienced the conditions of the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River. Anyone who has driven this road notices the difference once you pass Faro and start driving toward Ross River. This stretch of road is the main access point to town for many residents and visitors alike. Its condition is not comparable to any other community's access road in Yukon.

Is this government investing any money beyond regular maintenance to upgrade the road between Faro and Ross River?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question. The short answer is yes. I have spoken to the Highways and Public Works department. I am well aware of the different standards between Faro and Ross River and I have asked my department to actually address some of the road issues leading into Ross River.

As the member opposite well knows, there is environmental and other screening that has to be done when

doing engineering and all sorts of stuff. That work is going to be proceeding and we want to get the road up to snuff.

Ms. Hanson: That's really good to hear because, as we go back on that road between Faro and Ross River, the issue at stake has been for many years the double standard that the community of Ross River has been subject to. Those 300 citizens — as I said, citizens who all pay taxes like everyone else in this territory — live in that town, and nobody else has had to endure roads of such pitiful condition and have their emergency health care services compromised.

Mr. Speaker, would the minister identify what will be done this fiscal year and where in the budget we will find the commitment made? How much has been committed to upgrade the road between Ross River and Faro this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for that question. I will get the numbers for the member opposite. I don't have them right at my fingers right at the moment, but I will tell the member opposite that I have instructed my officials to start the engineering work and pre-planning. Coming into this role, I have discovered how much preparation and work has to be done. You can't just send the BST trucks out to start laying down road surfaces. There's a lot of preparation work and a lot of planning that has to go into this. This government is committed to planning and to doing the jobs right, and we're going to do that.

I have instructed my departmental officials to start that work — to begin assessing the roads, to start planning that work — so we can start improving the access to the community of Ross River.

There are other communities that will need some work as well. Pelly Crossing is another one that has been identified as an issue. I have asked my departmental officials to start looking at the north Klondike, which has been ignored for quite a number of years — certainly north of Pelly — and that type of thing. We are looking at all sorts of different areas in the territory that need improvement.

Question re: Opioid crisis

Ms. McLeod: Yesterday, we asked the government if they would support our motion that reads: "THAT this House urges the Minister of Education in collaboration with the Minister of Health and Social Services to instruct their departments to begin work to develop a health curriculum for use in schools that educates on the dangers of prescription opioid abuse for all students in the Yukon education system."

We haven't received a clear response to the government as to whether or not they will support it, and we hope that they will. Again, we think this issue is important enough that members on all sides of this House should come together and send a clear message.

I will extend the offer we provided the government yesterday. We're open to friendly amendments to the motion and, if there are wording changes necessary, obviously we are favourable to that.

Will the government support this motion so that our Legislature can send a clear message that we are working together to prevent the growing opioid crisis?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the honourable member for her question. I'm a bit confused as to how it wasn't clear yesterday, but I'm happy to reiterate very, very clearly that this work has already begun. There has been consultation between the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Social Services and other partners and other players in government to address the opioid crisis in a number of ways, not the least of which is through the schools, through community centres, and through community health centres and other partnerships with First Nations and others. This is a problem that will require a lot of energy and a lot of partners in order to bring our minds together to solve or address what is a very serious problem here in the territory.

To be clear, this work has already started and, of course, we are supportive of it because it was a top priority for us.

Ms. McLeod: All right; thank you. I guess what I heard there is that the government is not entertaining supporting the motion because —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. McLeod: If you let me finish — the minister believes that this work is already underway.

I'm wondering then if the minister can tell us how much the department is spending on the development of the health curriculum that educates on the dangers of opioid abuse. Has it already been developed? Is it finished? When will it be developed? Who is the curriculum provided to? Who was consulted, or who will be consulted, in its development?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The second part of that question was a little different from the first. Let me just back up to say that I didn't speak about the motion because it will be debated later today, I hope, in this House and everyone will have an opportunity to do that. I'm not, as the Minister of Education or the minister of anything else — appropriately — to speak about what will come out in a full debate of a motion here in the House.

I should also note, in answer to the question, that the specifics of an education curriculum to deal with this are not what I spoke about. I spoke about the departments cooperating with respect to an ability to address it. I appreciate that the motion later on will be about specific health curriculum in the schools, and I think we should debate it at that time, but certainly we'll have comments with respect to that and likely an amendment as well.

Question re: Montessori education

Mr. Cathers: The Yukon Montessori School is expanding in the territory and needs a new space to accommodate families looking for a more individualized education model. The previous government worked with Yukon Montessori to identify physical space and funding for the program. When we left office, the Department of Education was looking at the possibility of establishing a Montessori-style program at Hidden Valley Elementary School. However, since then, we've heard from parents that

they understand the Minister of Education has cancelled that work and parents are upset that they weren't consulted first and that there was no public consultation on this matter.

Can the minister confirm whether the Liberal government has cancelled plans to work with Yukon Montessori to develop a program at Hidden Valley Elementary School?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question describes a situation that is not entirely accurate. When I became the Minister of Education, I met, actually on my first day back to work on January 3, with the director of the board of parents with respect to the Montessori school. We had a very lengthy and fruitful discussion. I also examined what the situation was with their request to the former government, which was about classroom space. There was some discussion about that being at Hidden Valley School. We ultimately went forward with respect to the request that was brought to us, which was not about space at Hidden Valley School — it was about space downtown; it was about the cost of teachers; it was about bringing the Montessori School into the Department of Education proper.

As a result of the investigation done with respect to that request, a decision was made that, in fact, that would not be the best use of education funds. Particularly in light of the new curriculum that's coming, it would not be the best use of space — of which there isn't any at this time — in elementary schools in downtown Whitehorse, which is what the request was. Ultimately, the decision was very carefully considered and parents were advised of the ultimate decision, which was that we would not be expanding the Montessori model inside the Department of Education.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to hear the Minister of Education talking about how they advised parents of their decision, but this is a government that campaigned on a promise that Yukoners would be heard.

One of the options that the Montessori school was discussing with the previous government was actually a no-cost option to the Yukon government. I know one family who actually chose to purchase a home in the Hidden Valley catchment area, in part because they expected to see a Montessori program developed at Hidden Valley School. The idea of developing a Montessori-style program or having the Montessori school move some of its resources into Hidden Valley was a popular one with parents in my riding.

Can the minister at least provide some clarity to parents who have been left in the dark why exactly this Liberal government is not considering allowing the Montessori school to be housed in Hidden Valley and why she made that decision without consulting with the public first?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: At no time was a no-cost option presented to this government. I want to say that again: at no time was a cost-free option presented to this government by a Montessori school or by anyone else.

As a result, very lengthy consideration went into making this decision. I would have to guess at this point — I'm sorry about that — but I think over 40 parents wrote to me personally and each of those 40 parents got a copy of the letter that was written back to their school board and their executive

on the basis of why that decision was made and the details that went into that. I would be happy to discuss those details with the member opposite if that is of interest to him.

Hidden Valley School does not have the space that may have been considered in a past conversation — again, not a conversation that was brought to me — but in the past conversation about simply having space at Hidden Valley School. It just isn't an option any more. Hidden Valley School has done a number of things; in particular, an afterschool program and expanding their services to their families and their students that has resulted in that school being very well populated by students. There just simply is not the space with respect to that. But again, it was not an option — not even a question that was brought to me. It was certainly a separate proposal and a different, more updated proposal that I received.

Mr. Cathers: It's disturbing hearing the minister talking about informing parents. We know the minister didn't consult with parents properly before changing the school calendar and we've heard complaints from teachers who say that they weren't consulted either. The minister didn't consult with parents in my riding before deciding not to expand Montessori programming or the Montessori school to Hidden Valley Elementary School.

We heard the minister earlier today point to school councils for delays on the calendar and we heard complaints from councils who felt that in an earlier Question Period the minister threw them under the bus and blamed them for delays in the school calendar.

My question for the minister is: What does she have to say to Yukoners who made the mistake of believing the Liberals' election promise that they would actually be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Unfortunately, I don't think the Member for Lake Laberge is really listening to my answers. I was very clear with his colleague that I did not throw anyone under the bus, not the least of which would be school councils, which I very much respect. I'm not going to repeat that again. I have said it three times. I hope they will listen to that.

I should be also clear that there was no consultation with parents in his riding because the parents in the riding were not the people who were requesting the Montessori option. The Montessori option was being requested by the current Montessori executive and parent-teacher organization. They were the ones requesting it — not the parents in Lake Laberge or in any other riding.

There were some 21 students in the Montessori program when I first started having discussions about it in January 2017 and those 21 parents — some of them at least — were requesting that we consider bringing the Montessori option into the Department of Education and that decision was made and communicated widely.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 52

Clerk: Motion No. 52, standing in the name of Ms. Hanson.

Speaker: It is moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consider expanding the proposed amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* so that all workers covered by the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board benefit from presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder or injury (PTSD or PTSI) legislation.

Ms. Hanson: At the outset, I just want to reiterate the phrasing of this motion and to point out to the members present that the motion urges the government to consider expanding the proposed amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* so that all workers covered by the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board benefit from presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder or injury legislation.

I think it's important to make that point because, as we all know, this government has stated that it is developing amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* so that it will serve as presumptive PTSD legislation for first responders and that this will be tabled in the fall.

The NDP caucus believes that the announcement by the government of its intention to follow through on this commitment is laudable. The purpose of this motion is to encourage the government to take full advantage of the opportunity afforded it as it develops this legislation to make sure it is the best legislation possible to serve all Yukon workers who currently, or in the future, may face the very serious challenges associated with PTSD/PTSI as a result of their work.

Before we go further, let me explain briefly the concept of presumptive PTSD legislation, or any presumptive legislation. A legalistic definition of legislative presumption is that it — and I quote: "... creates an inference that a fact exists because of the known or proven existence of other facts." Essentially, it says that the adjudication process that you go through under the workers' compensation process can be simplified in much the same way as that of the result of a motion by my predecessor, Todd Hardy, in 2009, whereby amendments to the workers' compensation legislation came into effect in June 2011 to create a presumption that certain types of cancer in firefighters are occupational diseases, unless the contrary is proven.

While it is encouraging to see the government act to address PTSD with respect to first responders, there is no reason to limit this protection to first responders only. The Yukon NDP tabled PTSD-presumptive legislation in April 2015, and it also covered only first responders. First responders and workers' advocates welcomed the move, but

pointed out to us that there was a need to protect all workers, and that while some work situations and some workers are more likely to be exposed to traumatic events that can lead to PTSD, it can happen to all workers and it can happen in all workplaces.

The Liberal Party in the last election promised to introduce presumptive PTSD legislation similar to what we had proposed in 2015. Knowing the government is working on this bill, a similar one as was introduced in the last Legislative Assembly Sitting, we are bringing this motion and we hope the government will learn from our experience to bring a better bill this coming fall. Other jurisdictions have already taken measures to protect all workers. This motion asks only that the government consider — in capital letters — other examples of legislation that will protect all workers before finalizing work on PTSD-presumptive legislation and before tabling their bill.

If, for whatever reason, after doing the necessary consultation and research, they believe it's not the way to go, they can come back to this House and say they looked at it, considered it, and here is the evidence upon which they based the decision, including — although I highly doubt after a full review that would be what they would conclude — that it is neither a necessary nor fair approach. They could conclude that it's not the way to go. It's a very small ask, Mr. Speaker. One would hope that the government is already looking at best practices across the country before moving forward. We hope we can all agree on this.

I thought I would begin today by giving a quick overview of what PTSD and presumptive PTSD legislation is. I will then give a brief overview of what has been done elsewhere on this important issue. The definition of post-traumatic stress disorder has until very recently been firmly rooted in the sphere of psychiatric definitions. I am going to refer to an excerpt from a document that I am tabling now. It is the stakeholder consultation document that was produced by the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba when they amended their workers' compensation act to provide presumptive coverage for post-traumatic stress disorder. This will be circulated electronically as well as the hard copy. The question asked and the information that I will quote from this is on the second page of that document. It says — and I quote: "What is post-traumatic stress disorder?"

"There are many mental disorders that might be experienced by workers and that might be caused by various types of events. PTSD, however, is a specific type of psychological condition associated with specific types of events." This is where it gets all psychiatric on us: "The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (the 'DSM-5') is the standard classification of mental disorders used by mental health professionals in Canada and the United States. It is a compendium of psychiatric diagnoses produced by the American Psychiatric Association... It is considered the standard and definitive source of information about psychological conditions.

"The DSM-5 identifies the triggers to PTSD as exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence.

The exposure must result from one or more of the following scenarios, in which the individual: directly experiences the traumatic event; witnesses the traumatic event in person; learns that the traumatic event occurred to a close family member or close friend (with the actual or threatened death being either violent or accidental); or experiences first-hand repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event (not through media, pictures, television or movies).

“PTSD can arise from different sources, ranging from a single experience, such as an accident or a violent act, to a prolonged, ongoing exposure such as that caused by war or family violence. The symptoms of PTSD can vary among individuals but generally include: reliving memories of the event; recurring distressing dreams of the event; flashbacks; avoiding reminders; irritability and over-reaction to common stressors. PTSD is marked by ongoing symptoms to the point where the symptoms impair an individual's social interactions, capacity to work and other important areas of functioning. PTSD can arise very shortly after the triggering event or it can be delayed by days, months or even years.”

However, as I have just said, that is the DSM-5 definition, the psychiatric definition, with respect to a disorder. However, about five years ago, within the psychiatric community, there was a movement to change the name from a disorder to an injury, and it became more mainstream. It originated with a request — as I understand it — from an American military psychiatrist who felt that changing the name from PTSD to PTSI would reduce barriers to care.

I will just quote from the letter from the psychiatrist named Frank Ochberg to the American Psychiatric Association as they were considering in 2012 amendments to the DSM with respect to PTSD. He says: “To change PTSD to PTSI would mean we physicians believe that brain physiology has been injured by exposure to some external force, not that we are just anxious or depressed by tragic and traumatic reality.”

It goes on to say: “Prior to a trauma that caused PTSD, there was no PTSD, by definition. After the shattering experience, the alteration in memory function, with unwanted, uncontrollable episodes of re-experiencing, persists. It is not a weakness. It is really not, in its origin and manifestation, a disease. It came from something that happened, like a traumatic amputation.”

This is coming from a military psychiatrist: “No military surgeon diagnoses a Soldier or Marine whose foot has been taken off by a mine as suffering from ‘Missing Foot Disorder’. To those who live with the impact, PTSD is an injury — and a painful one at that.”

He then says: “Like the mine that takes off the service member's foot, the primary psychological injury usually is not what kills or disables the survivor, but the complications do. It's the cascading complications and consequences that do most harm.”

This doctor went on to say that: “We are past the point in medical science when gross tissue damage is necessary for a wound. Alteration of myocardial conduction due to electrical

shock, leaving no demonstrable bruise, is an injury with a grave consequence.”

Mr. Speaker, I know that both the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board and the Premier are aware of the ongoing work by Yukon's unions on issues related to PTSD and PTSI. Last fall, Yukon Employees Union had a two-day human rights panel on post-traumatic stress injury.

The panels were chaired by Jim Regimbal, the Dawson City fire chief and a passionate advocate of the need to recognize post-traumatic stress disorder in first responders and others. He was one of the people whom I talked with a lot during the period in 2014 leading into 2015 before we tabled our presumptive legislation amendments in the spring of 2015.

I have to say that I was only able to attend the first day. The comments and observations — workers from across the spectrum, not just first responders — reinforced my sense that, yes, presumptive legislation is needed for first responders but we must not ignore the realities that all workers potentially face situations of trauma significant enough to cause injury that may not be physically visible or quantifiable but, as the references I quoted above note, it is real.

One of the panelists, Nicole Bringsli, a psychologist, used the analogy of a water glass. A glass can only hold so much liquid. All it takes is one too many ordinary, inconsequential drops of water and the glass spills over. Like the water glass, we can witness and contain only so much pain and trauma before we reach our capacity to cope and, like the water glass, we risk spilling over.

Mr. Speaker, today we're becoming familiar with the idea that people who put themselves at risk, in harm's way, to help their fellow citizens, whether they are firefighters, ambulance paramedics or nurses, may be vulnerable to PTSD/PTSI. But it wasn't always that way.

In Yukon, we owe a lot to brave people like Michael Swainson, who shared his story publicly in 2009. I had the opportunity many times before he went off to university a year or two ago to fulfill his life dream of getting that education to follow on his experience that he described publicly — and that's why I'm choosing to read a couple of excerpts from a CBC interview that he did on November 2, 2009. He followed up on this interview with a lot of public advocacy work and public education work on the issues related to PTSD.

He said that the reason he did it is that people need to know more about just how bad things can get for front-line workers. I'll just quote here from this interview and I can make it available for members if they wish, or else it's online. He said he started working at the ambulance in Whitehorse in 1984, so he spent just over 20 years as an ambulance attendant and a primary care paramedic. He figured he went on about 5,000 ambulance calls and not all of them were serious. He thought out of 5,000, maybe between five and 10 percent were really, really serious emergencies. But one of the things he says that's curious — and I'm quoting here — about first responders is: What first responders are running into is what most people are usually running away from. It's danger, it's

fire, it's major accidents or whatever, and they are the guys running in there. He said that a lot of people have come and talked to him on the street and said, "How are you doing now, Michael?" He said that for probably the first 15 or 16 years, he said, "You know, it doesn't bother me. It didn't bother me." But then he said, "I sort of liken it to — when I started working at EMS, I put on this imaginary backpack and every time I went on a really bad call, somebody would put a rock in that backpack. After five years, I probably had 40 or 50 small rocks in there and, you know, I'm a big guy. I can carry around 50 rocks. After 20 years, and you have 200 rocks in there, it's not going to take too many more rocks before you're going to fall over and that's what happened to me."

During the Canada Winter Games year, unfortunately there was a teen killed in a snowmobile accident, and he said, "I remember going out there and I was driving the ambulance that day. I'm just so very thankful that I was driving and was in the back with the patient — and that day, we just happened to have two extra bodies in the car so there were three of us who went out on the call." This person had been hit skidooring. They had been hit by a vehicle on the highway. "You know what? Normally I would have been the first guy in like a dirty shirt doing my thing and when I got there, I wanted no part of that call. I mean, I did my job. I got the equipment. I couldn't even stand to look at that kid. You know, it was an awful thing." What made it worse for him was that this kid was 16, and he had two kids who were 15 and 16 — 17. "You know what? They like to snowmobile and that was the one thing that literally drove the nail into the coffin for me. That finished me off."

He said, "I thought it was burnout." People with PTSD, when they don't know what it is — he said you absolutely think you're losing your mind. He would have conversations with people and would start to ramble. He said, "I couldn't focus and I thought I was going crazy."

Mr. Swainson's story is sadly not unique. Through my work as an MLA, I have talked with, unfortunately, many other people — not just first responders, but people who work within our system in government and outside — who have experienced that trigger, that nail in the coffin.

It's unconscionable that, as a society, we expect those who literally risk all to save our lives to risk losing their own livelihood because of the injuries caused in the course of their work. That is why presumptive PTSD/PTSI legislation is so important. We can't overlook the fact that, as the Yukon Employees Union panel pointed out last fall, there are many other lines of work that may result in injury. Social workers face many heartbreaking situations in the line of their duty. Removing children from dangerous homes, denying parental access and leaving vulnerable children in foster situations can take a terrible toll.

Sheena Larose, a former child protective services worker from Ontario, recently wrote — and I quote: "Unless you are in the trenches, people don't understand that child protection work can be among the most intensive, heart-wrenching and volatile work one could ever encounter."

Mr. Speaker, I can speak to that from experience, having done that for a very limited time — only a couple of years. Social workers counsel child abuse victims and must bear witness for their frightened and confused young clients. When we talk about social workers' emotional health, we often say they have burned out. We don't consider post-traumatic stress injury or disorder as a likely outcome. Vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue — whatever the results, whatever we call it, the results can be life-altering and career-limiting.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, a couple of years ago, a Yukon social worker doing a master's degree wrote her master's thesis on compassion fatigue within Health and Social Services, within child welfare in this territory. It's a qualitative analysis and it's troubling.

Front-line workers in shelters for domestic violence victims face recurring trauma. Imagine the daily challenge of maintaining a healthy outlook when you're immersed in the pain of others. The convenience store clerk who is robbed and assaulted — it sounds to me like they fit the definition in the DSM.

Where does that leave us? We do know that Ontario and British Columbia have passed presumptive legislation for first responders. While this is a step in the right direction, as I have outlined, there are limits and downfalls to this approach. Ultimately, no matter how exhaustive the list of professions is, we must acknowledge that any workplace can expose a worker to a traumatic event that can lead to PTSD/PTSI.

Whether it's a postal worker who is first on-site of a violent car crash or a retail employee who is the victim of a violent theft, there is no reason why we would exclude them from presumptive post-traumatic stress/post-traumatic injury legislation if their injury happened at their workplace. The Yukon Federation of Labour, representing over 7,000 unionized workers in Yukon, supports the expansion of presumptive coverage, as does the Yukon Employees Union.

There is a fair and fairly simple solution to this. It is to look at the experience and the evidence from elsewhere in Canada, where new benchmarks for excellence have been established. In this case, the government can look to Manitoba, where presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder legislation has been in place since January 2016. In Manitoba, all workers covered by the Workers Compensation Board are subject to presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder legislation. This means that any worker who is exposed to traumatic events at work, regardless of their line of work, if that workplace is covered by workers' compensation, they will benefit from presumptive PTSD legislation.

Let me quote a couple of sections from the Manitoba Workers Compensation Board's analysis of this measure: "The post-traumatic stress disorder presumption is not limited to a specific occupation, recognizing that PTSD-triggering events can happen in any workplace." Again I'm quoting: "The intention of the presumption is to reduce stigma around mental illness and to make it simpler in some cases to establish a causal connection between post-traumatic stress disorder and a worker's employment."

To dispel some of the concerns around post-traumatic stress disorder presumption, I would like to outline a few of the simple FAQs regarding the Manitoba approach. Again, Mr. Speaker, I am quoting here from the document that I have circulated to members.

One question that comes up is: “Am I covered by the WCB if I have PTSD or another psychological injury?” The answer is: Work-related, psychological injuries, including PTSD, have always been and continue to be covered by the WCB, and that is the truth in the Yukon as well. The challenge we face is that the onus is on the worker and it can take months, if not years, for that proof to be brought to bear.

What is the PTSD presumption? In Manitoba, the answer is that, as of January 1, 2016, if a worker in Manitoba is exposed to certain types of traumatic events and is diagnosed with PTSD, the WCB can presume the PTSD is caused by the worker’s employment, unless the contrary is proven. This is called presumptive coverage.

WCB will continue to adjudicate claims involving PTSD in the same manner as other psychological injuries. The presumption only applies to certain types of cases involving PTSD and does not apply to other work-related psychological injuries. If there is evidence that the PTSD was caused by something unrelated to the worker’s job, the presumption may be rebutted — so it’s not a catch-all for everything, Mr. Speaker. This is not opening the floodgates wide. It never is when we’re talking about workers’ compensation.

The question is: Do I have to work in a certain occupation to be covered by the PTSD presumption? In Manitoba — and this is what we would urge the Government of Yukon to consider — PTSD presumptive coverage applies to all workers covered by workers’ compensation in Manitoba, and recognizes that PTSD-triggering events can happen in any workplace.

Some people — and I have seen this in correspondence with respect to circumstances of individuals in the Yukon — ask: What if I suffered a psychological injury many years ago? Am I still covered? The answer in Manitoba is that the legislation is tied to a current diagnosis of PTSD. Therefore, if you are diagnosed with PTSD after January 1, 2016, the presumption may apply. That would help a lot of people here — not a lot. With the risk of falling into that trap of “a lot” — “a lot” means, of the six or seven cases a year that the WCB gets and they approve maybe three or four, those other three might have been approved — maybe — who knows.

Does PTSD presumptive coverage guarantee that my WCB claim will be accepted? The answer: The WCB will investigate each claim individually to determine if it is acceptable under the presumption or other sections of the *Workers’ Compensation Act* and policies. The presumptive coverage does not guarantee that your WCB claim will be accepted. Does the PTSD presumption give workers special benefits? The PTSD presumption relates to the cause of the injury. It has no impact on benefit levels.

What types of treatment does the WCB cover? This is similar to what we will see here in the Yukon. These are all fairly standard in terms of workers’ compensation. Some of

the costs directly related to your psychological workplace injury that may be covered include: counselling services, medication including prescriptions, and other health care costs related to your workplace injury.

In conclusion, the Manitoba example tells us that it is possible to tackle this issue for all workers. There is no reason for half-measures. We know that lots of work goes into updating legislation. We have the opportunity as legislators to do the right thing at the right time, and we don’t need to go halfway. Unfortunately, Ontario appears to have veered in that way. They just recently passed their presumptive legislation — within the last week or so — so that police officers, firefighters, paramedics and other first responders are covered, but it doesn’t benefit nurses. That was an exclusion that drew sharp criticism from the Ontario Nurses’ Association. The nurses reported — and I quote: to be shocked and disappointed. They have many PTSD cases under appeal now that have taken a decade. Under what circumstances do we think it’s fair that a nurse who has worked in the ER department dealing with the same kind of trauma that a first responder deals with should have to wait a decade to get the proper coverage and services? The purpose of workers’ compensation, we need to remind ourselves, is to assist the worker to get back to work. We leave them hanging.

This motion is not even asking the government for a commitment to do it — to follow the example. All we are asking for is a commitment to consider it. If the government, in good faith, considers this — looks at the Manitoba example and determines that it’s not a good idea, then so be it. It will of course fall to them to explain why it shouldn’t apply to all workers, but at the very least, they need to look at options beyond first responders — and only first responders — before bringing their bill forward. There is enough time to do it before the Fall Sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

It is an opportunity for the government to show that it is actually listening and willing to cooperate and is open to feedback from other parties and from Yukoners. We won’t agree on everything, but I think this is something that could make a big difference in many peoples’ lives and we can work together to make sure that the bill this government brings forward in the fall is the best that it can be.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Leader of the NDP for bringing this motion forward today. I can say right at the start that we will be supporting the motion.

The action called for in the motion is in fact something we, as a government, are already doing. We also want to thank Dawson City Fire Chief Jim Regimbal for the advocacy on behalf of first responders in the recent years in regard to post-traumatic stress disorder. Actually, soon after being sworn in as Minister responsible for the Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board, I attended that session for one of the days and listened to first responders and others from the union speak about the passion that they have for this. At the time, I anticipated that this would be one of the areas in my mandate letter, which is exactly what I received.

During the 2016 election campaign, we did make this a commitment to amend the *Workers' Compensation Act* to include presumptive provisions for PTSD in first responders.

I hear your comments in terms of the compassionate and compelling description of workers who are first responders. I consider myself a first responder. I have been on the front line for a really long time in First Nation communities. I too have been on the front line in dealing with child welfare matters that do cause you to have a lot of fatigue, particularly around your ability to have compassion. I'm so blessed that I have been able to hold on to my ability to have compassion and so I am one of the lucky ones — I know that. I have been on the front line for a long time and I have a lot of friends who actually suffer from PTSD — people who I have come to know during my work for many years within the justice, child welfare, and mental health fields, so I recognize and am very committed to assisting in whatever way I can as the minister responsible. I thank the Premier for tasking me with this important work on behalf of all Yukoners.

At the time, we said we recognized the risks first responders face in providing services to Yukoners. One concrete way to do that is to address the serious health care consequences those workers suffer from. We also committed that a Liberal government would work with the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to develop prevention measures to reduce the incidence of PTSD in all Yukon workplaces.

We agreed that more is needed to be done to raise awareness of the issue itself. We also agreed there needed to be more support for critical incident stress management, which helps address post-traumatic stress before it manifests into a disorder.

The member opposite talked about the involvement and a description of interactions with Michael Swainson. I too have had many discussions with him. During my time as director of justice for Kwanlin Dün First Nation, we had developed a crisis prevention model that looked at the impact of post-traumatic stress and the trauma we were faced with on a day-to-day basis, regardless of what job you were in. You could be somebody working in finance and called into a community to deal with an issue that arises from a traumatic incident in a community.

I heard first-hand, and that's where I really began to fully understand the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder on first responders and on communities. The experience and the trauma loads that we have within our communities are not limited to people who are working. There are so many others. There are volunteers; there are many others who experience trauma and are oftentimes first on the scene or working with family members to respond to traumatic situations in communities.

PTSD, both cumulative and traumatic, is currently covered under the *Workers' Compensation Act*; however, workers must prove their condition is work-related. The member opposite talked about the presumptive legislation for Manitoba, which came into effect January 1, 2016, and was well-noted in her opening comments.

PTSD is very prevalent among first responders and, without treatment and intervention, it can result in significant mental health and work disability issues for these workers.

Our government is now working with the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and the Department of Health and Social Services on solutions and implementation of our election commitments. The *Workers' Compensation Act* will be amended to include presumptive coverage for post-traumatic stress disorder for first responders in the fall legislative session. This is a first step forward in terms of opening up this legislation. A presumption replaces the need to decide a claim on the balance of probabilities for select workers and presumes injury arose because of the work. While PTSD presumption for first responders is a good first step in recognizing the effects of psychological injury, we also have to recognize that preventing these injuries is equally important.

In 2008, the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board enacted policy EN-09: Adjudicating Psychological Disorders to manage adjudication of psychological injuries, including PTSD. A psychological injury may be considered work-related if it is caused by one sudden unexpected traumatic event or a series of events that happens in the workplace. Based on the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, employers with 20 employees or more are required to maintain occupational health and safety programs and have programs in place to assist workers exposed to traumatic events to prevent potential psychological injuries.

Following disturbing incidents, employers should encourage employees to use the assistance in place and talk to trauma teams to prevent potential psychological injuries. Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board can assist with arranging debriefing teams. To accept a claim — the PTSD on presumption — the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board will still require a diagnosis on PTSD from a qualified mental health care provider. The presumption can be reviewed, meaning if evidence is presented that disproves that the cause of PTSD was the work, the claim would not be accepted.

The Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board has hired legal counsel to do a jurisdictional scan to research presumptive provisions for PTSD and preventive measures in place in occupational health and safety laws across the country. This summer, we will consult stakeholders on proposed amendments to our current legislation. One aspect of that consultation will be around the costs associated with potential changes.

Mr. Speaker, "first responder" is a broad term we are using as a first step in the consultative process to identify the scope of presumptive coverage. A definition of "first responder" will be established as we consult with the public and draft legislative changes to the Yukon *Workers' Compensation Act*.

All Yukon workers covered by the Yukon *Workers' Compensation Act* are eligible for mental health injury coverage, including those who have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder. Some Yukon workers who may be

considered first responders, such as RCMP officers, receive workers' compensation coverage federally.

The definition of "first responder" varies across the country. Let me outline some examples of what worker groups are defined as first responders in other jurisdictions. Alberta: emergency medical technicians, firefighters and police officers; Ontario: firefighters, fire investigators, fire chiefs, police, paramedics, emergency medical attendants, ambulance service managers, correctional officers, youth service workers, including managers, dispatch workers, workers who provide direct health care services in adult institutional corrections and secure youth justice facilities and are members of emergency response teams; and New Brunswick: emergency response workers are defined as firefighters, paramedics and police officers.

Again, a definition is part of the work we are doing right now on this issue. Post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, is a severe type of mental condition that can develop after someone is exposed either directly or indirectly to extremely disturbing events.

PTSD cannot be formally diagnosed until 30 days after the event was experienced. Given the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, there is no way to expedite the diagnosis. The long-term effects of mental health — and this is where some of the preventive measures come in — so that if you are able to work with a team to talk through or work through traumatic experience, the likelihood of that becoming a disorder is reduced.

The Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board responds immediately to all claims involving risk to a worker's mental health with prevention, support and care. Some groups prefer the term "post-traumatic stress injury" to "post-traumatic stress disorder", and I recognize the member opposite gave a very good definition of why that is. They feel this change in language would remove the negative and stigma effects that come from the origin of "disorder". They feel the word "injury" would work better in an employment context, as denoted as an external source, and would promote healing.

We use the term "disorder" instead of "injury", not to cast judgment on the person suffering, but because it's a clinical term and we must assess mental health injuries using established medical standards. Post-traumatic stress disorder is one of a number of mental health injuries. PTSD may be either acute, the result of one event, or cumulative, the result of several events over a brief or long period of time. It could also be a vicarious, indirect exposure to a traumatic event through first-hand account or a narrative of that event.

PTSD must be diagnosed by a psychiatrist or registered psychologist using the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Medical Disorders* which is the DSM-5. This manual is published by the American Psychiatric Association and is the standard for the classification of mental disorders used by mental health professions across Canada, including the Yukon and the United States.

Mental health claims, including PTSD claims, are increasing. There have been eight PTSD claims filed in the

last three years alone, exceeding the claim volume for this type of injury for the entire period of 1992 to 2013.

I know my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, will be speaking to the motion as well, but I do want to touch on the topic of mental health in general. I know that my colleague will go more in-depth in this area. Protecting the mental health of Yukoners in the workplace and caring for those who have suffered injury are priority issues for this government. Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board has seen a steady increase in mental health claims for the past few years. Managing these types of claims requires significant human and financial resources. Mental health concerns extend beyond the workplace and require the understanding and support of our entire community.

There is a growth in mental health awareness, which presents an opportunity to combat the associated stigma. I think we've seen so many great campaigns over the years that help people to come forward and speak about their experience with mental health and that's a very, very good first step to being able to address the issues.

At the memorial — the Day of Mourning — I had some first responders come and talk to me about their personal experience and just express to me how important this legislation is to them and that it essentially could save lives rather than having people resort to self-medicating. That's something we know is happening among first responders, so there are so many difficult circumstances that people are managing, sometimes on their own.

To put it into context, here are some of the national statistics to consider. In any given week, half a million Canadians are unable to work because of mental health issues or injuries. Thirty percent of long- and short-term disability claims are attributed to mental health problems and illnesses. The annual cost of mental health problems to the economy is over \$50 billion. Mental health compensation claims are on the rise across the country, including the Yukon.

I want to thank the member opposite again for bringing the motion forward to debate today. It highlights an important problem, one that our government is absolutely addressing. As I said earlier, we are working with the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and will be consulting with stakeholders this summer. Again, we will be supporting this motion.

Mr. Cathers: I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition caucus. We will be supporting this motion. We considered the possibility of proposing an amendment but decided, in the interest of the House's time, we would simply add some additional suggestions for the government to consider. We will support the motion, as worded.

We agree this is an area that is worth looking at. The key point we want to add to the debate — and considered adding to the motion — is the fact that there needs to be a focus on critical incident stress management. While there are cases where people develop post-traumatic stress disorder or an injury, in our view, there really should be every effort made to avoid getting to that stage. While in some cases, someone who

is a first responder or another citizen who sees an incident may have PTSD following a single incident, in most cases, according to the information we have, it is typically the result of cumulative stress after multiple incidents, just as in the case of the former paramedic who the Leader of the Third Party was mentioning in her comments.

There are a number of things that can be done to try to help people from getting to the stage where they have PTSD, and that includes peer support, access to counselling and better efforts at identifying when someone is exhibiting signs that they are feeling the burden of the work and of the very difficult incidents and situations they have had to see, deal with and help people in the context of.

With that addition, we would again encourage the government to not just focus on the legislation, but to work with staff of departments that deal with first responders to reach out to those first responders and others who are in the health care field who may see these types of very difficult incidents that can be traumatic for people.

We would again just urge the government to reach out to all of the front-line responders and health professionals who deal with people in times of crisis to see what more could be done to improve the critical incident stress management that is in place today. We believe it has come a long way from what it used to be, but that further improvements can be made through ensuring that the network of peer support and counselling is there for the people mentioned in debate with the Premier on the budget yesterday. There is a long list of service personnel who may need this type of support and counselling, and that includes everyone from the RCMP to EMS to volunteer firefighters to highways crews who may be the first on the scene.

It can include the staff at the coroner's office and community coroners; it can include victim services workers, victim assistance volunteers. I know that I am missing some from the list, but just to give an example — the long list of people, both paid and volunteer across the territory who may be in need of peer counselling, access to mental health support and more support after they have dealt with a difficult situation or a series of difficult and unpleasant situations that can weigh on the mind of anyone.

With that, I will wrap up my remarks and just encourage the government to talk to the staff of the key departments in this and look at how to best reach out to front-line service personnel and volunteers to ensure that we are doing the very best that we can as a territory in supporting them in dealing with post-incident situations.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the members for their comments and I will follow up in a moment on the Member for Lake Laberge about reaching out to our first responders. I think that's an excellent point.

I would like to thank the Leader of the Third Party for her motion, which is encouraging us to consider expanding the proposed amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* so that all workers covered by the Yukon Workers'

Compensation Health and Safety Board benefit from presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder legislation.

I happen to be married to a nurse and I happen to have had the experience of being with my lovely wife on several occasions when she has been called upon to act in a good Samaritan fashion in dealing with injuries that we had come across. They ranged from a nasty gash in a leg to a ruptured spleen from a vehicle accident to a death in a motor vehicle accident. I know that there is stress in those situations, and I know that when people are injured, they themselves sometimes are struggling to cope and are sometimes disoriented, and sometimes, even though people are working to help them, they're not always aware that this is what's going on and it can be very stressful. I remember conversations with my wife and Michael Swainson about his analogy of the backpack.

We appreciate the comments that are being brought forward and I'm happy that my colleague, the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, is looking to expand the scope so that not only is it presumptive, but that we look at other workers, including expanding the definition of what it is to be a first responder.

Let me speak for a moment, as the Minister of Community Services, about our first responders. They are critically important to our community. They are our friends, our neighbours and our family, and they are there for us when we need them the most, so we need to ensure that we are there for them when they need us. We know that they are prone to stress and trauma because of the work that they do and because of the stoic culture that sometimes still exists in certain fields.

I appreciate that the motion wants to go beyond first responders, and I acknowledge that we should consider all workers covered under the Yukon *Workers' Compensation Act*. I am also concerned about first responders and wish to ensure that they have the support that they need.

Post-traumatic stress is prevalent on front-line health care workers, paramedics and firefighters. These occupations are exposed to stressful, potentially traumatic situations and incidents. We have many first responders in Community Services so it is a priority for me to ensure that they are safe and able to carry out their work and, in fact, are proud of the work that they do. I want them to be proud of the work that they do. It is important to ensure that first responders, as well as other staff and colleagues, have early supports so that stresses don't become post-traumatic stress disorder.

This is to follow on the comments of the member opposite. I note that all speakers have talked about critical incident stress management on both sides of this House, and I will as well.

I am supportive of that. Community Services works with other departments such as the Public Service Commission and the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to support the well-being, health and safety of first responders. Community Services emphasizes supportive workplace practices and professional services to manage stress reactions. These practices identify those in need of support and provide

timely assistance to deal with workplace mental injuries such as critical incident stress and post-traumatic stress. I believe we should focus on prevention and early critical incident stress management for all, including first responders. A proactive, timely approach that mitigates post-traumatic stress by addressing its early signs and symptoms in the workplace will make us all healthier and keep us all safer.

This government is committed to supporting our public servants — both our staff and our volunteers — to enable them to provide quality of life for Yukoners through their daily work. Keeping our front-line responders safe and well is a first step in building healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I too appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion. I am going to read the motion because I think that it is very important that we consider the language that we use within the motion. I like the language that was just currently presented around preventive care and the measures that we have in place to address early intervention.

The motion reads: “THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consider expanding the proposed amendments to the *Workers’ Compensation Act* so that all workers covered by Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board benefit from presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder or injury (PTSD or PTSI) legislation.” The reason I read that is because — I see the member opposite finds humour in that. But what I want to say is that it is very, very important that we look at all of our society. Post-traumatic stress disorder doesn’t just impact first responders, as expressed. It affects everyone.

We heard last week during the Mental Health Week that members of our community suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder from terrible trauma that they have experienced from sexual violence and physical violence in our communities. There are considerations that we have to take under advisement as we look at this particular motion and we look at preventive measures as we move forward.

I cannot express how important it is to recognize the mental health of our first responders and the importance of dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. Now, why am I feeling so passionate about this? I know first-hand the horrifying experiences that meet a paramedic or a police officer arriving at the scene. Why? Because I was a paramedic. For many years, I volunteered and came upon incidents on our highways where we’ve had death. We had significant situations happen. As a young police officer, I experienced first-hand incidents where I had to deal with families of trauma victims of incidents that happened within our society.

Dealing with life-and-death situations is not something we take lightly. I don’t take it lightly as Minister of Health and Social Services. The impact of many of those memories is still with me today, having dealt with very traumatic situations. It has affected all of us in some way and in some shape where we’ve had an opportunity or we have been impacted — friends, family, community members. We saw

that last week as we walked in the community with members of our society who suffer from mental illness and challenges. Post-traumatic stress disorder finds itself in that group as well.

Things that you see colour your life. It colours what you see every day — your thoughts, your sleep. It changes the way that you think about things. It drives who you are as a person later on in your life. Perhaps some people don’t have the support they require at the time that they need it most. Later on in life, we have opportunities to try to put some programs and services in place to address that. Fortunately, as a Liberal government, we have that opportunity. We have just that opportunity to listen to our communities, to listen to the paramedics and to listen to the members of our community who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder that isn’t associated with the first responder kind of employment or volunteer job.

Mental illness affects all of our citizens. It’s important to this government. It speaks to our desire to create healthy, happy and vibrant communities. Mental wellness of all of our citizens is important, and it’s important that we have a 10-year mental wellness strategy. It has seen its first year, but there is a lot of work to be done in that strategy — prevention, services to Yukoners, critical incidents, stress management and looking at reduction strategies. What can we do through our mental wellness strategy for all Yukoners, for all members of our society so that we take a people-centred approach to wellness to help Yukoners thrive?

Throughout the past year — the last six months, since being elected — we have worked with our partners, First Nation governments and community groups, to build on the concept of mental wellness for all citizens of Yukon. When we think about mental wellness, we think about everything we need to do to create wellness. Recognizing and talking about things that make us ill is an important first step. As a volunteer ambulance attendant and a paramedic, not everyone will step up to the plate and say, “classify me as that person”. Why? Because there is a stigma attached to that. We know that and we heard that loud and clear last week, and we continue to hear that.

What can we do to break down the stigma associated with post-traumatic stress disorder and mental illness? Like many other mental challenges, post-traumatic stress disorder is treatable. We need to make people aware, create awareness within our society and within our government, perhaps looking at expanding the scope of care for our health providers, care providers and families. As family members and community members, we need to be aware, identify and ensure that we have the services readily available. Where do we go? What do we do? Who do we contact? How do we educate and eliminate the stigma associated with PTSD? Why? I know, because I experienced it first-hand. I know what is needed. Yes, it makes me emotional. I know what is needed. All of us, in some way — we just put forward a tribute earlier about palliative care and end-of-life care. That leads to high-tension emotions about what we do to provide supports for members of our society, for family members who experience death in some way or end-of-life care. Those are

traumatic events in our lives that address or trigger some high-priority points we need to tie into our mental wellness strategy.

At first blush of all of this, we look at putting some expanded scopes in and phasing in integrated mental health, child and therapeutic services, addictions services, coordinating collaborative care and responsive care, timely care, and delivering on an expanded scope of services at home, in the communities where people live. It's a first step, and we have a lot of work to do to implement the strategy that's before us.

We need to ensure that treatment is provided in a timely fashion so that, eventually, the person experiencing PTSD is healthy and recovered. We don't have those supports in rural Yukon. We need to look at the strategy to ensure that the supports are delivered and are available to members of our rural Yukon.

Symptoms, as was expressed by my colleagues, include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts of events. Is PTSD an anxiety disorder? How do you cope? What can we do to support our clients — our citizens of Yukon? It is a mental illness after all. We have a strategy that we have to implement and, as a government, it's our obligation — all of us in our House — to participate in that process and give good guidance and ensure that we are involved and give the necessary feedback and participate in the process.

I just want to acknowledge that, as minister, I take this very seriously and I will do my part to ensure that we have a strategy — a mental wellness implementation and collaborative strategy — that addresses some of the preventive measures and ensure that we have the supports in our rural Yukon so that the volunteers in rural Yukon have direct access as well to supports that they need.

Ms. White: I thank the House for the comments because this is a really important day. I think it's also important to know that my colleague here really laid it out initially. When we worked hard on this legislation first, we made a mistake. We're telling you right now we made a mistake. We only listed first responders. It's important not to get lost in that language because when you say "first responders", we lose too many people on the side. We made a mistake when we tabled this and that is why we're coming back with this motion and we're asking you to consider opening it up, because if you remove the language of "first responders" in the presumptive legislation and you insert the word "workers", it means that we are going to make sure that everyone has access to this. That is why we're here because we made a mistake and we're trying to fix that right now.

I have a great friend in the gallery right now — this is my friend Steve Hahn, and he's sitting here right now because this is a really big deal for him. In his experience — under that classification of "first responder", he would not be classified. He is here because he needs to see that we understand this and he has actually written you guys individually. He has written you and I'm going to read that, but I want you to know that

my friend Steve is here and I am grateful for him. He's sitting through this. I tried really hard to get through your letter, but I'm just going to take a second.

I think when we talk about expanding it to workers, I am a perfect example of different situations. My friend Jean-Francois, in 2006, was killed when doing mining staking. The people he worked with — who were in the helicopter — who were the first people on-site would not be considered first responders.

When my friend Paul was killed at a mine site when a vehicle backed over him, the friends and colleagues who he had who responded would not have been considered first responders — and the list goes on.

If you were robbed at gunpoint, if you were robbed at knifepoint, if you were assaulted in the terms of your job, does that person become any less valuable to us than first responders? That is the conversation. We're talking about workers and workers as a whole.

I think this might be the first time that this has ever happened — what I'm going to do right now — but I have a copy of the letter and we made it available. I think everyone will have an electronic copy. Steve really wanted to make sure that you heard the personal account of what we're trying to avoid.

This might take a little bit.

It says, "Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker" — in this case, Mr. Chair — "My name is Steve Hahn and I am a survivor of occupationally acquired PTSD. As a board certified flight nurse and paramedic who worked on the critical care medevac team at Yukon EMS from 2002-2011, I developed PTSD as a result of exposure to Yukon's citizens and visitors having the very worst days of their lives. My path to recovery was the hardest challenge I have ever had to face, with loss of a home, savings and possessions along the way. From time of going off work until I was diagnosed and eligible to receive benefits two years later ... I was brought to the brink of suicide, financial and mental health failure.

"On September 5, 2011, I went to work a medevac day shift, tired, broken and emotionally exhausted. I had not slept in days and my hands shook uncontrollably from fear. Drenched in sweat, I did not know what was happening to me and felt I could not get out of my truck. I was suicidal and mission in-effective. I called in sick and went straight home to hide from the world. Friends called on me and a fellow paramedic texted me that I should call a crisis line. I was taken to hospital and admitted for my safety. This certainly saved my life that day.

"The call the night before was to the RCMP cells where a young man, suffering an acute psychotic break, was shackled, hobbled and put in cells. I was able to talk with him, get him to volunteer to go to hospital and take some anti-psychotic medications. As I put him on the stretcher, a well-meaning but ill-informed RCMP read him the riot act and caused him to go into a rage. I then had to aggressively sedate him and secure him to the stretcher. This left me emotionally triggered and having flashbacks all night. While working solo medical crew medevac flights in Nunavut, I had been confronted with these

types of clients on my aircraft and had to treat patients while one of the pilots came back to hold the patients down. For me, this was the straw that broke the camel's back. Children that I cared for who needed pediatric intensive care teams, trauma patients who bled out in front of my eyes, pregnant mothers whose babies were footling breech births, that I had to hold inside them until I could get to hospital, a 3 hr flight away. Ladies and gentlemen, these cases never leave your mind and will haunt you every day.

"This pivotal event began a two-year journey into the depths of my soul and the brink of ending my life. The result of a bad call five years previous that left unanswered questions, guilt and feelings of failure. I did not come to realize I had PTSD until 5 months later when a Psychiatric Nurse postulated that I might have operational stress injury secondary to my time in emergency services. Due to constant prodding of friends who had been diagnosed before me, I spent \$6,000 dollars of my own money to go to California to better understand if that is what was wrong with me. I was able to sit in the room with 14 first responders from different backgrounds who had the same symptoms and struggles I had. It was like a light went on in my head. When I came home, knowing that I had this condition, nobody would listen to me or undertake a proper diagnostic process. In one case, an assessment with a psychiatric specialist in Vancouver was cancelled, due to the recommendations by a social worker that I did not have enough exposure to trauma to warrant such a waste of money. Although my employer graciously paid for me to go to Ontario to attend an eight-week post-traumatic stress recovery program, I had to write my own care plan, advocate for myself and in one case link several specialists and case workers together to present evidence on my behalf.

"When I returned home, there was no plan. My primary care physician retired and I was adrift. Realize that flight nursing was my life. I was now unable to continue and it seemed that there was no hope. I still did not have a firm diagnosis and it seemed like I was falling through the cracks. Thanks to some excellent practitioners at community mental health who were concerned about my health status, I was able to have a chance to visit with a psychiatrist who specialized in PTSD. He put me on the right medications, set up lab work to verify issues secondary to PTSD and set me on the right trajectory. Moreover, I finally had a diagnosis. Without this diagnosis, my claim would have gone nowhere. In September 2013, I put in my claim and it was finally accepted after a battery of assessments in November 2013. Because of the delay in diagnosis and the legislation as it is written — \$85,000 it took me to get back healthy enough to work and I will not be reimbursed for it.

"Some of you may be thinking right now that this is what he signed up for or it comes with the job, suck it up. I had been working in critical care in pre-hospital practice since 1988, working in some of the most austere and difficult situations, providing care to the sickest and most vulnerable out there. I was an army medical technician, wilderness EMT, registered nurse, and primary care paramedic who was an expert in the field. I excelled at anything medical I tried. I was

jump qualified, short-haul and long-line rated and taught many of the classes in certifications I attained. However, I was never educated in the toll it would take and how to be emotionally resilient in the face of tragedy. Plainly, if you think that I was weak and lacked the intestinal fortitude, please understand that I was the most likely part of the team who cared for the aunt, father, child, or even you when you needed it most. I went to the call when I was tired, hungry, it was snowing and it was uncomfortable. PTSD is an occupational hazard in emergency first response and the hazards need better mitigation and care for those affected.

"The reason I came through this was due to my mental toughness, physical resilience and a core group of folks who never left my side. My care and recovery was both directed, orchestrated and financed to a large extent by me. Instead of it being easy, the road was blocked by ignorance, apathy and prejudice. Understand me when I write that I am unique and not the norm. There are many responders who have become ill with PTSD, who become frustrated with the lack of care and assistance and simply faded away.

"Creating comprehensive presumptive legislation that assists firefighters, paramedics, flight nurses, community nurses, enforcement officers, social workers and corrections personnel is something that is truly needed in Yukon. It will not be used as a crutch, but rather as a way to limit delays in treatment and aid in stopping the progression of the condition. I can honestly say that being sick with PTSD is debilitating and dangerous. What is needed is a plug-and-play process that speeds folks through the process without judgment or prejudice. I agree, we should also focus on prevention and early recognition, but when folks become ill, they need care that is timely and accessible. We need to be a leader in the north and not the hold-out jurisdiction that does not want to face this real issue. I know for a fact, ladies and gentlemen, that there are many responders in this territory suffering in silence. I am scared that we will have a responder commit suicide because of the lack of an adequate process to get them the help they deserve. This does not sit well with me. As I see brothers and sisters in other jurisdictions turn to suicide out of desperation and lack of efficient access to the financial, health and social support that they need during the acute phase of their illness. BC and Ontario have done it, now let's get behind our responders and show them that we will care for them here.

"In closing, my motivation for seeing this legislation through is so that not another responder will be told by the supervisory team: 'We knew that you had PTSD all along, we just thought you knew how to take care of it if it became more serious!', like I was. This is not a crutch or a way so individuals can be lazy. Recovery from PTSD is possible, but it takes financial resources, work on the part of the individual and a clearly articulated process to get the person healthy and ready to return to duty. Thank you. Steve Hahn RN, CFRN, CEN, WEMT-1, PCP, QL4 Med A, (ret)".

Thank you, Mr. Hahn.

Mr. Chair, this is one example. At the time, as a flight nurse, Mr. Hahn would not be considered a first responder —

nor were my friends at the mine site or my friends who were on the staking line or the attendant at the 24-hour gas station that gets robbed. What we are asking for is that the government, which has identified that this is important — that we don't want any more situations like what happened to my friend Steve to happen to other people. It needs to be expanded, because if you have PTSD as the clerk at the gas station, you still have to justify, you still have to be able to explain, you still have to be able to go through the entire process to say, "I was injured because of my job." What we are asking here today is that we take away that barrier and we say that, if you are suffering from post-traumatic stress injury, we will not make you go through that process. We will get you the help that you need in a timely fashion so you don't get pushed to the brink. We are happy to hear that all sides are supporting this, but the real work lies with government. You have the ability, when you open up that legislation this fall, to, instead of giving a definition of "first responder", remove that by just adding the words "all workers". That is what we really hope for.

I thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank my colleagues in the House. I especially thank Steve, who was brave enough to write that out and, more importantly, that he wrote it out to you because he wanted you to hear about his experience. Let's learn because he is here to tell us. Let's not put anyone through this, no matter what their job is. First responder, liquor store clerk, postal worker — all workers deserve this kind of support from government.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Hahn, for your letter. I am happy to discuss the motion before us today that was brought forward by the Leader of the Third Party, and I thank her for bringing the issue forward. I thank her because the more we talk about occupational health and safety, occupational disease and mental health — the better. It is better for workers, better for business and business owners, better for our communities and better for our territory.

Let me be clear. We are talking about saving lives, about preventing injuries and trauma — the limbs, the lives, the mental health of our sons and daughters, our sisters and brothers, our wives and husbands, our friends and our neighbours — people in our community we pass every day in the grocery store or while we are attending a show at the Arts Centre or, in Mr. Hahn's case, at the workers' memorial — real people. Make no mistake: the more we talk about this, the better. We should talk about it. We must act on what we know. This is our shared responsibility.

Last week, while I was at a meeting with my staff, I looked out over the parking lot and saw a pair of fellows on the roof — a three-storey roof. Neither of them was wearing fall arrests. In fact, one of the fellows was hanging on to the other guy's belt as he leaned over the roof line to secure, of all things, a plastic owl to the roof.

I called my former colleagues at Workers' Compensation and they responded immediately and spoke to the fellows. They were not workers. They were just regular people on the street. They were not on the job, but last afternoon they

learned a little bit about safety. You shouldn't be hanging off a roof holding on to a guy's belt. That's not safe. It could have been tragic. We also learned that safety is all of our business. Hopefully they take that information to heart the next time they are out on a roof with a plastic owl.

We have a responsibility to act when we see behaviour that is not safe and to try to prevent injuries before they occur. We share this responsibility, so I welcome this motion. It is about progress. It is about understanding. It is about compassion. It is about caring for our family, friends, neighbours and those in the community who are grappling with a mental illness.

I thank the member of the Third Party for bringing this forward. This discussion benefits us all. The Leader of the Third Party has spoken with compassion about the people she has met and has represented who are struggling with the triggers of mental trauma. It is terrible.

I too am aware of the perils of post-traumatic stress disorder through my work with the compensation board and also in my personal life. Both my brothers have trained as first responders. One of my brothers is a first responder today, serving his community. I have glimpsed — I could never know, but I have gleaned some of the effects when he has come home from a tough call to a family barbecue, to his young sons and his nephews.

I have a friend who was in the Balkan conflict. I have glimpsed the mental trauma he carries from that war zone. He hides it well because, like many people who have experienced such things, he's stoic. But I know my friend. I grew up with him and I caught a glimpse of that trauma that he now carries, so, Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that's close to me personally.

I'm not alone. We have heard the stories this afternoon from the members opposite. They are compelling and absolutely terrible, and I'm sure we're all aware of the people in our lives — people who are first responders or soldiers, people who have been exposed to traumatic events, people who have been exposed to terrible things.

The point is that we're talking about this this afternoon, and that's very, very important. We're coming to a greater understanding about this issue in this Legislative Assembly. This is a complicated issue.

Trauma is not limited to first responders, as we learned this afternoon. In housing, front-line staffers checking on tenants can see terrible things — traumatic things. It is not a profession you think about, but there you have it — it happens. My own mother was a bank teller in Kanata, Ontario. One day, a desperate fellow — a fellow who had no cash and had been denied cheques for months — jumped on to the counter and started shouting, screaming and waving around a gun. He was desperate, threatening to shoot everybody. The bank staff, my mother and all the rest of them crawled into cupboards underneath their bank tills — tiny little spaces. My mom gave me a harrowing account of her colleague, crawling around outside, saying, "Please let me in." They were terrified. The fellow was caught and nobody was hurt — or rather, nobody was shot. No blood was spilled thankfully, but the women — the staff at the bank were

largely women — carried the experience with them for years. My mother carried it. She got nervous and edgy whenever somebody raised their voice or there was a loud noise. When that happened, it brought back the memories. Unfortunately for her, I raise my voice fairly often, Mr. Speaker.

I didn't realize this incident happened until a couple of years ago when my mom and I were talking about workplace incidents and trauma. The incident happened in the 1980s. She didn't get workers' compensation. The bank, it should be noted, gave the employees a couple of hours off and a single drink at the nearby restaurant — not more than one, just one. Then the staff had to go back to work that afternoon and had to balance their tills. It was in the 1980s — in my lifetime. I was a teenager, I guess, at the time so I have a smidgeon of information about this topic.

Workers in many fields can experience trauma, so I am happy to discuss this issue. I'm happy to say that, unlike Ontario in the 1980s, the Yukon will assist workers who suffer trauma at work — bankers, housing workers, paramedics, firefighters and others. Everyone is eligible for mental health injury coverage today, right now.

Care is made available to all workers. Presumption simply removes the requirement to verify that injury occurred at work. We're doing this with cancers — people who suffer from specific cancers and occupational diseases that are well-known to stem from work. Asbestosis is presumed to come from work if, for example, you worked in an asbestos mine. The compensation board presumes the ailment stemmed from your work.

Other workers, non-miners, can get compensation for asbestosis if it stems from work. It has to be shown that it stems from your work. There is no presumption, but there is coverage — so too for post-traumatic stress disorder. The term "disorder" is a clinical term, as my colleague, the Member for Mountainview, noted. It denotes the type of diagnosis. Injuries to the mind are not easy to pin down. It takes a specialist, a psychologist or a psychiatrist, and we in the territory know how difficult it is to get that type of specialist's help. It is a barrier — one my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services — is trying to address.

We have to do more. We have to do more work on this front. We have to be creative and use some imagination to try to find ways to get these resources in place so that people in the territory can get the help they need in a timely fashion so they're not waiting and so they can actually get that help.

But it cannot be diagnosed on a Friday afternoon by your family doctor. It's not that easy. This injury is complex. It is difficult to pin down and it is often not easy to talk about. I've seen that with the people I know personally. Like so many injuries, it is much better to prevent than to treat once it happens.

As my colleague from Mountainview has noted, prevention is essential. We have to get specialists into workplaces beset by traumatic events to help workers cope with their stress before it becomes a mental injury. We have to be aware of these things and we have to get that help to these

workplaces quickly, regardless of where they are — to housing or a bank, to the paramedics and fire stations.

We also have to discuss this issue, as we are this afternoon, to remove the stigma in all workplaces, not just among first responders, and to get people to accept mental illness and trauma, to understand the symptoms and to be willing to reach out for help and break down those barriers so people aren't reluctant to do so — that they're actually comfortable doing so. That unease in doing so stems from all of us in society and in this room.

Once again, I want to thank the member opposite for raising this essential issue in this Assembly this afternoon. This is about progress. This is about understanding. This is about compassion. It's about caring for our families, our friends, our neighbours and the people in our community who are grappling with mental illness or who could find themselves facing trauma in the future.

I thank you for the opportunity to discuss this this afternoon.

Deputy Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. Hanson: I would like to extend my thanks to all members of this Legislative Assembly who have shared their views this afternoon on this motion that we brought forward this afternoon.

I also want to extend a very special thanks to Steve Hahn for writing to us, as members of this Legislative Assembly, and for allowing my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King to read into Hansard, where it will be forever as testimony.

We often speak about the importance of bearing witness, and what Mr. Hahn has done is a classic and very important example of bearing witness and allowing us to bear witness to his journey and asking us to prevent that journey from having to be followed by anybody else.

As the government prepares amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act*, what we have all agreed to this afternoon is that the government — and the government has agreed — will consider expanding the proposed amendments to make sure that all workers covered by the Yukon *Workers' Compensation Act* benefit from presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder or injury legislation. At the end of those discussions with a broad range of people, no doubt — and we heard from the minister opposite that the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board is doing its due diligence, as they do when they are asked by government to consider amendments to the legislation. We know that these are not the only amendments that are required to the workers' compensation legislation. It should have gone through an overhaul — a complete legislative review in 2015. It didn't happen.

We have an opportunity, as I said earlier. If the government, in good faith, considers what has been discussed this afternoon, considers the testimony that it heard this afternoon, looks at other legislation — for example, looks at the Manitoba legislation — and determines that it is not a

good idea for the Yukon, that will be their decision. But it will fall to the government to explain to Yukoners and to Yukon workers why it shouldn't apply to all workers. We do believe that there is time to do this well and to do it before the Fall Sitting of the Legislative Assembly. As I said earlier, we believe there is an opportunity for the government to show that it is actually listening and not bound by the very words that it wrote in an election platform. A platform is to generate an interest in what you are saying and to engage with Yukoners and to get them to support you. They expect you then, once elected, to listen. I think I heard someplace about a motto about "hearing" or "heard". Well, let's demonstrate that the government does hear and will demonstrate with the legislation that it puts forward this fall that it heard Yukoners and that it heard all Yukon workers.

We look forward to the work that will be done over the next while. We will certainly partake in whatever consultation process comes forward over the course of the next few months. We thank the members for their engagement this afternoon and for their support of this motion.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 52 agreed to

Motion No. 38

Clerk: Motion No. 38, 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:

(1) acknowledge that it has been 10 years since school spring break was extended to two weeks to accommodate the 2007 Canada Winter Games;

(2) acknowledge that a two-week spring break is an economic burden for many Yukon families; and

(3) consult with parents, school councils and the Yukon Teachers' Association on reducing the length of the spring school break before planning school calendars for the 2018-19 academic year onwards.

Ms. White: I'm going to try to change gears from our previous debate.

The spring break issue is an interesting one. As a person who doesn't have children, it doesn't affect me the way it does many other people, in the way that I don't have to try to find child care for children who aren't school-aged; I don't need to pay for camps; I don't need to do those things, so the spring break doesn't affect me personally in the way it does many others.

In the last five years, I have definitely referenced my little sister, because I'm really proud of what she does. She is a mother of three children: Kemper is almost 11, Aason is four and Lennox is two. I have also said she works for the most feminist company in all of Yukon, because she drives a school bus. The reason why she drives a school bus is because she can take her two young children with her to work. Previously she worked as a receptionist in a dental clinic, but the cost of daycare became too much for her and her husband, so they made choices, and that was to drive the school bus.

This last spring break, I got to see how tough it was. She said it was good, because she was home with the two little kids, but then to entertain the older guy, he was in ski camps, and those are costly. Then I got another message from someone on Facebook that said, as a single parent of a young child, two weeks' spring break — she said she can't even cover it — doesn't know where to start, can't afford to send her to camp, can't afford to take two weeks off right now — is lucky there are older kids who can care for her — but this is a burden.

It is interesting because, in 2007, I owned a coffee shop at the Canada Games Centre so I had the front-and-centre view of the massive contribution of the citizens of the Yukon during the 2007 Canada Winter Games. In 2007, the territory had to make the decision that we were going to close down the schools for two weeks for spring break because, for one thing, we needed the space and the school facilities, and the second thing we needed was we needed all hands on deck. We needed as many volunteers as possible. Thousands and thousands of people volunteered for those two weeks, and it was incredible. I had a first-hand view of that. It was amazing.

That happened in 2007, and we never revisited the issue. We never went back to say, "Okay families, that was one-off", or "we're going to look at doing this again; how do you feel about it?" I was told this morning there was a consultation in 2015 — maybe? — but I didn't hear about it. My sister obviously didn't participate at that point in time.

I looked across Canada to see what happens in other jurisdictions because, if everyone has a two-week spring break, then maybe that's just kind of the way it happens.

For most jurisdictions across Canada, spring break is one week. The exception is Yukon and British Columbia. It is important to know that not all school districts in British Columbia follow a two-week spring break. There are some that go for two weeks and some that do not. In the NWT, it is a mix, but it depends on where you live.

When I started thinking about spring break this morning before I came to work, it is important to note the conversation that happened — I put it out at 8:00 a.m. this morning. I asked on Facebook: "Yukon parents! What's your experience with a two-week spring break? I'm looking for positives and negatives." The incredible thing is if I pull up my Facebook right now, we are on 94 comments. It's really interesting — it's fascinating because there are positives and negatives. People are really honest about the financial burden of trying to figure out what they are going to do with their kids. It is interesting, because I am also friends with teachers, and so we have the perspective of teachers. Some say that they need the break by that point in time. Some say that it is too long and it's disruptive to their schedule. We have some people say that it's great because we can make big travel plans and we can go to far-off destinations. Then the response underneath it is: I would really like to be able to go to far-off destinations, but two weeks alone is more than I can handle.

What it has really shown me is that it is a good time for a discussion. It is a good time to have a conversation with people, especially as we get ready to set the schedule for 2018 and onward. I can tell you that out of the almost 100 comments, there are probably 50 percent on each side. The one thing that comes up again and again is that even the people who like the two-week vacation find there is a financial cost to it. People say that not working in the public service, they don't have access to that kind of vacation time. Some people say that we just can't afford \$350-a-week camps. The camps would be fantastic, but we just can't afford them. Then there are people who say that the camps are great, but they start at 9:00 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m. and I start at 8:00 a.m. and end at 5:00 p.m.

There are so many responses. If anyone is interested, I could be friends with you on Facebook later and you can take a look — but I do feel that by going out to consultation will definitely help government make the decision as to whether or not the two-week break should continue. I don't think that kind of consultation is a bad thing, especially when some schools — I have friends on school councils and they have said that families can deal with anything as long as they have enough time to plan — they can make backup plans. Setting the calendar for the next number of years will be really helpful, but I really do think that there is a really good reason to have this conversation right now.

We know in the territory that we might be on an economic upswing, but we know for a lot of people that is not their daily reality. We know that sometimes daycares will also

shut down the same time as spring break and that leaves some families without that option.

I know personally that it's not an option for my sister. It's not an option for her to pay for two weeks of daycare for three kids. It's just not a financial option.

I know my brother puts his son into camps, which is great, and sometimes they go away — but they're in two different situations. It's often a decision of: Does someone stay home? Does someone go to work? If you're able to go on vacation, like I said, I think that's fantastic. But if you're not, what does it mean? For many, one week is hard to cover, but two weeks almost becomes a crisis because that's a lot of time off work and if your paycheque is already put toward managing your household, that's a big deal.

I don't think I really need to go on at length because I feel it's all listed in the motion, so really, what I'm asking is that — we haven't talked about this since it happened in 2007. At that point, it was with a really distinct purpose and that was to make sure that Whitehorse would be ready for the Canada Winter Games — and we were. We saw tens of thousands of visitors essentially descend on the territory in those two weeks. It's not 2007 anymore. We're not hosting the 2018 Canada Winter Games. We don't need the schools for the same purposes, so what I would really like to see is for this to go to consultation. I would like parents, school councils, teachers, educators, daycare workers — I would like people to be able to give their feedback as to whether or not they think that two weeks makes sense. I look forward to having that information shared with us at a later date.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to other members' comments.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion this afternoon, particularly following the questions from the Official Opposition today. It will allow me to reiterate the important details of the school calendar, primarily with respect to March break as noted in the motion, in a process that's perhaps more than 90 seconds, although I won't take too long.

The Government of Yukon works collaboratively with Yukon schools, the Yukon Teachers' Association and school councils to establish school calendars that balance the needs of Yukon's school communities. The school calendars are complex, as already described by the Third Party House Leader, and they require a lot of planning and discussion.

The *Education Act* sets criteria for establishing school start and end dates, certain vacation days, training and non-instructional days. Each school year must include 950 hours of instruction, three non-instructional days developed with school councils in consultation with them, and three professional development days determined by the Department of Education.

Depending on the length of the school day, the school year is between 171 and 180 days, or at least it has been in all recent memory. The collective agreement between the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Teachers' Association reflects these same requirements. It provides for 950 hours of

instruction and 30 hours or six days of non-instructional time for training and professional development.

The *Education Act* also requires that in communities where there is more than one school, all schools in that community must have the same dates on their school calendars. This is needed for coordinating student transportation, including busing costs. It also helps families with children who are in more than one school, in planning for schooling time and childcare. All Whitehorse schools must have the same start date, winter break dates and spring break dates. The two schools in Watson Lake also aligned their key dates. The *Education Act* also provides school councils with the authority to provide feedback on the calendars and working with them is an important way for us to gather input from parents and families on planning the school calendars.

We sent the proposed calendars, with key dates for discussion, between the school principal and the school council. Rural schools have a choice of school start dates and some flexibility on dates throughout the year to support the unique needs of their school communities. School councils determine how to best work with their school communities, including parents and families, to provide feedback on their school's preferences. The principal and the school council then send their feedback back to the Department of Education, where it is reviewed for compliance with the act and the school council liaison and by the Public Schools division. That's how it happens in the department. The calendars are then set by the Minister of Education and the Deputy Minister of Education.

Part of the planning for school calendars includes deciding when key dates such as spring break could occur. School councils, school staff, parents and students are always interested in the timing of these dates for obvious reasons — for parents, or for aunts and uncles here in the territory. The key dates for the school calendars are important factors for each of them, including the spring break. We work with schools and school councils to ensure that school calendars best reflect the needs of all the schools in each community — at least that is the goal. We always have the opportunity and create the opportunity to do so, although there are, as my colleague has mentioned, varied opinions.

Prior to 2007, spring break in schools across the Yukon historically varied between one and two weeks, depending on the schedule of the Arctic Winter Games. Then, 10 years ago, the then-government made a decision because Whitehorse was hosting the Canada Winter Games — and we have heard a great description of that — to have a two-week spring break. Since then, we have no longer alternated and always had a two-week spring break each year.

It's important to note that in rural schools, school calendars for each community have different key dates, including for spring break. Based on the preference of schools and school councils in each community, some rural schools have had a one-week spring break and others have had two weeks. We know it can be challenging for some families to look for childcare and that not all families take vacations during the spring break.

My personal experience with respect to the things that the honourable member opposite has mentioned in her submission today — self-employed vacation time was not really an issue, but spring break vacations were not something that my family ever was able to indulge in, but certainly we all know people who can do that and have done so. We also know it's challenging for many families where that is not available to them.

Over the past few years, we have received mixed feedback from families and staff about both one-week and two-week spring breaks. I think the member opposite's Facebook survey is probably right in line with the other feedback we have managed to obtain.

A two-week spring break was set during the 2014-17 calendars in response to results of a public survey that took place in 2013, which my colleague referred to, where the majority of Whitehorse participants preferred a two-week spring break. Those three years were set to include that.

We continue to hear mixed feedback on the length of spring break with little consensus, but that does not mean we should stop asking. Shortening the spring break would also mean that the school year might end a week earlier, as the school year is based on the required 950 instructional hours and not on a required number of days, but that could be adjusted.

We are currently working with schools and school councils to set a four-year school calendar, which you have already heard about. This four-year calendar will set the same start date, winter holidays and spring break for all the Whitehorse schools, with some flexibility permitted for rural schools. We continue to encourage school councils to gather input from all families and their school communities and provide feedback on that. The deadline that was previously set for school councils was the end of this week, but if that kind of feedback is still forthcoming, it will be welcome.

We are currently in the last year of the three-year school calendar that was set previously. When I took over this job, I asked the department if they could explore and provide information to set school calendars for the next four years to coincide with the implementation of the new school curriculum. It was established following extensive consultation with schools, YTA members and the public. I'm referring to the calendars that were set between 2014 and 2017.

For the past three years, all elementary and secondary schools in Whitehorse had the same school start date and a two-week spring break. Rural schools had the option of choosing an earlier start date option in August, the same start date as Whitehorse or a later start date, often after Labour Day. Rural schools also had the option of choosing a one-week or two-week spring break. As I have said earlier, some chose a two-week and some chose a one-week one, depending on their school community.

Yukon school communities greatly appreciate the planning process, and that's why we have undertaken it for the next four years, so that school calendars are available well in advance. Having the information well in advance helps

families and staff to set their plans. It also helps after-school organizations, sport organizations, community groups and major events to know the school calendar. It helps daycares, city recreation programs and summer camps to plan for their programs, and it helps offer childcare options to Yukon families or for them to have the opportunity to explore what those might be.

The four-year school calendar will align with the four-year implementation period for the new Yukon curriculum, including essential training and support for teachers as we begin to introduce changes in the next year. For the 2017-18 school calendar, additional training days will be incorporated to support the implementation of the new curriculum, along with a new teacher evaluation process.

We need to provide this additional training and time to teachers to support them during the implementation. The usual six training days for school staff training each year are usually used as two days at a summer academy prior to school starting for teachers, and then four days throughout the school year. To provide extra support during the first year of the new curriculum — and I emphasize that this is for next year only — we have proposed that there will be eight training days, with six training days during the school year, plus a summer academy before the school year begins. This is supported by school councils.

Five of the six training days during the school year will be used for school staff to work, train and plan together on the changes to the curriculum as they start using it in the schools. It is both for opportunities for them to train with each other inside of a school and it's very much being encouraged that they train with other schools — elementary and high schools together — so they have an opportunity to learn from each other, as well as best practices and new ideas. What we do know is that many schools are well on their way to incorporating the new curriculum into their work and they are eager to share those opportunities with each other.

The five days of training will be all the same for the Whitehorse schools to facilitate that kind of cooperation. The actual training days are still being set. The dates are not yet picked.

This is a similar approach to what British Columbia is taking as it also implements its new curriculum. It's important to note that instructional time in schools has often been used for activities that support student learning, such as exams and parent-teacher conferences. An important note is that, as many exams will now be written in class with the new curriculum, there will be fewer exam days when students are not in school, which will result in more class time.

We consulted with the Yukon Teachers' Association and with school councils on these changes. We will use training opportunities to support teachers in further developing the instructional skills required for the new curriculum and with ongoing opportunities during the year for activities that support student learning.

School superintendents are working with their family of schools to develop individual area training plans. Training plans for the next year will focus on the priority areas of the

curriculum implementation, including assessment and Yukon First Nation ways of knowing and doing. The training plans will be reviewed and monitored during the next school year, with a report at the end of the school year from each school on their progress.

I would like to thank all school councils and all schools for their feedback during the exercise on the 2017-18 calendar. As I have said, we are asking for continued feedback and look forward to assessing those submissions.

Another point as I am beginning to conclude my remarks today is that it is important to note that from school attendance reports, we know that student attendance drops in June as Yukon summer weather begins. There are also many reasons for that with respect to First Nations and other communities outside of Whitehorse and their activities in the individual communities. It may be time for us to recognize — and maybe I am one of the people slow to do that, but I am open — that the Yukon summer is in June and July and not in July and August as it is in many other parts of Canada — primarily southern Canada. Our calendar should adjust to that reality and to the needs of Yukon families.

I should note that, after considering the feedback that we sought with respect to the 2017-18 calendar, it was set on April 21, 2017, and communicated after that.

Since 2006, as I have said, summer breaks have varied between 64 and 80 days for elementary schools. The summer break for 2017 will be 69 days. Next year's summer break, or the summer of 2018, for Whitehorse schools depends on the start date that is ultimately chosen with respect to the school calendar, and that has not yet been determined. We are expecting more feedback from school councils, and we will continue to gather that and assess it as it comes in. Not unlike the Facebook survey, my own attendance at school council meetings — as many as I can possibly manage — since December have included questions about school calendars, and feedback has been mixed. As our colleague has said, it is a complicated issue. Individual families all have opinions — and rightly so — and individual school councils have priorities. One of the key goals for us is to allow those dates to be set so people are forewarned and have knowledge because that is a benefit. But I do get mixed feedback from all those school councils with respect to March breaks and start and end dates, but primarily the one thing everyone can agree on is that knowledge — forewarning and planning — is the best.

Planning for school calendars is a really important process that sets the pace for learning over the coming years and allows the entire school community to plan ahead for key dates throughout the school year. It can be a complicated process, as we have heard, to develop calendars that balance the requirements and the needs — and really, the preferences — of all schools. I thank all of the schools and the school councils for their feedback and ask them to continue to provide it. It did play a critical role in ensuring that school calendars reflect each school community's priorities.

The Department of Education, schools, and school councils will continue to work with their communities, including parents, school staff and teachers, to provide

feedback that represents the needs of each unique community. The Yukon government will then prepare school calendars, as we have already done for feedback, but we will continue to do that a year ahead once the next three years have been set — the year ahead — so that there is always lots of notice for families and schools.

I very much appreciate the motion being brought forward by the Third Party and I am going to propose what will call a friendly amendment to that motion.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT Motion No. 38 be amended by:

(1) removing the words “is an” and replacing it with the words “may be”;

(2) removing the word “many” and replacing it with the word “some”; and

(3) removing the word “reducing” and replacing it with the word “determining”.

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister of Education:

THAT Motion No. 38 be amended by:

(1) removing the word “is” and replacing it with the words “may be”;

(2) removing the word “many” and replacing it with the word “some”; and

(3) removing the word “reducing” and replacing it with the word “determining”.

Then, just for greater clarity, to read the proposed amended motion back, the preamble remains the same and (1) remains the same; (2) will now read — and somebody can correct me if I am not correct here — as follows: “acknowledge that a two-week spring break may be an economic burden for some Yukon families”; and (3) becomes: “consult with parents, school councils and the Yukon Teachers’ Association on determining the length of the spring school break before planning school calendars for the 2018-19 academic year onwards.”

Speaker: Minister of Education, on the amendment; you have 20 minutes.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I should mention that the amendment, as has been passed up, says that we would want to remove the words “is an” but I think it is just “is” — if I’m allowed to correct that with you. You actually read it correctly by taking out only the word “is” and that was the intention, so that the sentence does read: “acknowledge that a two-week spring break may be an economic burden for some Yukon families” — so just remove the word “is”.

Speaker: Just for clarification then, on Motion No. 38, removing the word “is” and replacing it with the words “may be.” Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don’t intend to take the 20 minutes. I do intend to just explain the reasoning behind the suggested amendment.

The first paragraph in the motion, as you have said, is unchanged and I don’t intend to make any change there.

In the second paragraph, I think it’s the suggestion of the words “may be an economic burden for some Yukon families”. This does, I think, what the original motion intended without making an assessment of how many Yukon families, or whether or not the spring break is or isn’t a burden. The suggestion is only that the wording be a little broader so that the sentence reads: “acknowledge that a two-week spring break may be an economic burden for some Yukon families” and I think that is a true statement. As such, I am making that suggestion with respect to those wording changes.

Lastly, the third paragraph, suggesting that the word “reducing” be replaced with the word “determining” because the purpose, in my view, of going to consultation is to determine what the length of a spring break should be — if it should be two weeks or one week, or if it should be reduced some way or maintained in another way. I think putting the word “determining” in there just allows for that assessment to be done following the consultation, which is the true purpose, I think, of this motion and I hope that the members opposite will see that as the friendly amendment it is suggested as and that we will be able to proceed on supporting this amendment and also, ultimately, this motion, if it becomes the motion.

Thank you for the opportunity to explain those suggestions.

Mr. Kent: I thank the Minister of Education for the amendment. The Yukon Party Official Opposition will support this amendment. I like it for a few reasons. The original motion as put forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King was quite prescriptive with respect to the consultation, and I think replacing the word “reducing” with “determining” adds some more flexibility for those consultations when it comes to spring school break. I will speak more when we get back to the motion as amended, but certainly what I’ve heard from constituents — and many colleagues on this side of the floor have heard from constituents — is with respect to the broader calendar, not just the spring break or the legislated Christmas break — but minutes in the day. There are a few other things that I would like to read into the record when we get beyond the amendment. I don’t want to be called to order for speaking beyond that at this time.

I thank the minister for the amendment. I think it strengthens and provides more flexibility to the motion as presented by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Ms. White: I thank the Minister of Education for bringing this down to me earlier. It’s an example of how, when you’re pre-warned, you can be pre-informed and I’m happy to accept the amendment as friendly. I look forward to further discussion hopefully on the amended motion.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the amendment?

Amendment to Motion No. 38 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion as amended?

Ms. Van Bibber: I'm pleased to rise to speak to the amended Motion No. 38 brought forward by, first, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and the Minister of Education.

I would like to acknowledge the ideas put forth within the motion by the members and also highlight the consultation piece and its importance to this discussion.

The decisions made regarding the school calendar should be reflective of the collective wishes of those identified by the member in her motion. Providing the opportunity for parents, school councils and the Yukon Teachers' Association to weigh in with their comments, ideas and criticisms is the only way to ensure a fair and accurate representation of the wishes of our community.

I do understand the struggle of childcare, having raised two children myself. I have talked with members of our community who do express their concerns. I have also spoken with parents who are grateful to have a generous break in order to vacation as a family while the weather is still not very cooperative and summer is still a ways away.

A friend of mine with three small children in elementary school and a full-time job shared her concerns with me. She does not have the opportunity to take time off work to spend with her children, nor could she enlist the help of family during spring break. Rather, she and her husband were able to enrol all three kids in camps. The price tag attached to these camps over a two-week period ended up taking most of her take-home pay. Unfortunately, for even more parents, spring break camps are not an option because of that cost.

I have spoken with another parent who is thankful for that additional week as it has been a long-standing tradition in her family to head south to visit more family. A teacher herself, she is happy to have the time and not have to pull her child out of school for an additional week to make the long drive south each year. Another couple I spoke with shared that they teamed up with other parents of school-aged children well ahead of the spring break, and they each took days off ahead and made plans to share childcare throughout the two weeks. Perhaps this is a concept that might be worth more of an uptake.

Regardless of whether spring break is one or two weeks, parents must often make decisions on what to do with their child or children during that time. In the end it could be to the benefit of parents who think they have no options to be creative and team up with others in the same situation to come up with these solutions. As mentioned, there are so many stories from people on both sides of the issue.

With regard to the request of the member for government to consult, I would like to point out that they are in

consultations right now for the three school years beginning in 2018. I do commend the rapid and proactive decision to put forth a survey to parents that was offered via e-mail from their schools. In the survey, parents are asked pointed questions about their preference for the school start date, length of Christmas and spring breaks, and the end date in June. Accompanying each question is a series of choices along with an area to provide full comments. I believe parents should take advantage of lending their voices to the creation of future calendars and will have to put their trust in the government to read each choice and comment and to use them to fully inform their decision going forward.

I would urge the government to produce the results of the survey to the public in full and complete with comments in the name of transparency. I would also urge all parents to participate in the survey. Let your concerns be known and provide the department with the stats and input that they will need to make a decision for coming years.

I ask the Minister of Education to continue to involve parents, school councils and the Yukon Teachers' Association fully in discussions and decisions made that will affect their children, their schedules, their finances and their personal lives. Consult in full and use these results to correctly inform your decision and ensure that these consultations are meaningful and transparent. Full consultation should not only cover decisions made on the school calendar, but extend to all issues or considerations that may arise in the future regarding the education of our children.

I would like to mention that, while I have heard parents on both sides of the issue on the length of spring break, I have yet to hear a comment or opinion in favour of the proposed changes put forth by the department regarding student assessment. Like the issue of spring break, consultation is a key on the student assessment changes.

As I mentioned, with disclosure of the results of the survey on the school calendar, I also urged the government to make the full results from the survey of student assessment public to ensure they are held fully accountable for the decisions they make. I look forward to seeing the results and whether or not the department chooses to act on these results.

I would be inclined to say that, whatever option gets the most uptake from parents and other parties, that is the option the government should adopt for their upcoming school calendar years. People with small children are not all keen on having them out of school for two weeks. Generally those with older, more self-sufficient children do not mind either way. In the survey offered by the Department of Education regarding the school calendar, the question pertaining to spring break was accompanied by the following choices: "always one week"; "always two weeks"; "two weeks in an Arctic Winter Games year and one week in other years"; "no preference"; and "other".

Regardless of which direction the department chooses to go after considering the results of the survey, there will always be a group of people who are unhappy with the outcome. Once again, I would encourage anyone who has a strong opinion on whether their spring break is one or two

weeks to ensure their voice is heard. Complete the survey; contact your school council. They are your advocates and will ensure your opinions are heard by the department. I would encourage all Yukoners to also be in contact with their respective MLA. When I receive a concern from a constituent, I bring it forward to the government immediately. I will continue to do so and ensure the government hears you.

I would like to take a moment to expand on the ideas put forth in this motion as I recently viewed a letter from a parent who was very concerned with the fact that the school calendar next year will result in an 11-week summer. While I do not question the validity of debating a one-week or two-week spring break, I do believe it is imperative that we include the concerns the parents have with the length in summer, in addition to a two-week spring break.

Parents may struggle to find childcare in March, but it could be additionally problematic for them to seek childcare for an extra two weeks in summer. Without going into a multi-faceted debate over whether a length in school year or school day results in better student performance, I will simply remind all that consultation is the key. In a situation where parents are consulted on an issue, the department should ensure the consultation period is long enough to allow people the chance to be heard, and also that parents and interested parties receive more notification that it is taking place. That will likely lower the risk of people missing any deadlines.

In closing, I would encourage the government to continue to consult with parents, school councils and the Yukon Teachers' Association, who are all invested in education and may have different viewpoints. Use these results to form your opinions and be transparent. To all, be involved in education. It is the base for our future.

Mr. Kent: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this Motion No. 38, brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and subsequently amended, again with our support, by the Minister of Education.

I just wanted to take a little bit of time — obviously as a former Minister of Education, it was one of the most difficult jobs. I have been the minister of a few portfolios during my political career, and it was one of the most difficult jobs I have ever had, being Minister of Education, but also one of the most rewarding. I'm hopeful that in maybe 10 or 15 years a few old ministers of Education can get together and compare some war stories. I look forward — maybe we won't have our respective premiers there so we can talk about them behind their backs on their choice to put us in those positions. I commend the minister. It's a difficult job trying to balance so many different perspectives on so many different things. Education is so important to everyone in the territory. It's one of those departments that touches just about all Yukoners.

I agree with my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, when she says the parents need to be involved and to fill out these surveys and get involved with the consultations. Parents need to be partners in education, along with our teachers, the department staff and everyone else who is involved in this. Like my colleague from Porter Creek North, I

would like to read into the record a couple of comments I received on the broader school calendar today. The letter that was referenced in Question Period earlier today, I noticed, is published in its full form, in its entirety, in the letters to the editor in the *Whitehorse Star* today. I invite anyone who is interested in looking at that — I would refer them to the *Whitehorse Star* to take a look at that letter.

Last night and early this morning, I received a couple of comments from constituents of mine in Copperbelt South, obviously concerned parents and parents who are very involved in their children's education. I wanted to read those into the record and then, if time permits, I would also read in a letter that was addressed from someone else to members of the Selkirk school council with respect to the broader calendar.

The first one is from a constituent. It was sent to me last night at around 9:40 p.m. It says, "Hello ... I was just made aware that the Yukon Education calendar has changed for the 2017-2018 school year. As far as I can tell the summer holidays have been lengthened to 11 weeks and the school day has been lengthened by 8 or 10 minutes" and it says question mark "to make up for the extra holiday time. I think the Yukon Government is currently planning the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school year. I'm confused and angered by this change. As far as I can tell there was no consultation for the changes.

"As the parent of 2 kindergarten kids who attend Golden Horn Elementary School, I strenuously oppose the changes made for 2018 and do not want to see them added to the next 2 years.

"Why? A longer day does not equal more learning for young kids; longer holidays equals more financial hardship on parents who need to pay for more childcare/camps; a longer gap between school years equals more loss of knowledge, more time teachers need to review concepts, less new learning each school year; this change is contrary to the latest research on what works best for kids and moves the Yukon away from more forward thinking countries who have moved to reducing the length of summer break." She goes on to give examples of Australia, Britain, Netherlands and Germany.

"I wish I had time to write a more thoughtful and articulate e-mail, but as far as I can tell time is of the essence and YTG is deciding this right now. Thank you." She gives her name as a resident of Pineridge, located in my riding of Copperbelt South.

I believe I did send this particular e-mail on to the minister this morning after I received it. I sent a copy to her.

A second e-mail that was sent last night was sent to the Deputy Minister of Education and copied to a number of individuals. I thought the minister was copied, but it doesn't look like she is. I will send her a copy of this as well. It was sent to me, our Member of Parliament, the principal at Golden Horn and the school council at Golden Horn Elementary School as well. This e-mail says:

"Ms. Arnold: I am writing tonight after a day at work and tucking kiddies into bed, as I very recently went on the Department of Education's website to view the upcoming school year calendar. To my shock and dismay, it appears that

the summer break has been extended substantially, with school ending June 8, 2018. As the 2018-19 calendar has yet to be released, I am left to assume that this creates an 11 week summer break. My son currently attends Golden Horn Elementary School, and in 2018, my youngest will be entering kindergarten.”

She said she was copying our Member of Parliament, her MLA, and the principal at Golden Horn School and the school council — “as I feel this issue is important not just to myself, but to all Yukon children and families, and I understand there are some pressing timelines in terms of finalizing subsequent school calendars.

“I was simply baffled to read the upcoming school calendar, as anything that I have read indicates that longer summer breaks equal less learning retention. I have attached some links below that speak to this. I am sure the research must not only be well-known by the Department of Education, but for reasons that have not been made clear, evidence such as this has been overlooked when planning the school calendar.

“I see that the Christmas and Spring breaks have been shortened, but I have also heard that in order to accommodate this longer summer break, the school day will be lengthened. Can this be confirmed, as this is not clear on the Department of Education website. If this is the case, I can say, observing my son’s experience, that the weekdays are already mentally and physically exhausting, with the pressures of school, dayhome, sports activities and trying to fit in precious family time, all within the span of 11 hours before bedtime. As a parent, it is not an unreasonable expectation to be asked if the education system can keep my child for more time in any given day.

“One explanation I can think of for the school year ending June 8, is that perhaps the following school year is planned to begin mid-August at the latest? If so, please excuse my comments. If an 11 week summer break truly is the vision, I strongly question the motives and am curious to know what the proposed benefits would be. I can absolutely see this as a benefit if Yukon families were all given additional paid vacation days to be able to personally contribute more time to their children’s learning during the summer months. I can see how a model such as this would be an asset in rounding out children’s learning and life skills, and if any Yukon family would welcome the opportunity to spend more valuable time with their children. But this isn’t what is being proposed. All I can see is more daily stress on Yukon families, less learning retention for Yukon children, and added work/financial pressures for all Yukon families, not to mention the pressures on the already stretched resources of childcare providers.”

“Some of the questions that come to mind for me are: Do you have a baseline of indicators for learning retention from previous summer breaks, so you can even begin to measure the impacts a longer break will have in Yukon? Who can I send my son to when he is asking why he has to go to yet another summer camp with strangers? Who can I refer my supervisor to when I have added pressures to try and juggle limited vacation days? Is there someone to send the bill to for

added summer child-care/summer camp costs? What is the process for all Yukon families to have a true voice in the education of our children and the scheduling of our lives? How does the Department of Education see this impacting Yukon children and families? These are questions that ought to have been asked and answered for all Yukon families prior to a calendar such as this being released.”

This letter concludes by saying: “There’s one more thing that I ask; please, please, please put at the forefront that when it comes to education, Yukon children and families come first.”

Again, there are some links to the various articles that were referenced earlier in the letter and it is signed by a constituent of mine who lives in the Wolf Creek area here in Whitehorse.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Takhini-Kopper King, on a point of order.

Ms. White: I allowed the member to read the letter because I didn’t want to interrupt his constituent who was voicing his concerns but, in my opinion, if the Official Opposition wanted to debate the school calendar as a whole, they could have moved a motion.

My complaint is that it is not speaking to the question at hand, which is the consultation about a two-week spring break. That is my complaint.

Speaker: Member for Copperbelt South, on the point of order.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and with all due respect to the Third Party House Leader, I recognize that you did give some latitude to the minister to speak in broader terms about the school year and the length of the summer break. I’m merely bringing concerns from my constituents about the broader school calendar. This is a motion related to school calendars as it talks about the length of spring break. With respect to the Third Party House Leader, I’m just merely bringing forward concerns from constituents on the broader school calendar.

I too am hopeful we get to a vote, and I will wrap up my remarks shortly.

Speaker: Are there any other submissions on the point of order?

Speaker’s ruling

Speaker: I, like the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, was reviewing section 19(b)(i) of the Standing Orders, and it was certainly arguable that the comments by the Member for Copperbelt South were straying fairly substantially from what is arguably a fairly discrete and distinct motion that has been put forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

I take the point that the Member for Copperbelt South made in his submissions that the Minister of Education was provided some latitude to discuss issues pertaining to the school calendar generally. However, I would say to the

Member for Copperbelt South that you are beginning, in my view, to stray fairly substantially from the discrete motion that has been put forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, so if you could govern yourself accordingly. Thank you.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To wrap up my remarks, I won't read the final letter that was sent to me, and apologies to the individual who sent it. I will provide it to the Minister of Education by e-mail. I certainly don't want to stray any further beyond what your ruling suggested. This motion that was brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King does speak to the two-week spring break and the economic burden.

I am glad the amendment was brought forward by the Minister of Education. It is much less prescriptive than what the original motion suggested. There were some generalizations made in the original motion that I don't believe were fair. So again, I'm happy to see the amendments that were put forward by the minister. Like my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, I would certainly encourage the Minister of Education to continue her work meeting with school councils and encourage all parents to continue to send me e-mails, and I will continue to forward them or raise their concerns here on the floor as I am able. I thank them for being partners in their children's education.

I too will be embarking this fall on my son's educational journey with him as he starts kindergarten. My wife and I have already have discussions about the shortened school year and have talked about our concerns with respect to it as well. Those individuals who have reached out to me — thank you very much for doing so. I'll continue to represent you as your MLA and bring your concerns forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank members of the House for allowing me to discuss my concerns here today.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the motion as amended?

If the member now speaks, she will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. White: I appreciate the support that has been shown for the motion in the conversation about consultation for spring break, and I do appreciate the point of view from the members of the Official Opposition.

I just hope that, when the consultation goes out and the survey goes out, it's more than a yes-or-no question because it needs to say: Is a two-week spring break a financial hardship? Does this lead to problems in your family for childcare or financial burdens? In the same breath, does the two-week spring break give you the ability to travel? Is that why you like it?

I think if it's just a yes-or-no question, it doesn't really get down to the root of the problem because, if faced with a 50-50 or a 60-40 split in favour, we need to think about the 40 percent and what are their main reasons for saying that, no, it doesn't work for them. Is it a financial hardship? Is it the lack of affordable alternatives? Is it the lack of affordable

childcare? That is an issue in the territory. Is it more of a hardship for the working poor, the marginalized, those living in poverty?

When the consultation goes out, it needs to be expanded so we can figure it out. Is the weight for both those answers — for whether it's a vacation or whether it's a hardship — the same? Do they have the same value?

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank everyone for the conversation and I look forward to the 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. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

Motion No. 38, as amended, agreed to

Speaker: Do we have more business to transact this afternoon, Mr. Clerk?

Clerk: We do, Mr. Speaker.

Motion No. 55

Clerk: Motion No. 55, standing in the name of Ms. Van Bibber.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Porter Creek North:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health and Social Services to instruct their departments to begin work to develop a health curriculum for use in schools that educates all students in the Yukon education system on the dangers of prescription opioid abuse.

Ms. Van Bibber: I will just speak briefly to this motion as we had mentioned it earlier.

Prescription opioid abuse in the Yukon education system should really not be in the same sentence, but our teenagers and our children need our guidance when they are growing, learning and most vulnerable. Social media has proven wonderful in many respects, but it has also meant many detriments as well in how our youths view issues. Parents and guardians are not always aware of the type of communication or information they are receiving or sending. Peer pressure — I don't believe it has changed much since we were kids — whether pressure to smoke, to drink, to do drugs, to stay out late. These have been around forever, but the synthetic or new drugs are so much more dangerous and they kill.

Oftentimes even adults do not fully understand the dangers of these drugs. Our local headlines read about the number of deaths linked to fentanyl. This is no longer just a big city problem, but has arrived in our small towns and city. The north is not immune. The use of drugs and the need to withdraw from society for any number of reasons does not stick to a certain class of people or ethnic group or age group. It can strike anywhere.

That's why the Official Opposition has brought this motion forward. We think it sends a good signal if we as legislators from across party lines identify this as an issue. We want to take action so our children and youth know the dangers of dangerous drugs like fentanyl.

I think there is a way we can all work together to ensure a better, innovative way to educate and get the word out by using our schools, classrooms and lecture halls. We can use our skilled medical teams and educators to instill the knowledge of how harmful and life-altering taking drugs can be. Self-esteem can counter peer pressure.

We can provide information to parents and guardians on how to monitor their children's behaviour and patterns, such as sudden changes and mood changes, which can signify something other than growing pains. We can promote things like having family check their own prescription medications that we all keep for far too long after we need them, both old and new, by disposing of them properly. Take them back to a pharmacy so they can be disposed of and you know they are then removed from temptation. These are real worries; these are real fears. If we all focus, who knows? We might save one precious life.

With that, I hope the government and the Third Party can support this motion. Again, if there are certain friendly amendments that keep the spirit and intent of the motion intact that others feel are required, we are open to that.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the honourable member for her motion and for the introduction of that motion.

Mr. Speaker, I, along with our government, share the honourable member's concern about opioid abuse. I note that she spoke about prescription opioids, but I'm going to speak more broadly, because the scourge of fentanyl in particular has moved this concern to the forefront of all our minds.

Fentanyl, in its various forms — and I'll speak about that in a bit — is particularly concerning because of its deadly nature, because it cannot be detected and because illicitly distributed prescription drugs and illegal drugs can be tainted with fentanyl.

The crisis of opioid use is affecting many parts of Canada and resulting in overdoses and deaths. The numbers could surge, and there is real concern among the government and I am sure among the members opposite that the numbers here in the territory — or anywhere — could surge with a new shipment of illicit drugs being introduced at the street level here in our territory, or anywhere in Canada. It's also important to note that this is key and in the forefront of the minds of individuals who work in justice, particularly the RCMP. Their federal investigations unit will continue with its drug enforcement efforts to do what is possible to stem and reduce and interject in the illicit trade of drugs in this territory.

I appreciate that the motion is about continuing with respect to the Department of Education, but I think it's important for us to understand the context in which we are living here in Whitehorse and in the territory throughout, and in particular, what our front-line workers are doing, so that we all recognize the context of what we're talking about. It's one thing to talk about education and how we're going to address these issues in cooperation, in education, in a curriculum or other setting, but it's another to understand what it is really and truly on the streets that we're up against.

The local RCMP have trained all front-line members in the safe handling of the drug if it's encountered during drug seizures and along with the effective administration of naloxone to fellow members who may be exposed during the course of their duties. It's important to remember what a small amount of this drug could do. Even coming into contact with it inadvertently — which is why it's so important that we educate all members of our community — can be deadly.

They have also trained and equipped front-line members with naloxone kits, and the RCMP is also able to render assistance to a person experiencing an overdose, where appropriate. I am going to talk later about how that has also been integrated into schools and other departments in the government.

The Yukon has established a number of opioid response, surveillance, clinical and safety working groups that involve the full spectrum of law enforcement, the chief and deputy chief of medical health, health agencies and various NGOs. We know that the coroner's office is involved. We know that Department of Justice and their officials and workers are involved. I think it was mentioned earlier — Victim Services — those kinds of things and, of course, the net widens to ensure that first responders are equipped to respond to potential overdoses with their naloxone kits and the training. Of course, naloxone kits require training.

I do want to emphasize that, similar to other jurisdictions, the Yukon has put in force a number of working groups to address this problem — or begin to address it. As I say, in order to begin to address it, we must absolutely understand what the context in the community is.

At this point, I will move to clarify that the Yukon Department of Education will be known to everyone here, but for those listening, the Department of Education uses the BC curriculum. I note that the BC curriculum identifies learning outcomes that are expected at each grade and subject level.

The BC and Yukon curriculum has learning outcomes from kindergarten to grade 12 that are related to harmful substances, such as poisons, prescription medications and illicit drugs. I think it is very valuable to emphasize that point, because I am going to go on to explain and describe how those particular elements of the curriculum exist in the current curriculum and in the upcoming new curriculum and the importance of how each of those elements are included already, but not to dissuade from the motion, which wants us — actually, the wording is to “start” that work and I want to explain how much of it is already inherent in the curriculum.

The BC and Yukon curriculum has learning outcomes, as I have said — but to emphasize — from kindergarten to grade 12, that are related to harmful substances, such as poisons, prescription medications and illicit drugs. In this case, it is important to start at the very earliest ages with respect to the knowledge of those kinds of things. I think one of the most fearful things with respect to fentanyl and other opioids — but particularly the fentanyl situation — is that such a small amount can harm or do irreparable damage and/or kill someone. In many, if not most cases, they may not even be knowingly taking the drug.

In grades 5 to 10, there is a specific focus on the potential harms of illicit drugs and alcohol. It is an important piece of the educational curriculum and an important focus for communities and individuals to be aware, because that focus between grades 5 and 10 is ongoing and absolutely required. Within that framework, the department develops local curriculum resources to add Yukon context to the BC curriculum and then to support teachers in developing learning activities.

The Department of Education works with Health and Social Services, as well as with other agencies, such as the RCMP — again in this context — to ensure that students receive the most current knowledge on healthy living, including the dangers of intoxicants, opioids and alcohol, and the detriment use any of those substances can have on an individual's life — mental health and well-being, and family situations.

We value the partnership, because we are able to provide curriculum resources to address concerns that are current and specific to the school community. One of the important partnerships in communities outside of Whitehorse — in Whitehorse, of course, but in the communities outside of Whitehorse — is that between law enforcement and the community, RCMP and the schools' ability to teach children to trust police officers and authorities that can help them. A great way to do that is the educational piece where officers and others in the community partnerships are addressing issues that children are well aware of in their communities and in their families and giving them an opportunity to view those

things in a way that is safe, in a safe place, and to be able to talk about them at that time.

Social responsibility is another important component of the educational programming at all grade levels. Students are taught about making healthy and safe choices throughout their school years. We continue to provide students with information and skills necessary to help them make informed and safe decisions. We are addressing the dangers of prescription opioid use in our schools, among other substance-use issues. This is just one part of the picture.

I hope, in this short time, I can give the members opposite and the members of the government an idea of how we are working to ensure that all Yukon students have the skills they need to succeed, not just in the workplace or in their school careers, but also later in life. This is part of the government's overall commitment to wellness and improving the well-being of Yukoners — a high quality of education and ultimately making the lives of Yukoners better. Health education is a fundamental component of our curriculum.

I do appreciate the motion being brought forward. I guess the message I really want to convey today is that it's not a new idea and it's an important component already of the education curriculum, but something that, in light of the fentanyl crisis — if I can call it that — can't linger. It must be robust; it must be up to date; it must meet students where they are. We must be able to speak to them and have them take in the information in a format that allows them to really take it in and have it influence their lives.

Health education is a fundamental component of our curriculum, not only based on the current situation here in the territory and other places in Canada, but the research tells us that it's an important role played by education that contributes to prevention. That's really what we want to go forward with. We want healthy and happy communities. We know how some members of our community wrestle with addictions and the difficulties around those behaviours — mental health issues. In order for us to hopefully alleviate that to a certain extent, we can go forward with a community that not only addresses the issues we currently have, but tries to prevent the ones that we can prevent.

I will take an opportunity to break down the approach that we have to the issue of substance abuse in schools. I think that would be of benefit on this motion, which is asking about us going forward to do just that. As I said, we can always do better, but it's important for the members considering this motion to know what it is that is currently happening. We are building on the work that has already been underway for many years to give students the information and the skills that they need to make healthy choices.

At the kindergarten age, the introduction is really about laying the groundwork for understanding self-care and how to avoid dangerous substances like poisons and medications, and that's a reasonable place to begin with students of that tender age. Kindergarten students are introduced to all these preventive learning outcomes and the goals are to have the teachers and the class be able to identify opportunities to make choices that contribute to health and well-being; to identify

sources of health information; and to identify and describe a variety of unsafe and/or uncomfortable situations. Even four-, five- and six-year-olds are able to do that with the right instruction and with the opportunity to be in a safe place and do that.

The preventive learning outcomes also include identifying and describing practices that promote mental well-being — discussions around feelings and what makes youngsters feel uncomfortable and what makes them feel safe. Students are expected to know specific learning content as well, which ultimately are what practices they can understand to help promote health and well-being and the different types of substances — poisons and medications — those kinds of things.

Throughout these lessons, students are also taught about hazards and potentially unsafe situations. They learn about caring behaviours in groups and families and about emotions and their causes and effects. I can remember, even though it's quite a long time ago now, the kindergarten lessons that my own child experienced, learning about empathy and what that meant with respect to his classmates, what that meant for each of them in their emotional development, and having those discussions with him, which I hadn't thought about until right now. I think it's kind of interesting that this would come back from all that time ago. He's not in kindergarten anymore — I'll just say that.

The context is very important because I want everyone who is listening to understand that students are introduced to ideas that contribute to positive mental health, as well as avoiding dangers, at a very early age. This is something that we're not only expecting or hoping that families introduce to them from a very young age — from being a toddler on to school age — but something that we think is important enough that it is integrated, even at that early age, into the curriculum — positive mental health — again about avoiding dangers and about going forward and about prevention.

The holistic approach over the years will help contribute to students not only being informed, but also having confidence to do what they know is best for them, what feels good. As five-year-olds, we talk about feelings and, as their knowledge base grows, good emotional health is something that will never fail them.

The themes in kindergarten curriculum are built upon all the way up through the graduation year, so it must be started early. It has to grow with the child, with our classes and with the opportunity to talk about those things so we are not dealing with kids in grade 10 or 11 — maybe that's optimistic — or 7 or 8 who are starting to experiment with these things, who have not had opportunities or time to discuss what is good for them and what they should be avoiding for good physical and mental health.

As students get older and the learning deepens, the lessons grow more complex. At grade 4, students have moved from primary to the intermediate grades, and grade 4 students will demonstrate the understanding about themes that include understanding ourselves and the various aspects of health, how that helps us develop a balanced lifestyle and make

personal choices, and the social and environmental factors, including how they influence our health and our well-being.

I pause to say that it has to be contextual. It has to be in light of whatever the family situation may be, whether it's a single family, whether it's kids who live with aunts and uncles or grandmas and grandpas, whether it's same-sex families or large extended families with multi-generational people living together — but they need to have an opportunity to understand that in context. There are a lot of influences on kids.

Related to the curricular competencies that are introduced at grade 4, they include identifying and describing factors that influence healthy choices. It is a pyramid, if I could say it that way. It is built piece on piece — the foundation laid in the very early years. Grade 4 students also focus on examining and explaining how health messages can influence behaviours and decisions. They learn to identify and apply strategies for pursuing personal, healthy-living goals, and they identify and describe avoidance and assertiveness strategies to use in unsafe and/or uncomfortable situations. They also describe and assess strategies for managing problems related to mental well-being and substance abuse.

I appreciate that some listening to this might be thinking that I am focusing too much on the mental wellness strategies, but we need to be able to understand the context in which individuals make choices to use substances — to avoid pain, to alter their state of being, to change their current circumstances, whatever they may be — because what we know is that those kinds of behaviours ultimately lead to addictions. They can ultimately lead to the abuse of alcohol and other kinds of drugs in our communities. They can ultimately lead to problems that become much larger than they might otherwise be if what we could do is address the core issues for individuals and give them an opportunity to really learn these skills going forward, and an opportunity in a safe place to discuss them and understand how they can be safe and how they can reach out.

Schools are an amazing opportunity to do that because many of our children, if not all the children, attending schools spend a large amount of their day with adults or peers in those situations and they often become the people they trust — particularly in high school, with peers and influence of peers. There is real opportunity for intervention to happen early, even in early childhood, because teachers are such an integral part of a child's life and an opportunity to observe them during the day and maybe identify if there is a problem, identify if there is a family issue or concern that can be addressed.

These do seem like broad things, but if we are able to address them — and what I'm trying to explain is the curriculum that is currently being taught, being built on and being delivered in our schools for the purposes of addressing those kinds of issues, which ultimately, we hope, will help them to avoid things like drug addiction, like the experiments with drugs, like use of opioids of any kind.

By the end of grade 4, students are expected to understand, in age-appropriate terms, the potential effects of a

psychoactive substance or use of that and strategies for preventing personal harm. Examples of psychoactive substances could include alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs and even solvents. Teachers can focus learning on issues that are of most concern to their specific community, to their specific school, maybe even to their specific students.

For example, several years ago, there were specific concerns about the use of ecstasy here in the territory. Right now, the opioids, and specifically fentanyl, are of particular concern. All our schools have received information from Alcohol and Drug Services about fentanyl so they can have good tools to include in their lessons.

Let's look at the next phase of their learning, which occurs in grade 8. I want to be sure I'm not saying that it happens in grade 4 and then in grade 8, but it is grades 4 through 7, and then in grade 8, the focus changes a bit again. Grade 8 is the year that Yukon students are starting high school, so we should take a look at what they're learning about healthy choices. We hope they have built on the lessons from earlier.

Grade 8 students will demonstrate understanding about themes that include healthy choices that influence our physical, emotional and mental well-being — and advocating for the health and well-being of others — that connects us to our community. It's a bit broader — but, again, empathy.

Learning content is growing in complexity at that stage. Students learn to identify factors that influence health messages from a variety of sources and the influence of that on their behaviour. They are learning to identify and apply strategies to pursue personal healthy living goals and to reflect on outcomes of personal healthy living goals and assess strategies that they use — what works for them, works for their friends, how can they make that real in their lives.

They learn to describe and assess strategies for promoting mental well-being for themselves and for others. They describe and assess strategies for managing problems related to mental health, well-being and substance abuse for themselves and for others.

This is really critical at this stage, because we know that a lot of experimentation with illicit drugs or with alcohol or with prescription drugs and others tends to — we have kids in grade 8 who are generally 13 years old; there's peer pressure. They have moved to high school. They have probably moved from a smaller elementary school and are getting new friends and new influences. The opportunities open for them, but then so does the stress and the pressure.

I dare say that anyone here who has been to high school can recall that. It is a topic of legendary writings — the angst of teenagers in high school. It's not to be taken lightly, but we can all remember what that experience felt like being the young grade-eighter — as we like to call them. By then, students are expected to know the basic principles for responding to emergencies and the strategies to protect themselves and others from potential abuse or exploitation and harm — and in a variety of settings. This also comes with peer pressure. The flip side of that is peer support. Kids who are going down this road or a road that is not healthy for them,

hopefully if their friends and the friends around them have these basic skills and principles, they will be able to support them and hopefully pull them back from the brink.

During the graduation years, grades 10 to 12, learning continues with the themes we have already identified. These are related goals — again, they develop knowledge, skills, strategies for building respectful relationships, positive self-care, self-identify, self-determination and mental well-being. This really becomes a focus for them at this stage.

They are asked to demonstrate knowledge, skills and strategies needed to make informed decisions that support personal and community health and safety. We know that physical activity and other healthy choices can really help reduce the occurrence of preventable illnesses and the rates of harmful substance abuse. A focus on sports is important here. Individual or other activities outside of school are critical. The growth of the experiential school curriculum and things like the sports school in F.H. Collins and other similar opportunities in the high schools are really important to keep kids connected and healthy.

Now that you have seen the outline of how the curriculum relates to substance abuse that appears at various grades, I will just give you an example of the teaching resources that are available to teachers to deliver these programs. That's an important piece. We don't want to leave individuals without the skills and opportunities to learn those.

Teachers design lesson plans that meet the expectations and the competencies that I have outlined and the content outlined in the curriculum: What are the learning outcomes? What are the requirements? How do they build those into their school teachings?

Research tells us that fear-based approaches to drug education are very rarely effective when it comes to helping young people develop the competencies they need to navigate the world where they see substances used every day.

Our schools will embrace the new curriculum. We're encouraging cross-curricular objectives, and drug education lends itself particularly well to cross-curricular lessons.

Teachers may also take the opportunities to address substance use in other subjects, not necessarily just in health — in language arts, in social studies or in arts education, in English courses where they may write about or read books about people who have struggled with these things — or other opportunities for understanding.

Our schools will also continue to deliver successful programs in partnership with government departments. We spoke earlier today during Question Period about the opportunities and the cooperation between Health and Social Services and Education with other community organizations and, as I have mentioned already, with the RCMP.

Some examples of those programs that I think are critical: the PARTY program — my colleague mentioned that earlier today — which stands for prevent alcohol and risk-related trauma in youth — there, high school students are taken to the hospital to observe and participate in the very, very stark reality of the effects of alcohol and drugs. It's a very powerful program. It is supported by the departments of the government

— our one-government approach. Again, it goes through various departments but the students are very much affected in a hopefully long-standing way.

Steps to Respect is another program that helps students make healthy life decisions. The drug abuse resistance education program, also known as DARE, is the drug and alcohol program sponsored by the RCMP. It's delivered to grade 5 students by specifically trained RCMP officers. I mentioned earlier that it is an important opportunity for communities — schools and other community resources and RCMP — to join forces in that knowledge, in that learning process.

The drug and alcohol resources — there are assorted kits including activities, videos and guest speakers that are provided by the drug and alcohol resource services in Health and Social Services. There is a program designed to aid teachers and administrators in what to look for in a youth drug culture. This is very important — it's called street drugs — because if teachers and administrators don't know what they're dealing with — don't know what to spot, don't know how to respond — they can't be as helpful as they probably want to be and maybe as students need them to be.

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

Debate on Motion No. 55 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following documents were filed on May 10, 2017:

34-2-1

Health insurance coverage for Nadja Cooper, letter re (dated April 11, 2017) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge to Hon. Pauline Frost, Minister of Health and Social Services (Cathers)

34-2-2

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), letter re, from Steve Hahn to Hon. Nils Clarke, Speaker (White)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 13

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, May 11, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

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| Hon. Ranj Pillai | Porter Creek South | Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation |
| Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee | Riverdale South | Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice |
| Hon. John Streicker | Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes | Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission |
| Hon. Pauline Frost | Vuntut Gwitchin | Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation |
| Hon. Richard Mostyn | Whitehorse West | Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission |
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Yukon Party

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

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New Democratic Party

| | |
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| Liz Hanson | Leader of the Third Party Whitehorse Centre |
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, May 11, 2017 — 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 Nursing Week

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to acknowledge National Nursing Week, which runs from May 8 to 12. At this time, I would like to introduce Nika Leonard, Christina Sims from the Registered Nurses Association; Rachel Burkhart, Sheila Thompson from Community Nursing; Steve Tapp, a licensed practical nurse from Alcohol and Drug Services; Carmen Gibbons from the Kwanlin Dün Health Centre; and Sean Secord, past president in the gallery today — all of you are representatives of the hundreds of nurses who work throughout the Yukon.

The theme for this year's Nursing Week is #YESThisIsNursing. This theme recognizes the influence that new technologies have on nursing roles and some of the non-traditional settings and sectors that nurses work in. The theme also speaks to how those in caregiving roles can leverage social media to raise awareness on important issues.

Our nurses work in hospitals, communities, clinics, on the streets, in long-term care facilities, care homes, palliative care, correctional facilities, treatment centres and private practices. Nurses also work in policy and management roles.

We have registered nurses, nurse practitioners, nurses practising with expanded scope and licensed practical nurses working everywhere in our territory. The Government of Yukon employs nurse practitioners, registered nurses and licensed practical nurses in areas of Community Nursing, Continuing Care, Alcohol and Drug Services, Communicable Disease Control and Justice. In addition, there are a number of nurses working for the Yukon Hospital Corporation or in private practices. These men and women bring with them not only caring and compassion, but a broad range of skill sets. From the fast-paced emergency room to the bedside of a palliative care patient to the support and assistance of new moms, they show compassion, use critical-thinking skills and pay attention to detail. This week, we appreciate all of our nurses, no matter their specialty or place of work, for their dedication and compassion to improve the lives of Yukoners. Thank you all.

Ms. McLeod: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to nurses across the Yukon for National Nursing Week. Also celebrated this week is

International Nurses Day, which occurs annually on May 12, the birthday of nursing pioneer Florence Nightingale.

I am happy to have the chance to acknowledge the work nurses do for us day in and day out, and to reflect on the value that work has on our communities. Throughout our lives, we have encountered nurses who have been there for us in many different ways.

Nurses help to deliver babies. They weigh them, bathe them, and help new families get their bearings by answering questions and providing sound advice. They immunize those babies throughout infancy, into childhood and beyond. They help Yukoners thrive by encouraging healthy and active lifestyles. They lead research and innovation. They care for the elderly and seriously ill in their homes. They assist in surgeries and traumas. They provide comfort and companionship.

Nursing is one of the most difficult and also one of the most rewarding professions in our territory. From the community health practitioner to the surgical, emergency room or medevac nurse, each one of these individuals has dedicated their lives to ensuring the health of others and, in turn, contributing to a healthy and vibrant community. Nurses are the front line of patient and health care and tend to be the face remembered when one thinks back to their own or their loved ones' stay at a hospital.

I encourage all levels of government, all communities and organizations, and all Yukoners to acknowledge and give thanks to those working in a profession that makes such huge contributions to the well-being of our territory.

Thank you to all Yukon nurses for your kindness, your compassion and your dedication to Yukoners. Thank you for working long hours on odd rotations and never giving up. Your dedication to the health of our community is inspiring, and I thank each and every one of you for your commitment.

Ms. White: #YESThisIsNursing is the theme for this year's National Nursing Week. I'm pleased to stand here and pay tribute to the nurses in Yukon and to the Yukon Registered Nurses Association. We honour and recognize the dedicated professionals in the Yukon who are registered nurses, nurse practitioners, certified nursing aides and licensed practical nurses.

It has to be noted that nurses are with us throughout our lives. A nurse was likely there when we took our first breath and it is probable that a nurse will be there when we take our last.

The theme of this year's week is #YESThisIsNursing and is a reminder that these professionals are versatile and all around us. They work in our hospitals and health centres, they work in home care visiting and supporting clients in their homes, they work where the homeless and marginalized are found. They meet and support people where they live and where they're at, whether on the streets or in shelters, hospitals or homes. They are teachers and professors training more nurses, who will in turn support the community in all aspects of health.

We all know about Doctors Without Borders or Médecins Sans Frontières, but what is sometimes missed is the number of nurses who work alongside these physicians.

Nurses are bringing their skills and professionalism to areas of conflicts and to areas experiencing outbreaks of disease. They bring with them compassion and competency. They are training communities in preventive health care to make sure they leave behind a legacy of hope, just like they do in our communities.

Our territory would be a very different place without nurses and it's hard to even imagine, so thank you to the registered nurses, the nurse practitioners, certified nursing aides and licensed practical nurses. You make the Yukon a much better place to live.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Hassard: I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming a few people to the Assembly today. First off is Mr. Erin O'Toole, who is the MP for Durham as well as a candidate for the federal Conservative leadership race. With him is his EA, Mr. Jeff Pierce, as well as Connor Whitehouse, president of the Yukon Conservative Association.

Applause

Mr. Adel: I would like the House to recognize one of my constituents from Copperbelt North, Mr. Dennis Senger.

Applause

Mr. Streicker: I would like to acknowledge Mayor Michael Riseborough and his wife Brenda, who are here from Haines Junction. Michael is the first vice-president of the Association of Yukon Communities. He is on his way up to Faro, as are many of us later today. We're looking forward to a great weekend with the Association of Yukon Communities.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like the House to welcome my family. I have my cousin Mia Starcevic, my wife Shona, Sophie, my son Liam, my uncle Clive Mostyn, and beside him is Dennis Senger, who my able colleague here just identified. Clive and Dennis went to school together a couple of years ago to study journalism, and I welcome them to the House.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I do want to thank the Minister of Community Services for his kind words, but I would like to add a couple of points about our mayor from Haines Junction, who is a good friend of mine. He was once a CO and I look to him for a lot of knowledge and expert advice when it comes to doing my job, and I enjoy our great working relationship.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I would like to welcome Aubyn Russell. She came in a little bit late and she is one of

our amazing nurses at Kwanlin Dün and I want to acknowledge her today.

Applause

Ms. White: I'm lucky — I somehow won the coin toss here. I would like to introduce my friend Steve Tapp. It's an important thing to note that he came out of the harm reduction business.

He worked long and hard at making the lives of people better in Vancouver before he moved here. He took that love into the practical nursing program at Yukon College, and now he is working at Alcohol and Drug Services. This is a perfect example of someone taking a passion and moving it up to that next level. He is one of the nurses we are paying tribute to today. Thank you so much Steve for your dedication.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. Frost: I have a document for tabling in response to the question from the Member for Lake Laberge on health care insurance coverage.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the government, in consultation with palliative care physicians and health professionals, to consider placing the palliative care unit in the Thomson Centre close to emergency physicians and the hospital pharmacy.

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: Carbon tax

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, we learned what the federal government's plans for implementing the Premier's carbon tax scheme in Yukon will look like. Multiple national news agencies are reporting that the federal government will announce next week that the carbon-pricing scheme, which the Premier is working with Ottawa to implement in Yukon, will be modelled on the carbon tax in place in Alberta. For weeks now, the Premier has been saying that he has been in negotiations with the federal government

about the structure of the carbon tax here in Yukon. He told this House that he is waiting to hear about the details. Well, the details are now available, and they don't look good for the Premier's election commitments.

Can the Premier please tell us if he is happy that the carbon tax is designed by the Alberta NDP that is coming to the Yukon, or will he change course and stand up to Ottawa against this carbon tax scheme?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. We are very much aware of the recent speculation in the media about the federal carbon-pricing mechanism — the federal pricing mechanism. We continue to work with the federal government on this issue. The federal government will release its plan for the implementation of their mechanism. We will be working with the official information and develop a process to return the monies collected to Yukoners. We have made an agreement with the federal government to allow Yukon to return carbon-pricing revenues to Yukoners, and we remain committed to doing so.

As I have said over and over, this is a federal carbon-pricing mechanism. It will be collected by the federal government. We do appreciate that Yukoners are very interested in how this is going to work, and so are we. When we have more information, we will determine how the money will be collected and how it will be returned.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said over and over that he wants to consult Yukon businesses on the structure of the rebate program that is going to accompany this carbon tax, but now we're learning that the federal government has already made up their mind. In fact, reports suggest that there won't even be any consultation. It turns out that the plan is to mimic Alberta's carbon tax, including rebate payments sent directly to low- and middle-income individuals. The Premier promised over and over that Yukon businesses will get to help shape the rebate program to ensure that they aren't negatively affected by the carbon tax. Now it turns out that there won't be a rebate program for businesses.

Either the Premier has misled Yukon businesses or the federal government has completely ignored this Premier. Which is it, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, we are very much aware of the speculation and we can see it being emulated here by the Yukon Party. There has been some talk in the media, for sure, but when we have more information, we will determine how the money will be collected and how the money will be returned — of this federal carbon-pricing mechanism. It's important for the members opposite to understand that carbon pricing is federally imposed and will be levelled by the federal government. The Liberal government negotiated with the federal government to secure the option to return the collected dollars back to Yukoners. At the end of the day, carbon pricing is a revenue-neutral system, geared toward encouraging Yukoners to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels.

I know that we are in agreement that carbon-pricing mechanisms are a great way of identifying the need to transition off of fossil fuels. I know that the NDP is behind this as well and encourages this mechanism from Ottawa. We

look forward to more details coming in the next few weeks and months, and we will share those details with the Leader of the Official Opposition as we get them to make sure that he and his party can help us in determining how we're going to get those rebates back on this federal carbon-pricing mechanism.

Mr. Hassard: So I get from that non-answer that, yes, we are going ahead with Alberta's carbon tax plan.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has proudly told us he is going to rely on the federal government's backstop to implement the carbon tax scheme he signed on to, but now we know that the federal government plans to use Alberta carbon tax as their model for our backstop.

By using the Alberta model, the federal government can collect the tax and send some of the money raised to individuals directly, bypassing the territorial government altogether. The Premier has promised over and over that Yukoners will get to decide how the rebate program will work.

How can he assure Yukoners this promise will be kept when the Yukon government won't even play a role in the rebate program at all?

Hon. Mr. Silver: If the member opposite is going to get all of his information from newspapers, that's his priority. That's fine. We'll wait until we hear from Ottawa as to how they want to move forward with the carbon-pricing mechanism. That's what we're going to do.

I think I have been very clear in answering the questions. When more details come from the federal government — not from the newspapers — we'll share that information. Absolutely — this government has committed to open and accountable governance. We've committed to a whole-of-government approach when it comes to implementing the federal carbon-pricing mechanism. Also, we're very, very proud of the work that we have done on this side to negotiate the annex. Also, we're happy that the Yukon Party signed on to the pan-Canadian framework to start us down the process of a federal carbon-pricing mechanism so we want to thank them for the work that they've done in committing us to this federal carbon-pricing mechanism as well.

Question re: Carbon tax

Mr. Kent: The Yukon finally has some details on what the Premier's carbon tax scheme is going to look like. The Premier has avoided every question from the Official Opposition on this topic for weeks.

I have a simple question for the Premier: Can he please tell Yukoners what his definition of "revenue neutral" is?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, this is an interesting tactic for the Yukon Party: ask one question a day. I guess that way they are not going to run out of questions before the end of the session.

I will answer them again. We do know that there is some speculation going on in the newspapers about the federal carbon-pricing mechanism. We're going to wait for Ottawa to tell us the details and we do anticipate these coming soon. When they do, we will work with them, we will work on our

annex and we will work on the pan-Canadian framework that the Yukon Party signed on to. We look forward to moving forward and finding out what the mechanisms are about — the details. When we do, we will absolutely be open and transparent about the rebate and our commitment to Yukoners to make sure that the money is revenue neutral for Yukon businesses and Yukon families.

Mr. Kent: After spending six months avoiding the Legislative Assembly, the Premier spent three weeks avoiding questions on the carbon tax. We now find out from a Toronto newspaper what the Premier's carbon tax scheme will mean for Yukoners. According to these reports, the Premier's scheme will be based on the Alberta NDP model. This means that, by 2018, a couple with two children could pay an average of \$600 more in taxes, whereas the rebate for a couple with two kids could max out only at \$540 if they are one of the lucky 60 percent who qualify. It turns out that the carbon tax scheme the Premier signed on to is going to hit the wallets of Yukon families.

Is this the reason the Premier has refused to share this information with Yukoners and refused to provide a definition of "revenue neutral" here on the floor of this House?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the Yukon Party is getting very dangerously close to putting words in my mouth and therefore answering their own questions that they are asking here in the Legislative Assembly — but we'll let that go because this government has committed to answering the questions. The Yukon Party can't hear the answers, but I can't tell you something I don't already know and we've been very clear on what we do already know. We know what the annex says. The Yukon Party knows what the annex says. We know that we're waiting for Ottawa to give us more details. The Yukon Party knows that we're waiting on Ottawa to give us more details.

If the Yukon Party wants me to read the newspaper topics and go running around, based upon headlines in the newspapers — I don't think that is how they governed. I know that is not how they governed, and I know that they would appreciate that this government wouldn't do the same.

We will wait until Ottawa tells us about their federal pricing mechanism. We're going to wait. As I have said over and over again, this is a federal carbon-pricing mechanism. It will be collected by the federal government, and when we do have more information, we will determine how this money will be collected and given back in a revenue-neutral way to Yukon businesses and Yukon families.

I don't know how much clearer I have to be, Mr. Speaker, but I will anticipate the same question coming again in the second supplementary.

Mr. Kent: We're certainly seeing here today the Liberals showing their true colours — huge deficits, big debt and new taxes, and in the end, it is Yukon families who are going to pay. Let me quote one of the Premier's earlier claims about how he wanted to design his carbon tax scheme. He said — and I quote: "... to make sure that 100 percent of that tax stays in the Yukon so that it is truly revenue neutral for Yukon businesses and Yukon families." Again, Mr. Speaker, we have

not received a definition of what the Premier thinks "revenue neutral" is.

According to the Alberta New Democrats, 40 percent of Alberta households aren't even eligible for the full rebate. So the Premier has promised Yukon families and businesses that 100 percent of them will get all their money back, but now we find out that the Premier's scheme is based on a plan that doesn't give rebates to 40 percent of households.

My question is simple: Why was the Premier wrong?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, we'll tell the member opposite exactly what I know, and that is that we're waiting to hear from Ottawa. There is speculation in the media, absolutely. But here's the commitment: Ottawa made a commitment to our annex; Ottawa made a commitment to the Paris accord; Ottawa made a commitment to the pan-Canadian framework that was signed on to by the Yukon Party, which basically got us moving forward to a carbon-pricing mechanism.

I want to thank the members opposite for the work that they did, including a specific mitigation opportunities workshop from the previous government — I believe it was the Minister of Environment — preparing a comprehensive list of policy options to address climate change and carbon-pricing mechanisms.

So I want to thank them for the preliminary work when it comes to this federal pricing mechanism. We will, when we have more information, share it with the opposition — absolutely. But again, if the members opposite really want me to start speculating based upon news articles; I just think that's a bizarre way to do governance here in the Yukon. We're going to wait for Ottawa to maintain their commitment to our annex and maintain their commitment to the pan-Canadian framework.

Question re: Procurement policy

Ms. Hanson: It was just over a year ago that the Yukon Procurement Advisory Panel made its findings public. One of the findings from the 2016 report on procurement was that the mechanisms to address contractor concerns and complaints need to improve. However, recently, we have seen the courts being used as a way to settle disagreements or concerns with contractors. This is an expensive recourse that not only creates winners and losers, but it also creates unnecessary conflict. Mediation or negotiation is a more effective way to resolve issues. The courts should only be used as a last recourse. What has this government done to establish alternative dispute mechanisms to resolve disagreements with contractors?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have been working on the procurement file now for — since being elected. I've met with hundreds of contractors over the last several months. I have heard their concerns. I have started to address their concerns. As you know, this government is committed to bringing in all the recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Panel. We're going to do that.

No government wants to go to court, Mr. Speaker. It's an inefficient use of resources, but it is one of the mechanisms that we do have, and as a last resort, we're finding ourselves in court. I totally agree with the member opposite — we want

to find alternative mechanisms to address disputes within the contracting community when we can't agree on things. That is one of the panel recommendations. We are going to be looking at all of our options.

Ms. Hanson: That report from the Procurement Advisory Panel did make 11 recommendations — including what we just discussed — that would improve the process both for government staff and for the contracting community, those interested in bidding on government tenders.

Local contractors contribute their time and their expertise in sharing their experience and their recommendations. These recommendations also came with a long list of suggested actions.

What did not accompany this document and which is really clear from the minister's response is a work plan that outlines timelines, expected outcomes and measurements to determine if the measures are working, so that we don't just talk about how it would be nice to have alternate dispute, but we actually say that we have it or this is when we will have it.

Mr. Speaker, have any of the recommendations been implemented, and does the minister have a plan to implement the remaining ones?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question. It is really nice to see that the Third Party, this government and contractors are on the same page — and the civil service. We all want to improve the procurement process and we are in the midst of doing that.

To answer the member's question: yes, I do have a plan.

Ms. Hanson: That is really good to hear, Mr. Speaker.

We have heard from local contractors frustrated by the current tendering system that too often sees the addition of dozens of change orders, both when the tendering process is still open and again once the tender has been awarded. In most cases, these change orders result in more work, more time and more costs for the contractor.

What steps has this government taken to reduce the number of multiple change orders? Does the government track and review the reasons for change orders and the costs associated with these multiple change orders?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really thank the member opposite for her diligence on this subject. This government, right off the hop — I can tell you that it is going to move away from political interference in these projects. Right off the start, we are going to interfere less in these projects and let the good work of the civil service play out. We are going to provide guidance, we are going to plan and we are going to try to tender contracts earlier in the season so that contractors can actually start to build capacity in their businesses.

That way, they can actually execute on these projects with a little bit more planning a little more methodically, rather than just knee-jerk contracts being let at the last minute with very little consideration or planning. We're seeing contracts — even this morning, we were talking for a long time about contracts that haven't been planned and were done as politically expedient decisions. We're not going to do that, Mr. Speaker. We're going to take things with a more of a methodical approach and with more planning.

Question re: Solid-waste management

Ms. White: The closure of Raven Recycling's free store on Monday is bad news when it comes to waste reduction in the territory. This happened just a few weeks after the closure of the Salvation Army thrift store and a few months after the closure of the Whitehorse landfill's free store.

When it comes to re-using, options are more limited than ever in Whitehorse, which will likely lead to perfectly good items making their way into the landfill. Mr. Speaker, what steps has the minister taken to work with partners to find a sustainable way to reduce waste by facilitating the re-use economy in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks to the member opposite for the question. We have noted that there have been losses of private sector and NGO facilities that allowed for re-use. We are working with our partners, especially the municipal governments.

This past Friday, we had a meeting with the solid-waste working group, which includes members from several of our communities and members of the Community Operations branch to look at the overall waste diversion picture. We are working on it.

I will be talking this weekend with the Association of Yukon Communities to discuss options going forward.

Ms. White: The previous government set a goal for itself of diverting 50 percent of all waste by 2015. Without allocating proper resources to achieve that goal, it failed to even come close to it, with a diversion rate stuck around 20 to 25 percent for the last number of years.

It's important to note that any progress made was largely the result of the work done by the City of Whitehorse. Has the minister set a new goal for waste diversion, and has he allocated appropriate resources to reach that goal?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: To answer the question directly, Mr. Speaker, we have not yet set a new goal. That is part of the ongoing dialogue we're having with the municipalities. I look forward to those conversations to see if there's a goal.

There is encouragement to set a goal, so let's let those conversations happen and I'll be happy to share back with the members opposite the results of those conversations. I would like to acknowledge the work the City of Whitehorse has done. It is great work, and we recognize that, if we're going to do this well in the territory, we need to work in partnership and work in concert across the territory.

What I can tell you is that, when I have sat down with mayors — like Mayor Riseborough — and councils across the territory, and First Nation governments, everybody wants us to be recycling more. So we will be working to try to move more toward diversion, more toward reduce, more toward re-use and more toward recycling.

It is a good path and all Yukoners know we want to get there and we'll be working together.

Ms. White: Two key components of Yukon's recycling system are the refund mechanisms on beverage containers and the recycling fees charged at the time of purchase on different products. These are based on the concept of extended

producer responsibility. The idea is that the cost of our waste should be factored up front, rather than when we throw something out. It's the opposite of tipping fees, which too often lead to illegal dumping.

New regulations were supposed to be implemented last year, but the previous government decided to punt the issue forward a year — past election season. The regulations are now scheduled to come into force on August 1 of this year, so Mr. Speaker: Does the Minister of Environment support the concept of extended producer responsibility, and what are her plans regarding the previous government's proposed regulations?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks for the question. If the question is: Do we support the notion of moving toward stewardship models? Absolutely — currently, the date is set for August 1. We have been in discussion as a government and with our partners out there — the processors, the haulers — and our partner governments, municipal and First Nation governments. We hope to have an announcement soon. We recognize that it is important to move from the tax-based model to the stewardship model, and we think that is a great path overall. We will be working along with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment and the schedule that is provided there.

Question re: Carbon tax

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta carbon tax scheme is relatively simple: government collects a tax on all carbon-emitting fuels, including transportation and home heating. It then redistributes the wealth from tax revenue on the basis of income-based rebates to individual citizens. We now hear that the Liberal carbon tax on Yukoners will be based on the Alberta model, which will mean that there won't be a rebate program for businesses. Not even the Alberta NDP has tried to make the argument that the carbon tax is revenue neutral to businesses. Yet, the Premier has said repeatedly that a carbon tax in Yukon will be revenue neutral for Yukon businesses.

Will the Premier keep his promise to Yukon businesses that they will get carbon tax money back in rebates, or is this simply going to be another addition to the already long list of broken Liberal promises?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking the NDP for doing their homework and coming prepared for work and asking some really important questions — actually two different questions. The Yukon Party read a newspaper article this week, and they have asked three questions on a newspaper article — unbelievable.

I will answer the question again. We are aware of the recent speculation in the media about the federal carbon-pricing mechanism. We will continue to work with the federal government on this issue. I also read that newspaper article. The federal government will release their plan for implementation on their mechanism. We will work with this official information and develop a process to return the money collected to Yukoners.

We have made an agreement with the federal government to allow Yukoners to have that carbon-pricing revenue be returned back to them, and we remain committed to this. We appreciate that Yukoners want to know more about this and so do we. We are waiting on Ottawa to get more information and we are not going to use speculation from the newspapers to determine how we are going to move forward. We are in constant communication with our federal counterparts and the other provinces and territories. It is very important to understand that this is a federal carbon-pricing mechanism. We have to wait for Ottawa to find out more information.

Mr. Cathers: The thing that the Premier is not recognizing is that Yukoners want to know how much their taxes are going up within the next 12 months. We hear the Premier say that he is waiting for the federal government to take the lead. In Alberta, their carbon tax scheme is charged to all Alberta families regardless of income. It is charged on heating fuel, fuel in vehicles and a range of other carbon-emitting sources. The Alberta government only provides rebates to certain Alberta families and 40 percent of families are not eligible to receive the full rebate.

Not even the NDP there claim that the carbon tax is revenue neutral for Albertans, yet the Premier has promised that a carbon tax in Yukon will be revenue neutral to Yukon families.

If the carbon tax scheme he signed on to is going to be based on the Alberta model, as we have heard, how does the Premier plan to keep his promise so that the carbon tax will be revenue neutral for Yukon families? Is this simply going to be another broken Liberal promise?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the déjà vu from the member opposite. Again, we are waiting to hear from Ottawa. I don't know how much clearer I can be on the process.

Again, for anybody listening to the debate in the Legislative Assembly today, I urge them to take a look at the annex that was created by government-to-government relationships with Ottawa as far as making sure that the carbon-pricing mechanism is done in the way that we actually set out in that annex and it adheres to the plan that was given to us from the pan-Canadian framework, which was a result of the Paris accord and the Paris communications happening two years ago.

Again, this is all a process. There are many different plans across Canada — of provinces that have already invoked revenue-neutral plans. Alberta has a plan. They are very correct there, Mr. Speaker. There are other plans, and then there are jurisdictions like our own that don't have a current plan and we are waiting to hear from Ottawa for them to respond to our issues as put out in our annex. Until we hear back from them, we will not use speculation in the media to determine how we're going to move forward in our next steps.

Question re: Oil and gas development

Mr. Kent: I will ask a question of the Liberal government. It might be one of the few issues — if not the only issue — that they don't agree with the NDP on, and that's oil and gas development in the territory.

During the election, the Liberal government promised that it would support oil and gas development as long as it was outside of the Whitehorse Trough and wasn't involved in shale gas.

We know that there was interest expressed last year in the Kandik Basin and Eagle Plains and that First Nation consultations are now underway. Can the minister provide us with an update on when those discussions will conclude and the 60-day public consultation period will begin?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for Copperbelt South.

A little bit of background on where we are as a government working with the oil and gas sector — first, the Government of Yukon seeks to foster a thriving and prosperous economy. This means supporting existing industries, such as oil and gas resource development, while encouraging the development of new industries.

Existing industries have an important role to play in providing a stable base that allows us to achieve economic diversification, expand Yukon's economic competitiveness and create good jobs for Yukoners.

The Government of Yukon continues to support investment in development of Yukon's oil and gas industry to grow and diversify Yukon's economy, maximize Yukon business and employment opportunities, and provide government revenue.

As the member has stated, there is consultation ongoing. Just this week, there has been some communication back and forth from the northern First Nations on this piece, and we will continue to go through the process over the next number of days and months as we come to a point of understanding on what to do with these particular areas of interest.

Mr. Kent: There was a resource study undertaken by the Yukon Geological Survey among other geological surveys and expert organizations, and it suggested that the Liard Basin has tremendous natural gas potential. Developing these resources could provide direct and indirect benefits to not only the southeast Yukon, but to Yukon as a whole. The minister mentioned in his initial answer that the Liberal government is looking to promote thriving and prosperous economies.

Will the minister include gas development in the Liard Basin as a way to diversify the economy in southeast Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I look forward to a longer discussion, I think, that the Third Party has tabled — a motion that we'll probably see in the near future that will really focus on what is happening in southeast Yukon.

Would I love to see a growing economy through conventional methods in southeast Yukon? Absolutely. The challenge is this: right now we're in cleanup mode. We'll talk about this during the Energy, Mines and Resources budget process. I think the member opposite knows it well. Certainly what we're looking at now is we're going to be spending millions of dollars cleaning up in an area where there is actually no interest. We have one of the largest companies in the industry and at this particular time, we're in a process of cleanup, and there really is no interest on advanced exploration or production.

I look forward to when the member from the Third Party tables this and we're going to talk — really in-depth — about what is happening in southeast Yukon — what has happened — and maybe some troublesome facts that we can discuss later at that time.

Mr. Kent: The Liard Basin in southeast Yukon is much more than just the Kotaneelee field that the minister is talking about. It's one of the most attractive gas basins that the Yukon has to offer for a number of reasons. It's close to infrastructure. As I mentioned earlier, it has tremendous potential. The Kotaneelee wells contributed nearly \$50 million in resource royalties to the territorial coffers.

Has the minister had conversations with the affected Kaska First Nations — as well as the Acho Dene Koe, who have an asserted claim to areas in southeast Yukon, about including the Liard Basin in a future disposition?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that when we look at oil and gas development overall, really what we're doing at this particular time is — there are a lot of challenges that have been left. The first question talked about the 15 areas of interest and then of course the 12 that had shown interest — north Yukon. What I'm getting now are a series of letters really outlining the flawed process that we had.

There were a lot of discussions before we came into government. There are some lands that are in question. There are some areas that were supposed to be planned. There are some special management areas and all of those went out. At this point in time, I'm really trying to fix that scenario. In southeast Yukon, certainly, yes, we've had actually some great discussions with different affected parties, which were mentioned — different perspectives from each one about what interest looks like. But to be very open with the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, certainly at this time there has been really no interest from industry on doing anything in southeast Yukon. That may change. Certainly, the member opposite knows these files well. At this particular time, I'm trying to fix relationships and clean up things that were left behind.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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 (Mr. Hutton): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is

continuing general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*.

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. 201: *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*.

Mr. Cathers has two minutes and eight seconds.

Mr. Cathers: It's a pleasure to rise here today and engage in general debate on the budget. We left off with the Premier when last debating this. I want to recap a couple of things and point out that part of our job in opposition is to remind the Premier of his commitments, particularly when he is not doing what he said government would do, prior to taking office, and to call them out on those failings.

We have seen the government backtrack on a number of things the Premier said prior to the election. The Premier, in opposition, didn't like special warrants, yet set a record for the use of special warrants by using two special warrants before calling the Legislature and spending a total of \$456 million without the approval of the Legislative Assembly, which is a new record here in the territory.

We have also seen that the Premier, in opposition, was extremely critical of the previous government any time there were increases to the public service, even if those increases were in areas such as health care. Yet, as we have seen in the budget, the Premier has acknowledged that he is increasing the size of the public service by the addition of over 200 new positions in this fiscal year.

The Premier has also attempted to blame the red ink in future years on the cost of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility but, with those 200 new positions, we have seen that most of them are not even in Health and Social Services. The overwhelming majority are in other departments and represent a fairly significant increase of over 200 new positions to the public service, which increases the future O&M costs going forward.

Another area that we're concerned about is that the Premier, on April 4, appeared before the House of Commons finance committee. We're concerned about statements he made. The Premier told that committee — and I quote: "We're looking to remove power from our debt cap as well." Has the Premier made a formal request to the federal government for this yet and if so, what has he asked for?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would like to again welcome Kate White, Deputy Minister of Finance, here today by my side and again, thank you to the Department of Finance for

helping prepare me for the debate in general and also on departments.

So there are lots of things to go over from the 20 minutes that the member opposite used in his last time on his feet, both on Tuesday and today. I might as well start right with the FTEs. What's concerning, Mr. Chair, is that the member opposite either knows the truth about the numbers and understands the numbers, or the Yukon Party did a whole bunch of hiring without telling him — it is one of the two. I don't know which one is more concerning.

I do have a piece of paper here and I will share it with all members of this Legislative Assembly that breaks down that 201 number.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The statement that the Premier made — those types of statements in the past have been ruled out of order as being contrary to Standing Order 19(h).

Chair: Mr. Silver, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, on the point of order — which statement is the member referring to?

Chair: Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The accusation that another member is uttering a deliberate falsehood is typically ruled out of order in this Assembly.

Chair: Mr. Silver, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: If the member opposite would give me the opportunity to explain why I am making these comments, I think it will become very obvious to the Members of the Legislative Assembly Office what I'm talking about.

Chair's ruling

Chair: I don't see a point of order. I didn't hear the words that you did. If they are in Hansard, as you have suggested, I will look at it and review my ruling tomorrow.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I have the information here for the member opposite. The total of 201.75 FTEs — 133.33 of those are the expansion of programs pre-election. So if they are pre-election, they are from the Yukon Party. Out of those 201 hires that I have been criticized for by the Member for Lake Laberge, 133 of those are from his government. An additional 25.25 of those are for opening of new capital that the member opposite's party didn't plan for. Does the member opposite want me not to hire those 25 hires for Sarah Steele, e-health, new campgrounds or the Dawson City waste-water treatment plant? All of these are for them.

This document also breaks down our hires. We will stand behind the decisions of this government to put 10.6 more FTEs in the Department of Finance.

I will let the Minister of Health and Social Services talk about finally getting some support in Mental Health Services for mental health nurses in the communities. I don't know if those are the jobs that the member opposite would want us not

to have because they only had two, I believe, and that was just not enough. I am wondering if he doesn't agree that we should be expanding mental health services there — again, federal money.

I guess I would ask the member opposite if he could explain the 133.33 full-time equivalencies that his government hired that weren't in their last mains. They did not show up when we debated — when the Yukon Party put their last mains in. They didn't have a supplementary, so we will take it with a grain of salt that they could have at some time during the summer explained these 133 hires that their government did that we now have to account for with the 201 hires. I will leave that to him to answer.

Mr. Chair, the member opposite was very critical of our public servants — really. The member's disapproval was implied in this House earlier and he was very direct in an article in yesterday's *Whitehorse Star* as well. The quote was very clear — and I quote: "The ballooning of the Department of Finance is a total waste of money." It took a total of three weeks into the first Sitting for the Yukon Party to go on the record criticizing public servants.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Mr. Cathers, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The member is imputing unavowed motives to another member, contrary to Standing Order 19(g). He knows very well I was criticizing his decision, not officials.

Chair: Mr. Silver, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, I will suggest that this is a dispute among members. We both have our own different opinions on this, and I don't think there is a dispute here.

Chair's ruling

Chair: I don't find a point of order on this. It is a disagreement between members.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Given some of the comments from organizations like the C.D. Howe Institute, we firmly believe that mistakes of the past should be avoided. For example, it was in the April 2016, C.D. Howe Institute report that noted that Yukon placed 13th out of 14 jurisdictions in Canada when it comes to overshooting its spending targets over the last number of years.

The 2016 report gave Yukon government only a C+ grade on hitting budget targets and a similar grade on spending overruns and on the level of clarity on financial reporting. The previous government routinely spent more than it budgeted. One of the purposes of the new employees in Finance that the member opposite is criticizing — if the Member for Lake Laberge is now saying he is criticizing me, I will take the criticism, even though these appointments were a fantastic conversation with our caucus and the Department of Finance officials. It was an absolutely necessary step. I will go on to explain why we, working in partnership not only with the Department of Finance but also with a whole-government

approach, believe in these 10.6 more new hires. It comes back to my statement where the previous government routinely spent more money than it budgeted.

One of the purposes of the new employees in Finance is to improve that forecasting accuracy. The new division of the Department of Finance, which is Economics, Fiscal Policy and Statistics, will provide fiscal policy analysis and advice that has not been previously available to previous management boards, as the member opposite will know.

The division will work with departments to ensure that all budgeting and planning incorporates the latest of information and provides an internally consistent fiscal plan. Budgeting and reporting processes will be improved and streamlined, and supported by a consistent set of assumptions across Yukon government departments for planning purposes.

When we take a look again at the 201.75 new hires that have been identified in this budgetary process, 133.33 of those were decisions made by the Yukon Party government. We would like to ask the member opposite which communities these hires are in. We would like to ask the member opposite what departments they are in. We know that — he knows that — well, when he gets to his feet, he can comment on whether or not he was aware — it was his previous government that did the 133.33 full-time equivalencies there.

We have not made any request to the federal government to raise our debt cap, as the member opposite is saying. As the member opposite knows, our government has established an independent Financial Advisory Panel and we want to get our finances back on track to make the Government of Yukon financially sustainable now and into future generations. That's what we're going to do.

Our Finance department is going to become whole and we're going to make some better financial forecasts than previous governments and get ourselves back on track here.

I also did want to clear the record. It's noted in Hansard, I believe, when the member opposite, in closing — I will quote here from his statements on Tuesday, I believe. I'm not sure about that date but I believe it was on Tuesday that he said: "... I would also note that, for a government talking about fiscal control — if we look to the government's transition costs, there is \$111,550 spent for transition costs." Mr. Chair, that's not true. Really, the real cost in total is \$66,900. The member opposite — again, I don't know where he gets his numbers but he's twice as far off as the actual costs.

I think what might have happened — and I will let the member opposite correct me if I'm wrong — I think he didn't do enough due diligence on the numbers. He might have taken a look at the contracts as opposed to the actual money that was spent in the end. So for him and for anybody else listening to this debate today, our transition team — I think we did a very good job of transitioning from a 14-year government into a new government in as expeditious a process as possible and the total that we spent is \$66,900 — just under \$67,000, not the \$111,000-plus that the member opposite told everybody in the Legislative Assembly.

We're clearing up the FTEs. We're cleaning up the member opposite's questions about transition costs.

I just want to move on and I hopefully have enough time here for pension solvency, which was also brought up by the member opposite. I think the Member for Lake Laberge was finishing his remarks on Tuesday as well. He had mentioned the issue of pension solvency so I want to correct the record here just so he understands what's going on.

I want to ensure the honourable member that I do understand the issue and I do understand his point with respect to the Public Accounts for 2015-16. The Auditor General did acknowledge that, for 2015-16, the letter of credit in place in relation to the college pension plan was sufficient to cover any solvency deficits. However, Mr. Chair, that was then and this is now.

When we came into office in December 2016, there was a bill waiting for us. Money was required for 2016-17 to cover the pension solvency issues for both the college and for the Hospital Corporation. Now, I imagine the member opposite would know that. I'm sure he would, which is why I'm surprised by the line of questioning.

Money for this purpose was not included in the main estimates of the Yukon Party's last budget, so the money had to be provided in a supplementary estimate for last year. That's the process that the previous government would do. In other words, there was a bill for last year and I would have thought that the previous government knew that there would be that bill, so the member opposite can comment on that.

At any rate, it was left for us to pay and the payment was due. The letter of credit for the college was sufficient to cover solvency issues for 2015-16. That was not the case for last year, so money had to be included in the supplementary estimates for 2016-17 to pay last year's bill. That was \$3.5 million for the Hospital Corporation, and it was also just under \$500,000 — so \$496,000 — for the college.

Now, Mr. Chair, I understand that it was the practice of the previous government to wait until each year at the supplementary estimates to allocate the money for pension solvency. We changed that practice. That's what we're doing and I'll explain why. We have said that we are giving a true cost of governance — a true picture of cost for government. That includes providing these pension-solvency payments in the main estimates. We have a reasonable estimate of what they will be for 2017-18, just as we have reasonable estimates for many other expenditures. Again, by putting more emphasis in the Department of Finance, we're getting better and better at these estimates — so better and better accounting and better and better fiscal responsibility for the taxpayers.

The budget for 2017-18 includes \$3.6 million for the Hospital Corporation and also \$1.9 million for the college to cover pension-solvency requirements. As I have said, this reflects on our commitment to include money as we expect to spend annually — we do spend this annually — in the main estimates, as opposed to waiting for a supplementary budget or a budget light, we want to use the supplementary budget for its real purpose as well.

Mr. Chair, we intend to work with the college, the hospital and their pension committees to find a sustainable solution to this solvency issue. In the interim, we have some

progress to report as a result of discussions that I have had with the federal Minister of Finance. I am sure the member opposite will be interested in this.

Late last month, the federal government proposed regulatory changes that would increase the proportion of a solvency deficit that could be funded by a letter of credit rather than by cash. These regulations, if passed, would change the formula for the maximum amount that could be covered through letters of credit to 15 percent of liabilities instead of 15 percent of assets.

This is roughly equivalent to about 1.5 years of funding. That's good news. That would mean that if these regulations are passed, we could reduce the amount of money appropriated in future years. I hope that clears up a bit of the financial issues for the member opposite. I look forward to some more questions from him and hopefully some questions from the Leader of the Third Party as well.

Chair's statement

Chair: I would ask all members at this time to avoid references to “true” or “truth” when referring to statements from other members — “accurate” or “inaccurate” is preferred.

Mr. Cathers: First of all, in the Premier's assertions about jobs and employment that he claims were done by the previous government, and tying them to capital — first of all, I would note that the actual O&M requirements — actual personnel requirements — for any new asset are not necessarily as black and white as the Premier likes to indicate that they are. The choices of what staffing requirements are made are typically made by the Cabinet and Management Board of the day in conjunction with departments when reviewing the request. One thing that the Premier may not be aware of is that there are times when that request can be changed or adjusted to come up with a more fiscally responsible model than the original request.

Particularly when one is trying to live within a culture of restraining the growth of fiscal O&M costs, it's important to look for cost-effective solutions and to find ways to reduce those costs and to find efficiencies, particularly when one is adding new staff and new staffing requirements.

Again, we simply challenge the Premier to provide the evidence that those staff were actually hired prior to the election and provide that information, because he has made those assertions. He knows very well that we don't have access to previous Management Board documents. Those are taken as soon as Cabinet leaves office as part of the transition process. Executive Council Office staff come over and archive all confidential Cabinet and Management Board documents, and those are then put in a file. The member is welcome to share the information that his government is working from and, contrary to assertions the member made the other day — I will assume that he may have been unclear on the law in this area, but Management Board information can be released with proper authority. It is typically kept confidential, but the oath of secrecy that members swear is an oath not to disclose information without due authority in that regard. I know that

is cumbersome wording, but that is a quote from the oath of secrecy, based on my recollection of it.

In that case, the current Cabinet is the one that has the authority to choose to release briefing books, as they, prior to the election, campaigned on being more open and being more accountable. One of the current members of Cabinet — in a former role — indicated a belief that Cabinet briefing books should be made available to the public and yet we see government refusing to release transition books and briefing documents they told the public they would make available.

Mr. Chair, I would acknowledge that some of that is information that has been protected under the previous government prior to that. The point here is, when the Premier likes to point fingers at the previous government, we're holding him to account based on his own words and statements. Part of our job as the Official Opposition is to hold him accountable on behalf of Yukoners as we do our work. Our job as the Official Opposition includes holding the Premier accountable for his own statements and promises and those of his team — what they said to Yukoners to gain their trust and get their vote.

The Premier did provide a bit of a breakdown on those FTEs his government is adding this year, the increase of over 200 new positions — most of them not in areas such as health care, which is where the Premier, in statements to the media, has suggested is the real reason for government running red ink in future years — because of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. As we have seen here, most of the new employees the Premier is adding, which would have drawn strong criticism from the Member for Klondike prior to the last election, when he was in opposition, are not in areas of health care. We would welcome a detailed breakdown on where these positions are located, which communities and the date when employees were hired or when they will be hired.

Mr. Chair, I would again note that it's not often that I will quote the Leader of the NDP here in the House, but I refer to remarks she made earlier in a previous Question Period during this Sitting — or pardon me, I believe it was Motion debate — when she told the story of one premier talking to another and the three envelopes. It seems the current Premier has taken that advice to heart and has opened envelope one, which is blaming the previous government. He is peeking at envelope two, which is to blame Ottawa and, at some point, if he doesn't start to actually acknowledge the decisions this government made are ones for which he and his team have to take responsibility, then Yukoners in due course will force him to open the third envelope as he leaves office.

I would point out that one of the challenges with special warrants is that it does make it difficult to dig into the details for not only members of the opposition and private members of the government who don't sit at the Cabinet table, but it makes it difficult for the media and for the general public to understand what is contained within a half a billion dollars of spending authorized by a special warrant — I should say nearly half a billion, \$456 million in total.

It also blurs the line between fiscal years, makes it more difficult to find those details, and makes it easier for a new

premier to try to pass off decisions of his government as being those done by the previous government. As Yukoners know, in fact, the last almost half of the 2016-17 fiscal year was after the Liberals took office and they do need to take responsibility for the decisions made during that time period.

A couple of pieces of advice that I would pass on to the Premier — and I would hope, with some degree of doubt, that he'll actually listen and take this advice to heart — that is advice that most Yukon families, small businesses and people with their personal finances can pass on — which is that when you're short of money, you don't start increasing spending in areas where you don't need to spend it. You exercise fiscal prudence in making decisions about what new spending you need to do. You look for efficiencies within your existing resources and you try to tighten up your belt. You don't go on a spending spree and add a large number of new positions, which increases your overhead now and for years to come. You don't control spending by increasing it.

We've seen by the Premier's statements, including in previous budgets — and I'm genuinely concerned — I don't think the Premier understands the finances of the territory yet and why certain departments tend to lapse money or where and where there are issues and challenges with program delivery. I would also point out to the Premier and make a prediction that the total amount they've included in this year's budget in net capital is unlikely to be spent. The Premier has budgeted more than typically the procurement and contracting system has historically delivered in the past. I think that the Premier will be lapsing a significant amount of money because of that and because of this government's failure to meet its commitment to tender seasonally sensitive contracts by the end of March.

I do again have to — at the risk of being rude — point out to the Premier that this commitment did not come with an asterisk beside it when they put it in their platform. They didn't say, "We'll move toward tendering seasonally dependent contracts." They did say they would do it every year. Yukoners who voted for them on that basis — who depend on contracts to feed their families and to make their mortgage payments — are both genuinely concerned and upset by the fact that the government has failed to meet its own target and seasonally dependent contracts are slowly starting to trickle out, well after the date when the Liberals promised they would always be out by.

Mr. Chair, the Premier made reference to the booking of the pension deficits for Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon College. I am pleased by the update he provided about changes to regulation that may be coming down the pipe that may change how governments have to book this. For those who are listening who are not clear on the structure of this, what the solvency deficit refers to is — a pension plan is valued on the basis that the pension plan were terminated as of the valuation date. That has not always been the way it has been booked under Public Sector Accounting Board standards and that has been criticized by a number of governments across the country because effectively, for government entities and government organizations, it's highly unlikely that they

would wrap up all of their business and terminate all of their employees within areas, especially such as health care, education or other parts of the public service. The argument has been made by a number of Finance ministers across the country that requiring governments to fully book the valuation of — if the pension plan were immediately terminated — is, in fact, an unnecessary step and that it should be done more on a going-concern basis, recognizing the actual predicted slowdowns in future years and booking those annual costs.

The Premier has said that they had to book the \$4 million there. We do question that. We question that on the basis of — among other things — page 14 of the 2015-16 Public Accounts and the indication of the Public Accounts as approved by the Auditor General with a clean bill of health. The Auditor General indicated that the letters of credit from Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon College were sufficient and that a cash payment was not required for those amounts.

If the Premier indicated they were told otherwise, we would challenge him and request that he provide not only to us, but to the public, any documentation from the Auditor General of Canada indicating that or any documentation from the federal regulator of pensions, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, commonly known by the acronym OSFI.

I would also welcome information about the timing with which the government is now receiving updates on the hospital and college pension plans. I know that, going back a few years, when the hospital and college first approached us with pension plan deficit issues — that was in 2006 — during my early days as Minister of Health and Social Services. At that time, I know that the information that had been received by the Hospital Corporation in the case — which was the one for which I was responsible as Minister of Health and Social Services — the hospital had been informed by the federal regulator of concerns and knew the information from their auditor for the previous fiscal year for the hospital. They had received the information in June 2006 and the information was provided to government, subsequent to that date. I would be interested in hearing which month the government is now being informed of solvency deficits in those areas.

Again, if the Premier can provide evidence to back up his claim that they were required to book that \$4 million in the 2016-17 fiscal year, then we will certainly accept his statement if — and only if — he can provide evidence to back it up.

Also, when the Premier is talking about his overall increases to the size of the public service, he is failing to recognize that where the point of predicting the economy that he is referring to — in referencing the substantial increase to the Department of Finance, I would point out to him, in fact, that he seems to be failing to recognize the areas where government typically runs into issues with capital project delivery and program delivery.

In fact, if the member will refer back to the advice that I gave to him during my remarks at second reading on the budget, I actually pointed to areas where government, in the

past — through the structure of Management Board minutes — has at times impeded the delivery of capital projects. I gave him and his colleagues advice on how to avoid that in the future, because part of our job here in opposition — we believe as well that we want government to do the right thing for the Yukon. We want government to get the contracts out and have them work effectively and efficiently. We would rather not be in a position where we can criticize contract delivery because when we have the opportunity to criticize it, that also comes with the fact that there are Yukon citizens and their families who are paying the price for a poor decision by government or by a project delay on the part of government.

If the member would heed some of that advice as well as listen to senior department officials across government, and ask them for information on how to improve project and program delivery and procurement — that, coupled with the report of the Procurement Advisory Panel that was done last summer, would be a good starting point for the member and his government to actually help government employees across government and to help contractors in working together to ensure that contracts are put out the door and delivered on time and on budget, or as close to it as possible. We think that the choice to significantly increase the size of government by over 200 employees is simply a mistaken decision that we do believe rests entirely on the shoulders of the current government. I would note too — to the Premier and to every minister — that it's important as well that, if they are trying to send a message to government departments of the need for financial management and fiscal control, it is important for them to show leadership at home — so to speak — and to demonstrate that through their own behaviour and their own decision-making.

As I ran out of time in my previous remarks, I want to note again that, on April 4, the Premier appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance and we were concerned by statements he made. The Premier said — and I quote: “We’re looking to remove power from our debt cap as well. The federal government will definitely have to help us out with that very important consideration.” I understand that the Premier indicated earlier on the floor of the House that he has not made that formal request yet, but the question for us is why he actually even wants to make that request and considers it a high enough priority that he made that request to the federal finance committee.

Hon. Mr. Silver: There are a lot of statements but not a lot of questions. I will try to go through that again and just answer the questions as well as I can — based on 20 minutes of preamble, I guess.

I will start with the FTEs. We will provide the information. We will put it out there. I have asked the Member for Lake Laberge if he is unaware of the 133 hires that his government did last year, because that is a substantial part of the 201 hires in total. That is our statement on that.

As far as providing some kind of Management Board documents, you cannot provide something that wasn't discussed. These weren't our hires; they were his government's hires. I think he knows that — he understands

that if we provide Management Board submissions, there is nothing to show because we didn't make that decision. It was his government for those 133. I'm not going to continue to reiterate that. We are going to move forward here.

For the record, special warrants — on the point of accuracy — thank you, Mr. Chair, for clarifying language in the Legislative Assembly, and I apologize. Warrants are fiscal-year specific and we did one for the spending of 2016-17 so that we can get through this debate. That's the point — we're here now.

We do have two special warrants here. There have been 62 special warrants issued since 1994-95. We have been on record saying that if you're in your 14th year, you probably shouldn't be doing special warrants. But again, based on the circumstances of a transition and the lack of a supplementary budget, we feel that, even though I'm not a big fan of special warrants, we had to get them done.

In looking at the books and seeing how the fiscal scrutiny needed help, we also wanted to do things right so that's why we're a little bit late in the session.

The Special Warrant No. 2 for 2016-17 included the \$3.5 million for additional teachers in Education — again, he's asking me to break these things down but I think we've been over these things quite a bit. We're in Hansard many times breaking down the special warrants, but I will say again that for the bigger special warrant, Special Warrant No. 1 for 2017-18 — it is a big number. I agree with the member opposite on that — \$334, 440,000 in O&M and also \$92,535,000 in capital to provide spending authority for the first three months of the fiscal year while the Legislative Assembly is here debating the full year of spending authority.

In general, the special warrant will cover one-fourth of personnel and non-personnel, which includes, as the member opposite knows very well, grants, contributions and contracts paid and commitments from April to June, plus the full cost of any grants, contributions and contracts that are paid and/or committed to in a three-month period.

It kind of makes sense for the timing of this Legislative Assembly and it's us doing a fiscal accounting of the spending as we're in the Legislative Assembly to make sure that the money gets out the door — money like community municipal grants that were due on April 1 and also annual contracts, or large construction projects where the full project value must be committed to before the summer construction season starts, or to continue on with construction of infrastructure that has already been in progress. I think we have been pretty forthright in that.

It is worth noting — as far as comments on the debt cap — the previous government did leave us with an infrastructure deficit in power generation and distribution. We may ask the federal government to remove power from our debt cap so that deficit can be addressed. While we have not made a final decision on this, we are gathering evidence as promised and that's what we're going to do.

I hope that answers the member's question. Again, I don't want to reiterate too much here. I would really like to give the Member for Whitehorse Centre an opportunity to speak as

well today. Again, as far as whether or not we're looking forward to increasing that debt cap, we've answered the question already.

As far as money lapses — another question — it's typical for a government to lapse money and lapses are going to be less with better planning, basically. We're hoping to prove that this is possible with the strategic investment that we're making.

I think that is pretty much all the questions, without a whole bunch of preamble here. Just a clarification: the member opposite is incorrect. The pension solvency issue has actually been going on since 2004, not since 2006. I think that is all the questions from the member opposite for now and, if not, I am sure he will use his 20 minutes to ask these questions again.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier is actually partially correct in his statement about the pension plan solvency deficit, in that the first deficit that was addressed was for the Yukon Hospital Corporation and for Yukon College — although I'm not as intimately familiar with that one as I am for the hospital, since I was Minister responsible for the Yukon Hospital Corporation at that time in my capacity as Minister of Health and Social Services. The discussions with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the request for government assistance took place in 2006. The first year, there was a solvency deficit for the hospital — the member is absolutely correct — in 2004, but the request came in 2006. In December 2006, this was one of the first issues brought to my attention when I was given my initial briefing by the Department of Health and Social Services. Then, in early 2007, government concluded the agreement, which at that point saw the government provide \$10.4 million in cash to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to help them cover the solvency deficit for the 2004-05 fiscal year.

That's just a clarification for the member. I understand why he felt that a correction was necessary; I'm just providing more information on that, so he can understand how that actually transpired.

In the case of the transition costs where members said the government spent less than was issued, we would be interested — I won't actually ask him to provide that in the House, but I would ask him for a legislative return providing information about the amounts actually paid to the people for whom contracts were shown on the contract registry. The number of \$111,000 for transition costs was based on information from the contract registry. I would just ask him to get back to me with a legislative return. I'm not going to ask for those specific contracts here — just respecting the privacy of the people who are mentioned, so I won't draw them into debate by name. At this point, I would just ask for accountability by the government and explain to us, out of the \$111,000 that Yukoners looking at the contract registry would believe was spent, if less was spent, what was the actual breakdown?

It's interesting the member — it's another area where we have seen the Premier have a change of heart. I recall the Premier, in opposition, being critical of government's decision

to invest in Mayo B and in the connection of the two grids together so the Dawson-Mayo grid was connected to the Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro grid, commonly called the WAF grid. That investment and partnership with the federal government, which led to the connection of, first, the extension of the powerline up to serve the Minto mine, for which then Sherwood Copper made a contribution toward the cost of the line extension and government covered the rest — Sherwood Copper paid the full cost of the spur line.

At that point then, of course, they later became Capstone, which is now the current owner of the Minto mine. I would note then as well that the connection — the Carmacks-Stewart interties, as it was referred to — was part of the overall project along with Mayo B. It's interesting that the member was critical of those types of investments in the past because of the fact that some long-term debt was acquired through a bond for those purposes. Now — disturbingly so, in my opinion — the member is indicating that he believes there is an infrastructure deficit in power and indicating that, if I understood him correctly, they haven't formally requested power to be removed from the federal debt cap, but plan to do so.

Of the long-term debt that is on the Yukon's books — in total, \$143.8 million — the majority of it is due for borrowings by Yukon Development Corporation for hydro assets. What concerns us is that it would appear to us from his testimony to the House of Commons finance committee on April 4 that the Premier plans to borrow more than the \$198.5 million of unused borrowing capacity that currently exists under the debt cap, because it would seem to us that there would be absolutely no need to ask the federal government to make any changes to the debt cap if the Premier's plans were less than that remaining \$198.5 million, which remains under the federal debt cap.

Again, my question is twofold: How much money is the Premier considering borrowing to invest in electrical infrastructure? Secondly, how much money is the Premier considering borrowing for other infrastructure? Based on his statements to Yukoners in the past — if memory serves, I believe he said he didn't want to leave any federal money on the table and he left the door open — we understood with those comments about borrowing money — to access money from the federal Building Canada for things such as roads, bridges, water infrastructure and so on.

Again, twofold: How much is the Premier looking at borrowing for hydro and power assets? How much are they looking at borrowing for other assets?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the Member for Lake Laberge not using his complete 20 minutes this time.

I just want to correct the record again. Take a look at Hansard again. We didn't say we were planning on increasing — that we're planning on looking at increasing the debt cap. We're gathering information as far as power. We're gathering information as far as the debt that we were left with. Gathering information is one thing. Planning to exclude or include — the member opposite is speculating and I would encourage him to listen to the responses and the wording. I didn't say that we were planning to do that. I said that we

were gathering information. Again, I'm sensing a theme with the Yukon Party here. They're trying to put some words here in my mouth and it's just not true.

Again, gathering information. These are great conversations.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Mr. Kent, on a point of order.

Mr. Kent: Referring to Standing Order 19(h), I believe you ruled on it earlier here. The Premier is charging another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood by using the phrase "just not true".

Chair: Mr. Silver, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, it's an interesting call of a point of order because what I'm doing is defending what the member opposite said — that I was planning to do something. It's kind of a catch-22 here. The member opposite is standing up on a point of order because I'm explaining that I didn't say what the member opposite said I said. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair: Mr. Kent, on the point of order.

Mr. Kent: Just to further clarify, I was referring to the Premier's statement that you ruled on earlier and just caution members not to use the words "not true" or "untrue", which the Premier used in his previous statement. That is what I was referring to.

Chair's ruling

Chair: Mr. Silver, I would just ask that you refrain from using that language.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to correct the record and out of respect for the Legislative Assembly, I will just restate what I stated earlier, which is that the previous government left us with an infrastructure deficit in power generation — okay. We may ask the federal government to remove power from our debt cap so that that deficit can be addressed. We have not made a final decision on that. We are gathering evidence as promised, so this is a consideration. The bigger point is — and this is what we're doing — we don't want to increase the debt cap. We don't. But we have to account for the debt. Basically, what we're going to do — Mr. Chair, we're not going to burn down our house for firewood. We are going to make some intelligent financial decisions and, in those, we have established the Financial Advisory Panel and we hope to find solutions through that process. Again, we don't want to be increasing the debt, but we are gathering evidence as promised. Let's move on from that.

I just want to go back again to the solvency issue. I think the member opposite — and he can correct me if I'm wrong here — was talking about the concept of the college — you know, you have to have this money for the solvency because if these agencies or these corporations or entities — if they all of a sudden went bankrupt or whatever. Of course the college isn't going to do that and of course the Hospital Corporation isn't going to do that.

I had a fantastic conversation about exactly that with the federal Minister of Finance, and his response was, “Yes, but the post office could.” There are other agencies that are under these types of pension plans that could. You can’t justify one and not the other, so it’s more of a whole-of-government approach from them on the solvency issue. Again, it’s one of those things we’re caught in. We have to have the money available. We have to have the money up-front for those issues. However, we’re looking at a solution, and I’m happy to say that the plan moving forward is a good plan and we’re going to try to accomplish something that — I have a press release from a previous government — Fentie’s government actually back in 2005 — and I’ll quote here: “The Yukon government will work with Yukon College and the Yukon Hospital Corp. to address identified pension plan shortfalls within the two organizations, Premier and Finance Minister Dennis Fentie says.” He’s quoted in the press release as saying, “‘We’ve been approached by both the college and the hospital to help them address some serious deficits in their pension funding,’ Fentie said. ‘We want to assure employees that we will be working closely with both organizations to preserve the integrity of their respective pension plans.’” The press release goes on to say, “The government has agreed to sit down with both to help them find a solution to their problem.”

That was in 2005. Mr. Chair, hopefully this year, with the conversations we have been having — debts versus assets — we hope to have a solution for Yukoners and, as soon as we get any more information on that, we will get back to the member opposite.

I believe that’s all for the questions.

The member opposite talked about procurement and talked about the grid. I’m going to leave that to my ministers to answer those questions because they have the technical expertise to explain what we’re doing on both those files. Again, we have been very clear on procurement as to what we’re going to be accomplishing in this government’s mandate, and I stick by my team’s decisions to move in that direction because it’s very necessary, for sure.

I think that’s it and I will sit down. If there are any other questions I have missed, I apologize but will concede the floor to the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier may have indicated to this House that they were just considering whether to request removing power from the debt cap, but that’s not actually what he told the federal finance committee. According to the transcript of his testimony in front of the federal finance committee, the Premier said — and I quote: “We’re looking to remove power from our debt cap as well. The federal government will definitely have to help us out with that very important consideration.”

Again, Mr. Chair, that is why we’re asking the question. This is an extremely important question. This is not one that is just to be left to ministers to answer, because the issue of how much money government is prepared to borrow, or considering borrowing or might borrow, is one of fundamental importance to every Yukon taxpayer and indeed future

generations who will be left to pay the bill for any borrowings, especially if those borrowings become excessive and interest rates rise in future years. It is a very important consideration and, in my belief, that consideration is very much something that the Premier, in his capacity both as Premier and as Finance minister, should be the minister responsible for discussing in the House. If prepared to enter into debt and take on long-term borrowings, the Premier needs to be up-front with Yukoners and tell them how much and where.

I would note there are some very important considerations with this. As a recap, the questions we’re asking are based on the fact that the Premier was clear with the federal finance committee that they were looking at removing power from the debt cap. For Yukoners who are not familiar with the books, the Yukon government has a net financial surplus but does have some long-term debts on the books. Most of those long-term debts are borrowings for the Yukon Development Corporation for hydro assets. Some of those debts go back to, I believe it would be, four governments before — back to the time of the NCPC purchase and following that. Some of those debts are quite old, although they have been restructured somewhat, including some of the debt that is held internally and loans are owed by Yukon Energy Corporation to Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon government. Several of those loans were restructured to lower the interest rate to market rates. Even so, as I pointed out to the Premier in debate before, the decision to take government cash for the LNG generator project, for example, is something that is leading to the revenue for those interest payments made by the corporation coming directly back to the Yukon government. Ultimately, using that cash to purchase a capital asset is also creating a long-term revenue stream for government throughout the course of that loan being in place.

The reason that I am asking the Premier the questions about debt and deficit and not asking individual ministers is that I think the question of whether government is prepared to borrow money for hydro and electrical infrastructure is a fundamentally important one to the Yukon.

The question for the Premier relates to — if the government is investing in the expansion of hydro generation and transmission and distribution with the objective of increasing, for example, the economic growth, mineral development and so on — those may be laudable goals, but there are a lot of Yukoners who remember what happened in a previous era under a previous government when some of us were still too young to vote — back in the Faro era — where government, because the Faro mine was by far the largest private sector employer in the Yukon, entered into debt that then was reflected on people’s power bills for years after the Faro mine went bankrupt and left government, Yukon taxpayers and ratepayers footing the bill for the closure of the Faro mine. There is risk if government is considering borrowing money to take on a large industrial customer, and there are many Yukoners who are of the view, in that case, that companies should pay their own way and not have the government pay it for them. They are more supportive of

models such as what we did in the case of the Minto mine and with Alexco whereby, as part of a condition of them accessing the grid, they had to pay 100 percent of the costs that were solely attributable to the addition of that company. The Minto mine had to pay, I believe, roughly \$7 million toward the construction of the main line. They also had to enter into a take-or-pay power agreement with Yukon Energy Corporation that was a binding agreement between Yukon Energy Corporation and the Minto mine. It gave government some security for the limited risk that was taken by government in extending the main transmission line further north.

If the Premier has a different view and is prepared to expand the electrical grid — not just with federal investment, as we had sought and would be continuing to seek if we were still in government — but if the Premier is prepared to take on those debts on the Yukon's own books, then the question for Yukoners is: Why is \$198.5 million of borrowing capacity not enough? If the Premier wants to remove power from there, how much more than \$198.5 million does government plan to borrow? Is government considering borrowing for hydro or other electrical assets? How much is government looking at borrowing for other infrastructure? If the government isn't considering borrowing more than \$198.5 million, then there is absolutely no need to request a change to the federal order-in-council cap on Yukon's borrowing and it certainly doesn't fall under the category of how the Premier characterized it to the committee, which was very important.

Again, I look forward to hearing those answers from the Premier I hope.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The answer is no. We're not looking to take on the consolidated debt. Again, if we were going to ask for more debt it's not like we're going to use it. A good example is that I have a Visa card in my wallet. The balance is zero. It's good to have a credit limit that's high because of emergencies and those situations, so as the narrative that the member opposite is moving toward, the answer is no.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Chair, I think we'll have to chalk that up as the Premier not disclosing to Yukoners what the government is currently thinking, because his characterization of having a Visa card with a zero balance is not a comparable characterization. Visas are often used by people, including myself, for convenience, for the air miles or the Canadian Tire points — that would be a MasterCard in that case, to be technical — but Mr. Chair, if government is actually going to the step of telling the federal finance committee in the Premier's first appearance before them that it's very important to remove power from the debt cap, that suggests that the government has thought about this topic more than they're telling this House and telling Yukoners. Again, the Premier's characterization —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Ms. McPhee, on a point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm wondering if the member opposite can be directed to the proceedings under Committee of the Whole, section 42(2) of the Standing Orders that

indicate that "Speeches in Committee of the Whole shall be strictly relevant to the item or clause under consideration." In addition, presumably this portion of Committee of the Whole is for questions and I'm not hearing too many questions coming forth. Certainly the member opposite, in my submission to you, is straying from the topic of general debate with respect to the budget.

Chair: Mr. Kent, on the point of order.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, very much, Mr. Chair. In general debate under these circumstances on the budget, I believe the member is asking relevant questions with respect to the budget that we're debating. I see no point of order here. I believe it is just a dispute between members.

Chair: Mr. Silver, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, with all due respect to the members opposite, the debt cap is not in the budget. This is not about the budget. It's not a general debate about a budget and I would ask the members to maybe have the conversation about budgetary items.

Chair: Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: On the point of order, in past debates, it has been ruled by speakers and chairs that debate in general debate could be very wide-ranging, and it's disturbing that the government is trying to shut down debate about important questions. I don't believe there is a point of order.

Chair: Ms. McPhee, on the point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: On the point of order, Mr. Chair, at no time am I attempting to shut down debate. I'm trying to make it relevant for the members of this House and for the public — and that the comments and questions are required by the Standing Orders, not by any ruling. I'm not suggesting or referring to former rulings. I'm suggesting that, based on the Standing Orders, they're required to be strictly relevant. Those are the words in the orders: strictly relevant.

Chair's ruling

Chair: On the point of order, I'm going to allow the debt cap because it is relevant to the budget.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In the question for the member, what I'm actually baffled by is that the government doesn't understand the importance of this topic to Yukoners. This is an issue where, if government is planning on taking on long-term debt or is contemplating it, these debts will go past this current government. They will be paid for; they will still be on the books. If government takes on debt — just as, when in government, we inherited debt from a previous NDP government's decisions — which still continues on the books to this day — the long-term debts are passed on to future generations of Yukoners and to future governments. I would argue, just as we debate the budget, the topic of whether taking on debt is appropriate and whether government is prepared to is an extremely important one.

I do have to point to the Premier's statements to the federal finance committee, which indicated, and I quote — and this was just on April 4 — so we're relying on the

transcript prepared and posted on the parliamentary website of the Government of Canada. I did not witness that but, just as with Hansard, we do assume the official record is accurate.

According to the official transcript on the Parliament of Canada website, on April 4, when the Premier appeared by videoconference before the House of Commons finance committee, he made this statement: “We’re looking to remove power from our debt cap as well. The federal government will definitely have to help us out with that very important consideration.”

I don’t seem to be getting answers from the Premier on this, but I would point out that I think the Premier’s claim to Yukoners that, effectively, a request for an increase in borrowing capacity doesn’t mean government is going to use it, is a strange claim. The question is — this government is busy, the Premier is busy and the federal government is busy. You have a limited amount of face-time with the federal government, with the Prime Minister, with the finance committee, et cetera, so why talk about topics if they are not a priority? Why speculate on something that relates to an area that you indicate you don’t actually intend to go there — so don’t worry? It does remind Yukoners who were talking to us of when the Premier said, “Don’t worry, I don’t like special warrants”, and referred to the use of special warrants in April of last year as showing a lack of respect for this Chamber and for democracy itself.

Again, the question —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Ms. McPhee, on a point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I hesitate to interrupt the member opposite, but for a good portion of the afternoon, he has asked the Premier questions and he has then speculated that those answers are untrue. He didn’t use the word “untrue” but, nonetheless, he is imputing false motives to the Premier.

He has also used, I would say, insulting language by using a word like “claimed”. When the Premier makes a statement here in the House, it is to be respected. If the subject matter or the topic is disagreeable, that’s fine. But using language like “claim” in my submission to you, Mr. Chair, is inappropriate and it does breach Standing Order 19(i) and (g).

Chair: Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: I’m using statements consistent with what past opposition critics have used when in general debate. I don’t believe there’s a point of order. I questioned the accuracy of the Premier’s statements. I did not accuse him with uttering a deliberate falsehood.

Chair’s ruling

Chair: I’m going to find that there is no point of order here. It’s a disagreement between members.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just note again in this area with the debt cap that we’re relying on the Premier’s statements. We really question why government would bother to, or even want to see, an increase in borrowing

capacity if it doesn’t intend to use it. It just simply doesn’t make any sense to us why government would want to request an increase to borrowing capacity but not actually intend to use it. Why government would see a need to request, as the Premier indicated on April 4 to the House of Commons finance committee — the Premier indicated at that time that he wanted to see a change to the debt cap to remove power from what was captured under it. Again, that leaves, not only us, but Yukoners asking the question: Since there’s \$198.5 million of unused borrowing capacity left under the debt cap, why ask for changes to the debt cap unless you plan to borrow more than that \$198.5 million? I hope the Premier will answer that. It doesn’t seem he has been very willing to provide us with more information on this so I will move on to other areas.

Mr. Chair, I would ask the Premier: Can he confirm which infrastructure projects are going to be started under the New Building Canada fund for this year and which projects may face delays as a result of the government’s failure to meet its own timeline of getting seasonally sensitive tenders out by March 31?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I have answered the member opposite’s question already and I’ll reiterate that the answer is no. We’re not planning on taking on more debt. It’s as simple as that. We’re planning on turning the ship around. I have answered his question.

It is worth noting as well, that one other territory has requested and received extensions. Also, it’s worthy to note as well that the federal government decides the current debt caps. The answer is: no, we’re not planning on taking on more debt. We want to bring some more fiscal scrutiny and turn the ship around.

If I can direct the member opposite’s attention to a document that he already has, which is the Budget Address document, under tab “Long Term Plans”, pages 2 and 3, “Multi-Year Project Listings” — there are the answers to your questions as far as the New Building Canada Funds. It is all there in black and white, as the member opposite knows.

Mr. Cathers: I think perhaps the Premier didn’t hear the question because what I asked for was which projects will be started under the New Building Canada fund for this year and their start dates. We know the information that is presented in the budget, but this is an area I’m asking the Premier about in general debate because it relates to multiple departments. I’m asking the Premier this in my role as Official Opposition Finance critic because it relates to the accuracy of the Premier’s budget. The Premier has stated in his Budget Address and outside this House — he has characterized the previous budgeting process as not working well. He has made some statements that we think, in fact, reflect a lack of understanding of how the budget is developed, what cost pressures government faces in the year and what issues around program delivery become a challenge.

In asking which projects under the New Building Canada funds will begin this year, I would also appreciate a breakdown of which of those are projects have recently been

approved and which were approved by the previous government.

So again, Mr. Chair, I do want to note to members — I know that when we were in government during the last term, the Official Opposition of the day didn't spend a lot of time in general debate. That was not the case during the two previous legislative assemblies where the Official Opposition Finance critic took the opportunity to ask the Premier wide-ranging questions that they believed — and in fact we believe also — are areas that the Premier should be accountable for on behalf of the government and he should be prepared to answer those questions.

I would just encourage members to look back through Hansard from those previous legislative assemblies and they will see that both our questions and the manner in which I am framing them are no more aggressive and no more wide-ranging than previous Official Opposition Finance critics and other members engaged in.

We do take very seriously our responsibility on behalf of Yukoners to ask the government questions about the budget and its plans.

One area that we find it strange is that the Premier is claiming to be more accurately budgeting and he claimed that the delay in calling the first real Sitting of the Legislative Assembly of this term where members get a chance to debate the budget and to ask questions — the Premier indicated at the time that the reason for that was members needing time to understand the finances and be able to do the budget better. Then, in the presentation, we see in the budget — and again I would note the Premier has pointed to officials and tried to suggest we were blaming officials for the choices. But we know very well, as do most Yukoners and virtually every single government employee, that decisions about things like what is contained in the budget — the departments may make recommendations, but ultimately they take direction from the Premier and ministers, and, in fact, although government can attempt to hide behind those officials in an attempt to avoid scrutiny, we know that officials also typically react to the strategic direction and indications they get from the government. So the question on that would be: On the choice that ultimately the Premier is responsible for — to shorten down the budget highlights from 11 pages of detailed text to four pages that are heavy on infographics — how does the Premier see that decision to provide less information in the budget highlights as being consistent with his commitments to Yukoners to be more open and more transparent to them, including as it relates to the budgetary process?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the Minister of Finance, I will direct the member opposite's attention to page 2 of the Long Term Plans in the Budget Address where we have under: Community Services — New Building Canada fund (small communities fund) — for this year \$1.155 million for the mains. We also have future years planned as well. There is just over \$30 million for 2018-19. For 2019-20, we have another \$34.5 million and then for 2010-21, \$38.3 million.

With respect to my Minister of Community Services — I would ask the member opposite to ask for a detailed

breakdown. He can get that information. I don't have that information at my fingertips right now. I think the best way to get that is from the minister, and I don't want to steal any of his thunder when it comes to the good work that he and his department have done on this file. I would probably miss a few of the highlights that he would have a more detailed explanation for, so I wouldn't want to steal that opportunity from the Minister of Community Services.

When it comes to the former budget highlights, there was a list that basically repeated the budget speech. We are getting away from a process that really didn't resonate with Yukoners, in our opinion. The members opposite can disagree with that. But I believe we are using those infographics to make the budget more accessible to Yukoners who aren't — I mean it's a lot of information and a lot of detail. I think that is what we are trying to do. If it doesn't work out, then I will take the member opposite's suggestions to go back to the old-fashioned way of doing it if we don't see that resonating with Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: I guess I am not going to get an answer from the Premier on the details of infrastructure projects. I would point out, with all due respect to the Minister of Community Services, the reason I am asking the Premier is because in delivering those projects, while the Minister of Community Services is the lead on Building Canada, as was the case during our time in government, in fact that project delivery depends on a number of factors that are outside the minister's control. That includes services that are provided by other government departments, such as the Department of Highways and Public Works and its procurement support. It includes its work in contracting. It includes, as well, financial approval, in most cases by Management Board, and if those projects have not been given Management Board approval or require Management Board approval due to a change in costs, it is the Premier himself in his capacity as Minister of Finance and Chair of Management Board who is responsible for choosing when that gets on the agenda or if, indeed, that item comes forward for consideration by Cabinet wearing its hat as Management Board.

I was concerned, as were some of my colleagues, by the Premier's comparison of the Yukon's finances to NWT and Nunavut and the debt cap. I would ask the Premier to state for the record — I certainly hope he's not indicating that he's intending to follow their example in terms of financing. With all due respect to the other two territories, they have both struggled with their finances and had more difficulty with things such as long-term debt than the Yukon has. The Yukon has been proud in recent years — in the past 14 years under the Yukon Party we were proud, as indeed we heard from Yukoners as well, with the responsible financial management and the fact that we had money in the bank in comparison especially to NWT and Nunavut, but also to other jurisdictions across the country. Our finances were in a much better situation with a lot more black ink and not as much red ink as others had.

Perhaps the Premier could tell the House if the current Liberal government is now looking to the example of NWT

and Nunavut for their budgeting process, financial management and so on as an example of where they want to get to or was that illustration just provided as a reference to the fact that both of them are already deeply in debt and that future generations of citizens of both of those territories are going to have a very hard time paying the bills for those debts.

Before sitting down, looking forward to questions from the member — I would just encourage him in the budget highlights, as I look through the Budget Address and the budget highlights — that really the change in the budget tabled by this Finance minister and the budget highlights section, with the exception of all the red ink, is much prettier to look at. It might be easier if somebody is trying to provide that information to a class of students in grade 2 and trying to explain to them what's in the budget — then the Liberal presentation is probably a better way to do it — but for Yukoners who are interested in understanding the details of major projects across the territory, they want to see the fine print. They want to be able to look at what they're used to during the last 14 years and prior to that as well. They are used to being able to look at the budget highlights to understand the most important projects in their ridings, in their communities and ridings across the territory and so on. Some of the things that are not kept in the past — in the 11 pages of budget highlights for example that were in the budget last year, there was detail about projects that the Premier didn't mention in the budget speech because it was recognizing certain projects that were important — the details were important to individual Yukoners, but the Premier didn't think that it was worth the House's time to have him stand up and go through every specific detail during the Budget Address.

Mr. Chair, we didn't get a clear answer on the plans as far as future debt. We got a very disturbing comparison to NWT and Nunavut. The only thing that I am pleased with is that the Premier has indicated he might reconsider the choice to narrow down the budget highlights to four pages — heavy on infographics and low on details — because again we've heard criticism from Yukoners who look at the budget highlights compared to past budgets and are asking, "Where is the information? How are we supposed to find this out in a succinct manner?"

I would also note that the Premier claimed that the reason this Sitting was so late was because they were taking the time to get the budget right. We've heard very clearly from the Premier and from officials that this budget doesn't have anything budgeted for a carbon tax. In fact, we know from statements of the federal government and the Premier that a carbon tax is set to come in this fiscal year, so the question of its financial impact on departments is an important one that is not budgeted for in this year's estimates. I would note that if it does affect the cost of fuel — going back several years when there was a significant spike in the cost of diesel fuel and gasoline. At that point, it was a major cost pressure for every single department of the government, especially those who use a lot of fuel like the Department of Highways and Public Works. There was a very serious cost pressure on their budget because of anticipated fuel costs and predictions in those

areas. Every minister and every deputy minister was concerned about the financial impact if gasoline and diesel prices went even higher. The question of why there isn't even a contingency booked for the expected Liberal carbon tax is really a question that we're hearing from Yukoners and they're wondering how a budget can be more accurate if it's leaving out important facts?

I would like to move on to another area — diversion credits that are made available for recycling. The government has continued them this year. Has the Premier booked diversion credits for future years within the long-term financial plans — yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think the member opposite is going to have to expand a bit on — what diversion credits? I'm not really sure what he means by that.

But I'm going to re-answer a couple of questions because he keeps on going back to the debt cap. I'll answer it again. He's going dangerously again to re-asking questions that we have already answered. No, we're not planning on taking on more debt. What we are doing is we're planning on turning this ship around. I'm very pleased with this government's proactive approach when using the panel to do such actions. That's the answer to that.

He asked again about the budget highlights so I'll answer that again. We feel that the best way to do the budget highlights is in debate in the particular departments so it would be great to be able to get to those.

I do want to say as well that what we did add, which was never in the budgets in previous years, was the economic outlook and we're very proud of the government working really hard to make sure that information is available. To this end, we've moved the economic research unit from the Bureau of Statistics to the Department of Finance to ensure that the forecasting across the entire department can be aligned and the same information and the same planning assumptions are all there in tandem. It's great to finally see in this document the economic outlook actually being there.

Again, I guess we'll see if Yukoners prefer the new style of more information as far as economic highlights. Hopefully, when we get to line by line, we can have the debate of the highlights per department as we said.

Can he give me some more clarity on his last question?

Mr. Cathers: I am sure the Minister of Community Services can advise the Premier that diversion credits for recycling processors were put in place for non-refundable recyclers. It also supports the increased diversion of waste. That is something that occurred under the past government. It has been extended, I understand, by the current government.

The question is whether that is single-year funding or whether that is booked in the government's finances. The reason I ask is because, although the actual costs will vary based on the number of tons of things — such as clean cardboard and plastics that are diverted from landfills — the question of whether that number is included in future years' financial plans is a question for the Premier as Finance minister — whether the amount for this year is just one-time

funding or whether he has included that in the numbers for future financial years.

For Yukoners who are listening, the reason this is relevant is because the amounts for the last year the Yukon Party was in government were over half a million dollars in total spent on diversion credits. This is a significant cost item for government and more than a half-a-million dollar question for government about the accuracy of its future financial plans.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I didn't hear the question completely. The Minister of Community Services will be happy to answer that question. We're looking in general debate for less specific questions. We can go into every single line item here in general debate, but I think the best use of the time for taxpayers' money is to have the ministers who are responsible for these particular parts of the budget to answer on behalf of those departments.

I know the minister responsible is champing at the bit to get to that debate.

Mr. Cathers: I have some bad news for the Premier. Just as every Premier has found out, the Premier doesn't get to decide what questions the opposition members choose to ask in general debate — whether members choose to ask them in general debate with him or whether they choose to ask them in department debate.

As the Premier knows, we asked for a 40-day Sitting prior to the Sitting being called, and that was because of the questions we wanted to ask in individual departments on behalf of Yukoners and based on our own review of both what the government has made available through the budget and policy announcements, and what it hasn't indicated and made available.

The question relates to the Premier's promises to improve budgeting and the assertion he made to the public that the primary reason for delaying this Sitting of the Legislative Assembly from when it was usually done was that, to get a budget ready for the Spring Sitting, he was — and I'm paraphrasing — going to do the budget better than any other Finance minister had ever done it in the history of the world.

I'm being slightly facetious, of course, for the record, Mr. Chair.

The Premier did indicate that government was taking time to get the budget right. The question comes down to the accuracy of future financial years. In the case of diversion credits, they are a major line item. The question of whether that is included and booked in future fiscal years, or whether the funding for this year is one-time only, is not only a relevant one but one that is perfectly reasonable to ask the Finance minister and it is appropriate that the Finance minister should be able to tell this House if it is or isn't booked in future fiscal years.

If the government is planning on moving away from diversion credits or stopping them, then we would be interested in hearing that explanation — what the rationale is for that and why, and whether they believe that recycling will still continue in this territory for non-refundables if diversion credits are not provided.

It does relate as well to the questions of the pressure on landfills and it affects a number of departments — Community Services, Environment — and, of course, the overall waste that is put into every landfill across the territory and the amount that is transferred from transfer stations operated by the Yukon government. Any waste that it brings in is affected by whether the government continues to support incentives to keep waste out of landfills.

Again, the question is: Is the money available for diversion credits right now booked as a one-time item just for this fiscal year or is it included in the cost for future fiscal years?

I will also ask the minister that same question about the announcement that was made that the interim electrical rebate is going to be continued for this fiscal year. Is that \$3.5 million for the IER included in the financial projections for future fiscal years or is the government planning on eliminating the interim electrical rebate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, the diversion credits are there and ongoing in the fiscal framework, and yes to the question on the money being there for the interim rebate as well.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer from the Premier on those specific areas.

Mr. Chair, in response to the federal budget released in March, when asked about the money committed to the territorial health investment fund and the fact that medical travel was not specifically referenced, the Premier stated that we're able to use that money as we see fit and that medical travel is, of course, where we're going to be putting a good chunk of that money.

In looking at the budget information that our critic for Health and Social Services, the Member for Watson Lake, received at the budget briefing, it appears that there's a reduction of some \$600,000 in the budget for a drop in medical travel funding from the federal government and the area that the Premier and Minister of Health and Social Services announced with a fair bit of fanfare — the additional federal dollars for mental health and home care — we see an increase of just over \$300,000 in the budget according to the information we saw for the line items for home care and continuing care — so again, just over \$300,000 in commitment — but we see a drop according to the documents that we were provided of some \$600,000 in the money for medical travel.

The question first is: Is that information correct? Does the Premier agree with those numbers, or have we misunderstood the information because of the way it was presented in some way? If indeed we have seen a decrease overall of over a half-million dollars annually in medical travel and a fairly minor increase for both home care and continuing care, the question would be: Why has the government simply walked away from the table instead of pressing the federal government for additional funding in those key areas?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The simple answer is that the member opposite is misinformed, and he might be misinformed for good reason. I think with the previous government's negotiations with Ottawa, THIF had a lot of strings attached to

it. Those strings have been removed, and that's from my Minister of Health and Social Services doing a great job for Yukoners by making sure that this funding has fewer strings attached and reinstating that money for four years. I'm very proud of her and of her work in that department — but yes, not a decrease in federal health funding. There is not a decrease. The member opposite is incorrect.

Mr. Cathers: I would appreciate the Premier providing a detailed breakdown on that because it certainly appeared — according to the information that was shared with us in the briefing on the Department of Health and Social Services budget, there is clearly a \$600,000-reduction on one line item for medical travel and it appears that a corresponding offset is just an increase of \$300,000 for two areas, which were announced with quite a bit of fanfare, but don't appear to have much cash attached to them.

For Yukoners listening, I'm not sure how the Premier comes to the conclusion that the THIF had a lot of strings attached to it. There was a requirement for a reporting to the federal government, but in fact the details within what first started out as THAF, the territorial health access fund, and was due to the work of the Premier of the day and the former Member for Klondike, Peter Jenkins, in his capacity as health minister, the good work that they and officials did in making the case — along with the other two territories — to the federal government about the inadequacy of per capita funding and clearly making the case for the unique needs of the three territories, resulted in the territorial health access fund being created after the Prime Minister of the day had emphatically said no to any additional health funding for the territories. As well, the details of that spending did require federal approval for the categories, but the details of the THAF spending plan were developed by officials of the Department of Health and Social Services. Indeed, the Deputy Minister and ADM of Health Services both deserve a lot of credit for their own work and the work of staff who reported to them for the excellent job they did in coming up with a plan for the use of territorial health access funding.

I would note that, in part, the details of that plan were developed after I gave direction as the Minister of Health and Social Services, that government wanted to put additional funding into incentives for health professionals, including the family physician incentive program, but it was officials who came back with the detailed plan and came up with a way to make it work and a way that has been part of Yukon's success in attracting family doctors. It has also been part of the success as well in over 100 Yukoners being trained as doctors, nurses and other professionals across the board, with the support of bursaries.

To simplify it for the Premier — in that case, we weren't told by the federal government what we had to spend the money on. We came up with a plan to spend the money. There were some areas when THAF became THSSI and then THIF. There were certain category changes and we weren't able to fund all of the things we funded in the past under the new criteria. Certain areas were picked up within government budgets, such as the mental health nurses who the Premier is

referring to, which originally started as two and then became three. The two rural mental health positions were ones that were created as part of the good work done by officials in the Department of Health and Social Services during my time as their minister, but in fact it is those officials who deserve full credit for bringing that need to my attention. The only credit due to me is getting Management Board approval for the spending plan for those additional nurses.

In that area, in our debate about new staff, the Premier was questioning whether we wanted to see those new positions for addictions and mental health cut. If the Premier will note, we have noted publicly — and I made mention in my speech at second reading — the fact that those specific increases are ones that, from the information we have seen so far from government, look like valuable enhancements to the capacity in rural communities toward addressing mental health needs.

I would ask the Premier to explain or correct the record on his indication that the THIF funding had a lot of strings attached to it, because I don't believe that's accurate. Perhaps the Premier could ask for a briefing on that and would potentially then inform his future comments here in the House on that.

Moving on to other areas, would the Premier indicate what the government's vision is for land and lot development? In addition to the lots that are included within the budget for this fiscal year in phase 3 lot development in Whistle Bend, what does the government see as the relationship between the Yukon government and communities? Where does the Premier believe the Yukon government is responsible for land development and what does he see as the respective roles of the territorial government, municipality governments, the private sector and individual Yukoners? I would note that specific questions related to that are whether the government has any plans here or in communities such as Dawson City to release existing titled land that is on the government inventory for sale? Is the government contemplating any changes to the current land development protocol with the City of Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Silver: When it comes to THIF — the member opposite talked about the new criteria requirements. They used to have to approve projects that supported a federal initiative, and that's the criteria the member opposite speaks of — those are gone. Basically, right now, we submit a plan — that's it. The funding from THIF is 100 percent the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Services. We're very happy with that negotiation and it's good to see that there is just a plan that has to be submitted, and that's it.

When it comes to the development of lots in communities, what we will be doing is working in partnership with our partner governments, whether they are municipal or First Nation. There are some great opportunities coming up when it comes to the land resources that First Nations represent. The member opposite knows what is going on there as far as the ability for mortgages on First Nation land. It's a pretty exciting time as far as new options coming on the table.

We will be working with our federal, municipal and First Nation governments to come up with plans when it comes to addressing the needs in each community and to our commitment, again, that all communities matter and that all communities are different.

The needs in one community compared to another — they change for each community. We are looking forward to continuing those dialogues with our partner governments. There will be a great conversations to be had this weekend at Association of Yukon Communities in Faro.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that partial answer from the Premier. It didn't provide a lot of detail, but I would hope that the Premier will come forward with details in a few days, including one question the Premier didn't answer, which is a fairly specific one. It is also a document signed by a previous Premier with the mayor of Whitehorse. Is the government contemplating any changes to the current land protocol and lot development protocol? I might be missing a word from the proper name on that, but it exists with City of Whitehorse. After the current phases of Whistle Bend that are under development, does the government plan to continue to have the Department of Community Services take the lead in getting that work done? Or is the government considering handing over additional responsibilities and resources to the City of Whitehorse?

I would also, in advance of the AYC meeting that is coming up on Faro this weekend, ask the government what plans it has for the comprehensive municipal grant. Is the Premier planning to make changes to the CMG along with municipalities? If so, will he commit first of all that no municipality will see a reduction in their funding?

Does the government intend to make any adjustments to categories such as the existing supplement that is available for structural fire protection? It was implemented under the minister of the day — then-Minister of Community Services, Elaine Taylor. We provided for the first time specific funding for municipalities to help them with the costs of providing municipal fire protection services. We in the Official Opposition believe that it is time for that amount to be increased to meet the needs of those communities. We also would ask if the government is considering an increase of that and, if they are not currently, whether they will take that suggestion under consideration. What provisions do they have as far as ensuring that the money is dedicated for fire protection purposes instead of general revenue?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As far as fire protection, we are in negotiation. That is the whole purpose of the negotiation. That will be forthcoming after the minister meets with all stakeholders. There will be no reductions or changes to the community municipal grant.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the partial answer from the Premier on that. It is an area that we are simply asking the government on behalf of Yukoners who are wondering what government is putting on the table. What is the Yukon government after in those negotiations? What are its priorities? Is it offering additional resources? What resources are they offering that may be additional? Are they targeting

any specific criteria — for example, structural fire protection? Is there a requirement for specific spending accountability in terms of where that money is spent?

The other area I would just note is whether they are planning on increasing the comprehensive municipal grant. How much is government considering increasing it? Has that money been booked or has a contingency for that money been booked in future fiscal years that's shown in this budget?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The answer to the member opposite's last question is yes. Again, we're in negotiations right now and we're not going to talk about negotiations here in the Legislative Assembly. That's what negotiations are for. We will take all the member opposite's concerns and questions under advisement and add those to the negotiations.

Mr. Cathers: I guess we're not going to get an answer on that particular file.

Again, I would just point out to the Premier that the questions I'm asking on behalf of the Official Opposition are also questions that are of interest to Yukoners. Yukoners in municipalities and Yukoners on town councils or who are employees of municipalities — not to mention everyone who receives the services of municipalities — want to know what the government's vision is for meeting their needs and whether government is planning to do more or do less or change their relationship. I won't spend much more time on this. I understand that they are in negotiations, but I would point out that there's nothing untoward about the Yukon government indicating what its priorities are or what it is hoping to get out of negotiations.

I'll give a good example of that from our time in government. When we sought to extend the rural well program into municipalities, we made it quite clear — I made it quite clear, both on the floor of this House and to Yukoners outside this Assembly — that we were trying to get that change. We also made it quite clear to municipalities when we proposed four basic options for extending the rural well program into municipalities or developing a comparable one that we were open to whichever option was their preference or to an additional option if municipalities were to come up with a different suggestion that was at all reasonable. We received the results of that consultation which, again, we were very open — not only with the Legislative Assembly, but with the Yukon public as a whole — about what we were hoping to achieve and why. We heard back from two municipalities that they wanted a fee for administration so that they didn't have any additional administration costs. While that was a request we weren't thrilled to receive, we did, as part of getting the deal to extend into municipalities, agree to that request to tack on that \$500 fee so that would occur.

Again, I would encourage the Premier to recognize that for a government that campaigned on being more open and more accountable to Yukoners, that includes being accountable to the public as well, not just providing information in discussions with other levels of government. I'm saying that with great respect for those other levels of government and understanding that there are sometimes detailed discussions that occur there first. However, I would

note that there is nothing the matter with the Premier including 11 pages of budget highlights, sharing information that prior to taking office they indicated they would share with the public and have had a change of heart.

In those areas of the priorities in CMG — comprehensive municipal grant — negotiations, I guess I'm not going to get an answer from the Premier unless he's had a change of heart, but I don't think there is anything untoward in Yukoners asking to understand what the Premier is trying to achieve.

Moving on to two areas of tax credits — which again depend on the government legislative agenda — the previous Yukon government worked to support families by maintaining the children's fitness and arts tax credits after they were eliminated by the federal government. Will the Premier commit to continuing to support Yukon families and maintain this tax credit or is his government considering changing it?

Secondly, we saw no mention of the Yukon small business investment tax credit this year in the budget. Does the government commit to upholding their promise to increase the ceiling for the Yukon small business investment tax credit from \$1 million to \$5 million and increase the asset limit to allow larger companies to qualify?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The answer to the first question — so for the tax credit, we're examining the tax credit right now to make sure that we're maximizing the benefit to all small businesses. As far as this question about the tax credit — fitness and arts, we are continuing that credit. There is no plan to change it.

Mr. Cathers: I thank the Premier for that answer. I'm going to return to one of the Premier's favourite topics briefly and just refer to an article about statements made by the Premier of Manitoba that appeared in the *Winnipeg Sun* dated yesterday. For members who are looking for it, it is an article in the *Winnipeg Sun* by Joyanne Pursaga that was posted yesterday. In those statements, the article indicates that Premier Brian Pallister of Manitoba says he plans to exempt Manitoba farmers from paying a carbon price. He added that agriculture and agri-foods in that province "... account for more than 33,000 jobs and about five percent of the provincial GDP..." and that carbon pricing has the potential to "... negatively impact on that sector." Those statements and recognition by the Premier are very much in line with my own questions and comments earlier in this House about the potential impact on the agriculture sector here in the territory of a carbon price.

I would ask again whether the Yukon government is committed to seeing a carbon tax that exempts the agriculture sector and puts them on an even playing field with other jurisdictions like in PEI and Manitoba, particularly in light of the fact that Yukon farmers already pay substantially higher fuel prices than farmers in those areas and already face challenges in terms of competition.

I would ask the Premier whether they're committed to ensuring that the Liberal carbon-pricing model that they're discussing with the federal government doesn't see Yukon farmers paying a carbon price that is not paid by farmers in other jurisdictions.

I appreciate the answer on the small business investment tax credit, but what is a little disturbing is that I didn't hear the Premier indicate they're not keeping their campaign promise, but it did sound a lot like the Premier was indicating that the government was considering whether they were going to keep their campaign promise to Yukoners, which was a commitment to increase the ceiling for the Yukon small business investment tax credit from \$1 million to \$5 million and increasing the asset that it took from larger companies to qualify.

Moving on to another area, I would ask the Yukon government — with regard to government's promises to reduce community reliance on diesel energy — if the Premier has any concrete plans on how to do so and financial estimates on any plans they have in place?

With regard to the \$1.5 million that I believe is the number in the budget for partnerships with First Nations and communities, who is eligible for that and for what type of projects? How would that be determined?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will ask the member opposite to be a little more specific about which \$1.5 million he is talking about. I didn't catch that. As far as the tax credit — as the member opposite knows, tax credits take time to develop and we are looking at the evidence and are committed to addressing that issue.

As far as carbon pricing, we're waiting to hear back from Ottawa. Once we do, we'll know the parameters as to how we're going to rebate those dollars back to Yukoners. The agricultural sector is an extremely important part of our economy. As well, you take a look at those specific parts of the pan-Canadian framework — talking about the north being a special case — and make sure the carbon-pricing mechanism doesn't unduly make things disproportionate for businesses in areas where they can't reduce their emissions.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*.

Mr. Cathers: I'm continuing on in debate with the Premier and asking questions about the budget. One question I would like to hear from the Premier on that I intended to ask him earlier is — one of the areas where government lapses a significant amount of money is in personnel dollars. If positions are created and funded and if those positions are vacant due to retirement, temporary absence, departure or during the recruitment process, during those times the money is still there attached to the position but the person is not. Some of those dollars can be consumed at times through a thing such as overtime but, overall, in vacancies across departments, there are typically very large annual lapses in those areas.

The question for the Premier is: What is the total anticipated lapse for personnel across all government departments for the 2016-17 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We are planning on spending all of our personnel dollars. Risk management happens in this consideration that the member opposite talks about — lapses that are attached to personnel in regard to vacancies, but we have every intention of spending the dollars allocated.

Mr. Cathers: That was a very interesting answer from the Premier because typically, in previous years — every single year — money that is available — rather than simply having the department spend it on other purposes, those funds are typically used to go back into general revenue or to fund cost pressures that were unanticipated within a fiscal year. The total amount that we're talking about, for Yukoners who are not familiar with it — actually probably most people are not — if you're looking at recent fiscal years, I can tell the member that based on the last budgetary cycle that we were part of, at that point, the total lapses for the last year — for which the actuals were on, based on the period 12 variance report — were \$5.9 million in lapses in personnel across government departments. With the number of vacancies that we have seen here under the Liberal watch, including the delay in hiring deputy ministers for over half a year and the issues that we heard the Yukon Employees' Union take issue with the government on in a press release that the YEU issued, where they talked about — and drew to the government's attention — the fact that these vacancies and acting positions across departments were having a significant impact on program delivery and having a cascading effect on hires across the department. I don't have the release right at my fingertips as I thought I did, but — oh yes, I do.

At that point, in a press release issued on April 19, Steve Geick, the president of the Yukon Employees' Union noted that the Yukon Employees' Union was withdrawing from collaboration with the government. In the YEU and Public Service Alliance of Canada press release, they referenced the fact — and I quote: “When elected last fall, the Yukon's Liberals promised Public Service excellence as one of their platform commitment. The platform states that a Yukon Liberal government will review hiring/promotion processes to ensure they are open and transparent.

“YEU urges the government to act swiftly to show the strong leadership they promised.”

Moving on to a different section of the press release, the YEU referenced the fact that in the PSC, the top positions were either vacant or temporarily staffed, with both the Public Service Commissioner and the director of Labour Relations temporarily acting. Referencing that they were quoting the government's online staff directory as of the date of the press release, the YEU believed that there were at least five deputy ministers, seven assistant deputy ministers, 17 directors and a multitude of managers and supervisors who were acting. The press release noted that they believed the list to be incomplete.

Again, as I mentioned in my remarks, I believe, at second reading on the budget, I noted to the Premier — I want to make sure that the Premier is crystal clear about the fact that

we're not criticizing people who are in those positions. In fact, as I stated at that point, some of the people who are filling those acting roles, if they were to be ultimately selected for that job, they would do in my belief an excellent job in those areas. In most cases, the people who we are aware of at the deputy minister and assistant deputy minister level, as well as below that, are competent people.

As I mentioned in my cautionary note and advice to the Premier when I first rose to debate the budget, I acknowledge the fact that I don't think the Premier and his Cabinet have fully understood the effect that a delay on hiring deputy ministers has. As I mentioned at that point, someone being in a temporary position for a month or two doesn't have a significant impact on that department. It does have an impact, but usually the lights are still on and business is still generally conducted as usual. But it comes down to — in terms of personnel decisions and strategic decisions around matters such as policy and advice to be provided to government — if those acting positions continue beyond the three-month period — a somewhat arbitrary number, but it is roughly around that time period, in my view — and if they continue to the point where they are half a year, you start to see a cascading effect across those departments from the lack of action in that area. I have two questions on that. The first is: When does the Premier plan to follow the advice of the Yukon Employees' Union and appoint, choose, select and hire permanent choices for those deputy minister positions?

Secondly, my question is — in light of the Premier's statement that he didn't expect there to be any lapses for personnel and considering there are far more vacancies than in a typical fiscal year, we would expect that in fact the amount lapsing for funded positions that aren't filled would be higher than the number of \$5.9 million in monies that are lapsed and returned to the public purse. In our view, it would appear to us that this number would probably be somewhere between \$7 million and \$8 million. Again, the question for the Premier is: Does he wish to correct his statement and indicate how much money is expected to be lapsed based on the period 12 variance report for the 2016-17 fiscal year for personnel across all government departments? If the money is not being lapsed for those positions, what is it being spent on within those departments? That money is dedicated to personnel and it would seem that, rather than exercising the fiscally prudent approach of cash management that we used successfully for 14 years, the Premier is perhaps telling departments that, if they don't spend the money, they won't get it next year. That can lead to a department culture of good managers spending money on things they don't really need that fiscal year because they don't want to lose the money for the next fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Silver: When we include lapses, we include it for everything, not just personnel. The member opposite mentioned lapses as being a normal part of fiscal planning and delivery. I agree, and I am happy to confirm to the member opposite that we are aware of that and that there have been no changes in the methodology for estimating lapses. They are contained in the other adjustment figures, as the member

opposite knows — and that is the long-term fiscal plan as they always have been. There are no changes there.

When it comes to vacancies, I agree. You don't want these things to go on forever — that is for sure. The member opposite knows very well that in 2015, 11 Yukon government departments saw one or more new deputy heads appointed.

Five of these departments saw nine acting deputy heads appointed. Some deputy head appointments were necessary because of resignations or retirements, and several appointments were simply transfers laterally — so lots of movement in the previous government as far as some of these positions. We're actively working as expeditiously as possible.

I know the Minister of Highways and Public Works can talk about the great conversations he has had with Mr. Geick and others as far as remedying the situation that we find ourselves in.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Chair, that response is a bit disappointing. It's again disappointing that we've asked a detailed question, and when they are questioned about lapses, the Premier first indicated that there wouldn't be any, that they were going to spend the money. Then it appeared that ministers and officials informed him otherwise, and the Premier corrected the record but he wouldn't give a breakdown on that and to simply say that those lapses are included in other lapses — it's a pretty simple question. What are the total anticipated lapses anticipated to be for the 2016-17 fiscal year for personnel across all government departments? Those amounts are part of other numbers in the budget. They are not in anything that we saw specifically broken out. They're certainly not included in the four pages of budget highlights that are heavy on infographics and weak on actual information.

Again, the question relates to not only whether or not there was a deficit for the 2016-17 fiscal year, but the government's overall financial picture. Is the Finance minister telling me that he's not aware of what the lapses are for personnel across departments, or rather what the anticipated final lapses are estimated to be for this 2016-17 fiscal year? If that's the case, I would strongly encourage the Finance minister to do — as every Finance minister whom I have ever personally worked with has done in the past — and recognize that knowing the anticipated amount for lapses on personnel is one of the single-most important things that a Finance minister should be doing because it has a very significant effect on the cash possession of the government and whether the government is able to lapse or revoke money from the current fiscal year and, overall, save money in the bank.

Again, it's a simple question: What are the anticipated lapses for personnel across all government departments for the 2016-17 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'll correct the member opposite. We're planning on spending all of our personnel dollars. We want to make sure that we develop the programs and services that we set out. Things happen for sure during the year. I don't know if the member opposite is trying to tell me that his government in the past had manpower-specific lapses because

I don't think that's true. That's not the procedure. I will confirm to him again that we haven't changed the methodology for estimating lapses and, Mr. Chair, there are lots of different lapses — lapses in judgment, lapses in accountability, lapses in attention — and again, we have not changed any policies and we're planning — my words, not the member opposite's — on spending all of our personnel dollars.

Mr. Cathers: We have heard two different answers from the minister: first, that there wouldn't be lapses in personnel, that they are planning on spending it all; then that they were including the numbers for the other lapses; and now we hear again that he is back to the first answer, saying that there won't be any lapses for personnel.

The question would be: Why not? Typically, in any given fiscal year — and contrary to the Minister of Finance's understanding, I don't know what the current Management Board is asking for information from the Management Board Secretariat and the Department of Finance in this area — but I can tell the member, for information purposes, that the lapse of \$5.9 million in personnel across all departments in the most recent year for which we had the information was not unusual. The previous fiscal year to that, the total lapse in personnel across government departments was a total of \$5.6 million.

I give the minister some examples of this. Some specific areas include, for example, the area of the emergency response centre and the 911 call centre. I'm sure both the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Community Services are aware of that, because those newly created positions were created under contract with the RCMP. Some of the positions were the 70:30 split between the territorial government and the federal government paying for them. A couple of them were fully funded by the Yukon government.

Because of the fact that the RCMP recruitment and hiring process often takes a number of months, even though we had budgeted for those positions to begin about six months into the year, the RCMP hiring process ended up taking longer than originally anticipated because of all the work. They do have a fairly rigorous process around screening candidates for suitability and, in some cases, have to weed people out for that.

I can see, according to Facebook right now, the RCMP are currently advertising for staff to fill those positions, so clearly at least some of them haven't been filled. That is an area where, for those positions, the money can either be used for other projects or can be lapsed and returned to general revenue. Overall, I would encourage the Finance minister, if he is not receiving that information now, to request it. In the past, we have always had that information available to members of the Management Board of the day. It is something that has a significant impact when the Premier is ruminating with his colleagues on future years' financial plans. Understanding what is happening in the current fiscal year is an important part of that, and lapses in personnel are a significant element of that and also an indicator of where you have potential gaps in having your people in place to deliver programming.

Again, it's a simple question — and maybe we'll get a third answer this time. What are the total anticipated lapses in personnel across government departments for the 2016-17 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, we are planning on spending all of our personnel money. It is typical, and I have said this before today — I think I have said the exact same thing to the member opposite before. We agree that it is typical for governments to lapse money. There are fewer lapses if you plan better, so we are hoping to prove that it is possible, within the strategic investments that we are making, to have fewer lapses. Again, we are planning on spending all of our personnel money.

Mr. Cathers: I am going to offer the Premier some friendly advice that I have a feeling he is not going to take. I would just note for him that if the message is sent by the Premier to government departments that the Premier doesn't like to see lapses in money — even if it's framed in the context of wanting to budget and predict better — if managers have the sense that they need to use the money or lose the money the next year or have the sense that the Finance minister is going to be leaning on ministers if ministers are lapsing money, that sends the signal throughout government that tends to lead to the choice to spend money when money could perhaps be saved. If managers have the understanding that the government appreciates efficiencies and that the Premier and Cabinet welcome it if officials find a way to come in underbudget in individual areas and will appreciate that behaviour rather than criticize it, it has a big impact on the culture of government, and it will have a multi-million-dollar impact on your bottom line. Again, it is interesting that we got two different answers from the minister on that question.

I want to move on to another area. I know it is one of the Premier's favour topics. In the area of carbon pricing, we debated earlier today what model will be put into place. The Premier seemed to indicate to this House that he didn't believe the national news stories about which model would be used were accurate, or at least he hadn't received confirmation from the federal government of that. I have two questions for the Premier in that regard. First of all, has he asked what the fine print is? Secondly, if even the Yukon government and the Premier haven't seen the fine print on the federal carbon tax yet, then why is the Premier still supporting the imposition of a carbon tax on Yukoners? Why has he not told the federal government that the Yukon government is opposed to the imposition of a carbon tax until and unless that has been thoroughly costed out, shared with Yukoners — subject to public consultation — and supported by the people of the territory once they see the fine print and the effect on their personal finances?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think we have been very clear on our position on carbon pricing — the federal carbon-pricing mechanism. Again, unlike the Yukon Party, we are not going to speculate about the media. We are not going to read the newspapers and decide policy based on what we read in — the *Vancouver Sun* was one of the papers that the member

opposite talked about today. We will pretty soon be hearing some quotes from *Briertbart News*, I am sure. We have been very clear on this and the member opposite knows that. We are waiting for the federal government to respond. We have been working with Ottawa very closely on this file. When we know, we will tell him. We have the annex. We have the pan-Canadian framework — more to come. Again, we are looking forward to it.

We're very anxious to find out where Ottawa is, as far as the variables that are on this federal carbon-pricing mechanism, because we did commit to giving that money back to Yukoners and Yukon businesses.

Mr. Cathers: Again, I would encourage the Premier to actually read his own remarks in Hansard and think of how they come across to a Yukon family or a Yukon small business that is looking ahead to the next 12 months of what they'll have to do, trying to decide what things they can spend money on, trying to decide their personal finances — everything from whether they choose to buy a home or buy a new vehicle or buy their son or daughter some sports equipment that they don't absolutely need, but would be nice to have.

As I mentioned and reminded the Premier and his Cabinet previously in the House, Yukoners and people across the country who are making those personal financial decisions, including decisions about major purchases, many of them plan very carefully. Especially for those who have limited means and are the working poor, so to speak, within the labour force, or people who are contractors who are just now hoping that, now that the government has finally gotten around to putting some of the seasonally dependent contracts out now that were supposed to be out by March 21 — those people are looking at what they can afford to do. They want to know what they are going to have to pay in taxes and to whom and what the rebates will look like.

The Premier's messaging on this is, shall we say, odd. It's interesting to hear, on the one hand, the Premier saying that his government is working closely with the federal government on the carbon tax file, then on the other hand, he says they really don't know and don't have any control over that, and it's just the federal government and they're waiting for them to tell us what's going to happen and what we have to do.

A new question is: Rather than continuing their steadfast support for a carbon tax, will the Premier reconsider the government's position and lobby the federal government to not impose a carbon price on Yukoners until after there has been thorough consultation with the public on the details of the carbon-pricing scheme and on the rebates, as well as economic modelling on who would be eligible, when they will receive the money and which Yukoners will receive nothing back?

Hon. Mr. Silver: With all due respect, I thought we were talking about the budget. This is a federal carbon-pricing mechanism. The member is still stuck in election mode, talking about an exemption that doesn't exist. He'll be talking about Sasquatch next.

If he has a question about the budget, then I would like to hear it.

Mr. Cathers: I would remind the Premier that, as he is dismissive of questions from the opposition, not only is that not in keeping with his commitment to be more open and transparent to Yukoners, but since our questions are ones that we are hearing from Yukoners, he is also being dismissive to Yukoners.

In the Liberal election platform, the slogan was to be heard, but there was never any indication in that slogan that they would actually respond to Yukoners' concerns, rather than simply tuning them out and having their comments go nowhere.

The Alberta model for carbon tax indicated — and this is a case where the Alberta NDP government is being more transparent than the Yukon Liberal government. They listed in their budget in a document, entitled *Fiscal Plan: Climate Leadership Plan Budget 2017* — they got into details on their climate leadership plan overview, their leadership funding, the economic analysis of the impacts on a carbon tax and carbon pricing. What the Premier needs to recognize is that if he is not being forthcoming with information to Yukoners who are asking how much their taxes will go up and whether they will be eligible for a rebate or not and whether their sector will be exempt or not — we know that the government appears to have fully bought into the ideology of the argument that a tax on carbon is the way to save the planet, but in any taxation model the devil is always in the details.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Ms. McPhee, on a point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have raised this point of order before. I appreciate that there is lots of latitude with respect to the budget. The last question that the member opposite has asked and the discussion he is currently having — or the submission he is making, as far as I can tell — are with respect to carbon pricing. Carbon pricing is not in this budget. Certainly, government is open to asking questions and it has done so in Question Period — and I submit to you that is the appropriate place for these questions, and that his questions should be directed to be — as noted in Committee of the Whole, the Standing Order — directly relevant to the topic today. I am suggesting to you that they are not, if he is asking questions about carbon pricing, which is not in the budget, Mr. Chair.

Chair: Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: On the point of order, Mr. Chair, I am asking questions that are no more wide-ranging than those that have been allowed in previous general debates in this House. The member may wish to actually read Hansard from the past. In this case, I am specifically comparing information contained in Alberta's budget to information that is not contained within the Yukon government's budget and I'm asking why. I believe that is very relevant.

Chair: Ms. McPhee, on the point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: On the point of order, and with the greatest of respect, we're not debating the Alberta budget. We're debating the Yukon budget. Carbon pricing is not in it. If the member opposite wants to compare or ask a question with respect to our budget, I think there is no issue with that whatsoever, but at this point, it is not, subject to Standing Order 42(2), directly relevant to this debate.

Chair: Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Chair, on the point of order, I am asking questions that are no more wide-ranging than have been allowed by MLAs in this House in the past and I am disturbed that the government is trying to shut down debate because the Government House Leader doesn't like the questions. I don't believe there is a point of order.

Chair: Ms. McPhee, on the point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't have any feeling one way or the other about the questions, except that they are not relevant.

I guess I do feel that the Chair's position should be respected and that, regardless about whether or not these kinds of debates have been permitted before, the Chair should make a ruling today and not be influenced by necessarily what other Chairs have ruled.

Chair's ruling

Chair: I am going to rule that there is no point of order here. The key phrase in general debate being "general". It really is difficult to limit it, so carbon tax not being in the budget has some relevance.

Mr. Cathers: Again, what I'm pointing out, just as I compared the Liberal budget to the last government's budget and criticized the fact that we had 11 pages of budget highlights and the Premier has chosen to reduce that to a lot less information and issue four pages instead of highlights that are very heavy on infographics and shy on details — just as I am criticizing that, I also believe that it's relevant to criticize the fact that the Alberta government, in their fiscal plan for 2017 to 2020, on pages 55 and 56 in their climate leadership plan, costs out and details the fact that under their carbon pricing, which is reported to be the model that is going to be imposed on the country, we see that an estimated 60 percent of Albertan households would get a full rebate, but 40 percent do not.

It notes as well that, in their case, the model that is being used may be a net rebate overall, but you have a situation here where in January 2017, according to the Alberta government's budget, \$138 million in rebates were provided to 1.1 million households. Again, that leaves out a lot of families within Alberta and is very much in line with the comments that were made in the 2016 election by the then-star candidate for the Liberal Party, who, in debate, indicated that the great thing about a carbon price is it is a redistribution of wealth. One of the concerns we hear regularly from Yukon families is that they are concerned that a carbon tax may be a way of making a tax more palatable. I've heard the characterization made before that it's really not much different from the GST, but the Liberal government is being smarter and branding it a carbon

tax. Maybe if Brian Mulroney had called it the “green services tax” people would have welcomed the increase on their taxes.

Our point on the carbon tax is that for a government that talks about evidence-based decision-making, we see some appalling gaps where they’re not interested in evidence at all. In the case of a carbon price, if the argument is made by someone that a carbon price will have a positive impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, that should be backed up with economic modelling on what products that is applied to for that to work, what the cost of that carbon tax has to be, what the effect of a rebate will be and whether there are any distorting impacts as a result of that tax on the economy.

For an area as important and wide-sweeping as a carbon tax, it is effectively a very significant change in the Canadian tax code and tax structure. Whether you call it the Yukon Liberal’s carbon tax or the federal Liberal’s carbon tax or their joint carbon tax, it doesn’t really make much difference to the Yukoners who are paying the tax and know that the only message that they’ve heard from the Liberal government here and the Liberal government in Ottawa is: We’re going to hit you with a tax; we’re telling you not to worry — all the money will come back to the Yukon — but we won’t tell you who is getting it. We won’t tell you if 40 percent of households won’t see a rebate. We won’t tell you whether certain businesses will be exempt or not. We won’t tell you whether or not you’re going to have to pay the money to Ottawa and have to wait 12 months for a refund. We won’t tell you whether the process is going to be as cumbersome and frustrating as dealing with the Canada Revenue Agency, where even if you have a refund, you may have to go back and forth through letter after letter to actually get them to give you the money.

Even if you have submitted an eligible rebate, they may do things like — there are a number of people who have been reassessed on previous taxation years and had to prove they were a northern resident, for example.

I know I’m not alone in this, but I had the frustrating experience of receiving a letter from the Canada Revenue Agency right at the start of the 2016 territorial election, asking me to retroactively prove that I had been a resident of the territory during the previous taxation year for which I had claimed the northern resident deduction. For 60 days of that term, I was sitting in this House.

My point is that if it’s frustrating for me, it’s frustrating for other people, and I have heard multiple complaints from constituents who have had very long and frustrating exchanges with the Canada Revenue Agency. The point on this is: if the process for this is similar to that for a rebate, or if we aren’t even being told what it is, will the Premier agree to take a step back on this and recognize that they need to give time for the carbon tax details to be shared with Yukoners and for Yukoners to provide their input on it?

I see the Premier laughing about this, but this is no laughing matter for Yukoners who are concerned. There are people here in this territory — the number of people going to the food bank. Every one of those people who is currently employed —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Cathers: I hear the Leader of the NDP. I will provide her an opportunity to ask questions, but I’m asking questions here on behalf of the —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Cathers: It’s interesting. We hear both the Liberals and the NDP laughing at the concerns of Yukoners — laughing at the concerns of Yukoners on fixed incomes. Senior citizens — I see the Leader of the NDP making a little violin motion there.

We need to understand that there are Yukoners who are genuinely concerned, Yukoners who are currently going to the food bank, even though they are employed, and they’re wondering how much money am I, as a citizen, going to pay for this tax increase.

It’s interesting that both the Leader of the NDP and the Premier seem to find this a laughing matter. Again, this is about transparency and accountability to Yukoners, and telling them what they’re going to have to pay.

Again, my question for the Premier is: If they still don’t have the fine print on this, will he agree to push for the postponement of a carbon tax until after it has been fully consulted on with Yukoners and they understand the fine print of this Liberal plan?

Hon. Mr. Silver: To correct the record, we’re not laughing about any concerns of low-income Yukoners. We were basically wondering when the member opposite is going to give the Leader of the Third Party an opportunity to speak in general debate.

That’s okay. A little levity in here is always a good thing, Mr. Chair.

The simple answer to your question is, no, because you don’t have it right. You’re presenting this in a way —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Mr. Kent, on a point of order.

Mr. Kent: I believe the Speaker, in a previous ruling during this session, cautioned members to direct their remarks through the Chair. The Premier is not doing that, by referring to the honourable member as “you”.

Chair: Mr. Silver, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you to the Government House Leader. I absolutely agree. I will direct my comments through you, as the Chair.

Mr. Chair, the member opposite is misinformed or he does not fully understand where we are right now. I feel for him because he wants to know what the rebates are going to look like. He wants to know what the process is going to look like. But he is asking us to make a decision without the evidence, and we can’t do that. We promised Yukoners that we wouldn’t do that.

What we are going to do — and I have said this many times in the Legislative Assembly. It would be nice if we could get past this. Once we get the information, of course we are going to reach out to these concerned citizens. I am reaching out to the member opposite, the Member for Lake

Laberge — if he could keep track of all of the concerns that he is getting from his constituents and make sure that he brings that forward when we do get into the consultation period and when we do start reaching out to Yukoners once we know what Ottawa is thinking.

I am not going to speculate, as the member opposite is doing, as to how this is going to roll out. It's almost like building a house before knowing the building codes. You could totally do it, but it is probably not the smartest thing to do.

We have been working with the federal government and we know that, as committed in the pan-Canadian framework, the federal government will work with the territories to find solutions to address their unique circumstances. Until we know more from Ottawa, there is not much more to talk about, but I am sure I am going to get more questions from the member opposite on this. We are standing by our commitments that we will make this revenue neutral, and I appreciate the question from the opposition — what does revenue neutral mean? We need to know the variables. Once we know the variables, then we can open that up to the opposition. They will know as soon as we will as far as knowing what the mechanisms are. I know that there is some speculation in newspapers and the opposition has come in here with the speculation — duly noted.

When we know more from Ottawa, we will be better able to work with Yukoners, work with Yukon businesses and families to make sure that the carbon-pricing mechanism does what it's supposed to do and doesn't impede business in those areas where we can't make reductions and also that other part that we have talked a lot about in the Legislative Assembly — marginalized individuals as well. All this is the information that we do know. It is the information that we have been sharing with the opposition. We have been very clear and we have been very up-front in sharing the information that we have, including the information that we knew from the previous government as far as the pan-Canadian framework.

That being said, we do respect the fact that Yukoners are interested in knowing how this will work — so are we.

Mr. Cathers: It looks like I am not going to get any answers on this issue. Again, I would encourage the Premier and his colleagues to take a step back and to realize that, if what the Premier is saying is accurate and if even he and his colleagues don't know what the carbon-pricing scheme will look like yet, then they need to give Yukon businesses — especially small businesses — time to understand it. For government to make a major taxation change without actually consulting with Yukoners on it is something that we believe is also contrary to the spirit and intent of the *Taxpayer Protection Act*. I would point out — at risk of being rude — that if the territorial government were trying to make some of the changes in a carbon tax, it appears to us they would not be able to do it because of the *Taxpayer Protection Act*. There are Yukoners who are seeing this as effectively a technically federal tax that is very welcome to the Yukon government and that they are in these negotiations with Ottawa and they're doing it this way, rather than developing a local model, as a

number of provinces are, simply to do an end run on the *Taxpayer Protection Act*. There are Yukoners who are very genuinely upset about the fact that they don't know the fine print on what this tax increase will be.

After raising this with the Premier earlier this week in debate, I went to a community meeting in my riding and I had one of my constituents come up to me after that to thank me for raising the point in asking the questions and standing up for concerns that were on his mind. I know he is not alone in this. Apparently I'm not getting answers out of the Premier in this area. I would again point out that it's easy perhaps when you're sitting in wherever the Liberal strategy room is, crafting your platform and crafting your commitments, to come up with nice taglines like "Be Heard." But when Yukoners see situations like the 19 days of consultations that we heard from school councils — we understand in the case of, I believe, the Watson Lake School Council, they actually received a letter asking for their input on the school calendar after the deadline for that feedback. There were negative days of public consultation for that school council and perhaps for others. We are still hearing concerns from school councils across the territory that tell us that they felt that they were really not given an opportunity for input. The department and the minister were telling them — they felt — what it was going to be.

Again, that 19 days of consultation in that case — we have heard as well from Yukoners who are concerned about the fact that the government, in proposing its consultation paper talking about amendments to the *Human Rights Act* and the *Vital Statistics Act*, had only an 11-day consultation period. They also launched it during the March break when a lot of people are out of the territory. There were people who are telling us that they are disappointed and that they wish they hadn't voted Liberal, because they feel that they have had campaign commitments to them broken, and feel that the government only listens when it wants to listen and only to certain people and only on certain files.

I would ask the Premier a simple question: For consultation with the public and stakeholders on any matter that government wants to have meaningful consultation, how many days does the Premier see as the minimum necessary time period and what does he think is generally appropriate for consultation time periods?

Hon. Mr. Silver: On the carbon pricing as well — just to sum up as the member opposite did — we also went door to door and we also heard concerns from Yukoners. What I heard at the door was: The NDP has a plan, the Liberals have a plan — what is the Yukon Party plan? Let's say that they can't get their exemption. What is their plan? It's like blocking the GST — we don't want to pay the GST, but it's coming anyway. Well, what's your plan? I think that was also heard at the door. The member opposite goes into saying that some people don't want to vote for the Liberals again — well, okay. You hear that for all parties, I'm sure, and I'm not going to go down that road. I'll stick to the questions on the budget here today.

Again, as far as consultation goes, we're committed to consulting with Yukoners and stakeholders in all areas, whether on vital statistics or National Aboriginal Day or for any other thing that we're moving forward with. I think Yukoners are happy with the new approach and the new direction of this government. What I'm hearing is that you have a government that wants to do more when it comes to consultation and a government that wants to do more when it comes to reaching out to the stakeholders.

We're new in our early mandate here and I'm very proud of the commitments on this side of the House. I'm very proud of how much work this government has done so far in getting out there. Every time we stand up for Question Period to hear the engagement — whether it be with the contractors associations or whether it be with other governments or whether it be with women's groups or the Women's Directorate, I think we're doing a good job.

Can we do more consultation? Absolutely, yes. When it comes to summers and people being busy, I understand the criticisms for sure. We're going to do our best to make sure that we do a fulsome process when it comes to consulting with Yukoners. As people see this government mature and get used to its role, I think they will be happy with the new approach and with our commitments.

Mr. Cathers: I'm going to move on from the carbon-pricing debate and note, for the record, that the Premier didn't give an answer on how much public consultation he thinks is appropriate to be meaningful public consultation. Again, we see another indication from the Premier of how, as he said, the view is a little different over here and there are a number of things that the member said in opposition that apparently no longer reflect his viewpoint and he has backtracked on them.

I'm going to ask the member a few questions. First of all, my last comment for today — probably, at least — on the carbon price is the point that the Premier did sign on to an agreement to do it, and I would encourage the Premier in the future to never sign on to a binding agreement without reading the fine print because that's what Yukoners expect you to do.

Mr. Chair, the Premier has talked a lot about his much-touted Financial Advisory Panel, and the Premier said he would share the terms of reference. When is the Premier going to share the terms of reference for that panel and let not only the Official Opposition but Yukoners know what those terms of reference are?

Next I would ask — in the area of extended care, in the Premier's mandate letter to the Minister of Health and Social Services, he states: "Work with Yukoners to create solutions to promote aging in place and a full spectrum of care, both public and private, while keeping the Whistle Bend Continuing Care development at 150 beds". This looks like a modest compromise after the Liberals put forward a community petition prior to the election calling for the stop work of the continuing care project. Can the Premier please confirm that those 150 beds are expected to fill up right away? When will the facility be fully staffed? If there is a need for more beds in Whitehorse, would the government be open to

adding on to the building as per the original concept of potentially adding 150 beds?

Secondly, the government promised extended care in Yukon communities so that Yukoners could age in place. Does it plan on keeping that commitment and, if so, how many continuing care facilities and with what level of care are they looking at building in Yukon communities, and what is the overall cost of that?

Last, but not least, are they prepared to borrow money that would affect our available borrowing under the debt cap to build those facilities to make their campaign promise, or are they looking reviewing whether they will keep this promise as well?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I have to say that was a scatter shot of questions. A lot of preamble and then about — I think he asked several different questions on several different topics all at the very end. I'm going to have to ask him to get back on his feet and ask those questions that I don't respond to right away.

I'll start with carbon pricing again. Don't sign on to something that you haven't — okay, I believe it was his government that signed on to the pan-Canadian framework. I believe it was his government that signed on to that first, about this time last year, and then started doing their working groups — their clean technology, innovation and jobs working group. After signing on to the pan-Canadian framework, then they started having working groups — the departments of Environment and Finance, his government — on carbon-pricing mechanisms. These were all in July. They signed on to the agreement this time last year but then, in July, started doing the working groups.

There's that, so let's move on. Again with the carbon-pricing mechanism, I want to give a shout-out to our Minister of Community Services for providing me with a scientific approach and analysis of the different models that are available in Canada, in the United States and in the world, models that work in certain jurisdictions, how some of them wouldn't be able to work here because of our limited industries, and those types of things.

With the carbon-pricing mechanism, we have been very forthright with information and, as more information comes out, we will definitely be providing that.

I appreciate the member opposite's friendly advice and will take it into consideration.

The next question was about the terms of reference for the Financial Advisory Panel. Those will be released this month. The panel needs to approve those first. Once they do, as quickly as possible we will be providing those to the member opposite. If he could ask the other scatter-shot questions, I will try to get those before we adjourn for the day.

Mr. Cathers: First of all, something the Premier said that does require me to respond to his point about carbon pricing — the pan-Canadian framework the Premier is mentioning. He likes to throw that out in debate, but I would encourage Yukoners to actually read that and the document that was signed on to by the then Premier Pasloski. It included specific language around looking at exemptions for the north.

Indeed, it was not a commitment to implement a carbon tax, contrary to what the Leader of the Liberal Party appears to be remembering from that. He might want to re-read that document as well.

I would also note that it's interesting — the Premier is talking about establishing for the Financial Advisory Panel but is saying they will set their own terms of reference or have to approve it. That seems quite odd that a financial advisory panel would be the ones —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Cathers: I hear the Premier indicating that they have to approve the terms of reference. The strange thing about that is that a panel has been established without establishing their terms of reference yet — and that there would be a requirement for them to approve it, if they're being tasked to take specific actions.

I will go back to the questions that I apparently asked the Premier a little too quickly.

The Premier mentioned the Minister of Community Services' analysis of and report on the different carbon-pricing models that he provided with the Premier. I would ask the Premier and the government to make that information available to Yukoners. If the Minister of Community Services has done an analysis and can provide a detailed breakdown on other regimes and the rationale behind them, and if this is something that is part of what is informing governments' decisions, then I would simply suggest that, in the interest not only of accountability, but also to inform the public and all members of the Assembly, it would be helpful and appropriate if the government would consider making that information available to Yukoners and table it in this House. I would ask them if they would commit to a legislative return — or to the minister tabling that document in the House.

I will go back to the questions the Premier missed that I asked. In the Premier's mandate letter to the Minister of Health and Social Services, the mandate letter talks about and instructs the minister to work with Yukoners to create solutions to promote aging in place and a full spectrum of care — both public and private — while keeping the Whistle Bend continuing care development at 150 beds. This looks to be a modest compromise after the Liberals put forth a community petition calling for a stop-work order of the continuing care project prior to the election. I know that one of their candidates not only signed, but was collecting signatures on that.

Can the Premier confirm that if those 150 beds at Whistle Bend fill up and there is a need for more beds in Whitehorse, will the government be open to adding on to the building as per the original design, should the need arise? Or are they considering building other facilities either in Whitehorse or in rural Yukon? Also, will the Premier indicate if the Liberal government plans to deliver on its promise to support aging in place by developing extended care facilities in Yukon communities? If so, how does it plan to do so? How many facilities? How many beds? Is the government considering borrowing money to meet its platform commitments to Yukoners to do this?

I will add another question as well. We have called for a review of the medical travel program and the subsidy. We have expressed concern with what certainly appears in the budget to be a reduction in medical travel funding. The question for the Premier is whether the government is prepared to agree to our request for the government to review the medical travel program, including reviewing the out-of-territory subsidy, the eligibility criteria under the travel for medical treatment regulations and eligibility within the territory, including — I will give the Premier a specific example. The travel subsidy inside the territory is at the same level it has been since we increased it when I was Minister of Health and Social Services in 2006 or 2007.

I'm trying to remember the exact effective date of that, but the rate is the same as it has been since that point — gas prices have gone up. I have always heard from a constituent of mine who is a senior citizen of limited income and who has expressed their concern that, for physiotherapy appointments, physiotherapy is not currently covered under the scope of areas where someone receives a subsidy to travel into Whitehorse to receive specialist treatment. I would acknowledge it has been that way for a while and, in retrospect, an area that we should have included at the time. Is the Premier willing to consider reviewing the medical travel program, including the rates and the eligibility both inside the territory and out, and is the Premier willing to direct the minister, in doing this review, to consider whether there are any additional services, such as physiotherapy, that should be added to the list of eligible treatment for Yukon citizens?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do find it quite ironic that the member opposite did mention that his government, for 11 years, did not change the medical travel rates and now he is asking us to do so. Again, I don't want to talk on behalf of my minister in this particular regard, but we're always willing to take a look at all of our programs and services to make sure that we're providing the best services for Yukoners. We're always reviewing these things, as the member opposite knows. The member opposite had 11 years to change those rates and his government did not. We will continue to review that and we will get back to the member opposite if any changes are made. Thanks for the suggestion.

I think that was pretty much the only question. I will just reiterate again that the member looked at one line item, saw a reduction and his hair is on fire. There is no deduction in federal funding in medical travel and no plans to borrow. I'm not sure what else the member asked, but I think that answers his questions.

Mr. Cathers: That did answer some of my questions, but there are a few points. The Premier didn't commit to sharing the Minister of Community Services' scientific analysis of different carbon-tax models with Yukoners, and also didn't indicate whether that information is based on information from the Department of Environment or other sources, or if the minister is now filling the role — if I may be slightly facetious — of chief science officer to the Yukon government.

That was one question. Another one was about the government's plans around continuing care — both in Whitehorse and outside of Whitehorse — including whether the government believes the Whistle Bend facility of 150 beds will be sufficient to meet the population needs and, if not, whether the government is looking at either adding an additional 150 beds or developing an alternate facility either in Whitehorse or in a rural community. Also, in light of the Liberals' platform commitments around aging in place, promising extended care facilities for seniors in Yukon communities and whether the government plans to do so in its long-term capital plans — whether that's included in the financial projections for future fiscal years, both from a capital standpoint and an O&M standpoint or not. Also, if the Premier is telling me that government is actually committed to keeping this promise, unlike a number that they've chosen not to keep already, is the government prepared to borrow money to build extended care facilities and continuing care facilities in Yukon communities?

In the area of medical travel, I would note that the Premier may have seen that as an overly detailed department question, but when something is spelled out — when we're talking about questions that relate to what's in the mandate letter and what direction has been given, in the area of the medical travel program, while the Premier is tempted to characterize it as, "Well, you should have increased the program while in office" — well, we did increase it once. We did significantly change the structure once and our contention is that we believe that it's time again to do it. When we increased the rates for medical travel inside the territory in 2006, it was a decision that we made at that point in time to increase the rates and costs have gone up since then.

When we made the decision in 2006 to change the eligibility for the per diem outside the territory from the previous structure which had only a \$30 per day subsidy available to Yukoners on day four of travel outside the territory, to the current level where it is \$75 on day two, we did that in the context of the current time and the available dollars.

There are a number of other specific areas that relate to things like when parents are able to be an escort for a child. I also heard from a constituent who expressed the concern that the medical travel policy and the decision made by staff, based on their interpretation of what the requirements were under the existing regulations and policy, resulted in a case where she was eligible to travel outside the territory to Vancouver for treatment, but because she was planning on going on to another destination after that for vacation, her application to have that trip covered was denied. She pointed out, as somebody who had worked for government for quite a few years that, in her view, while she could afford to pay it, she felt that was an unfair differentiation between the standard rule that applies to ministers and government staff, wherein if you are travelling outside the territory on government business, people are allowed to tack on personal travel, as long as there is no net cost increase to the taxpayers and as long as they pay the change fees.

This was an area that she felt was unfair and we think is worth considering — whether the rules that are in place for the general public and what applies to government employees and Cabinet ministers — if there's a difference in standard, perhaps the regulations should be changed to allow officials the flexibility, in a case like that, to say you're adding on travel that has no net cost to the taxpayer.

We agree this treatment, this service or this appointment falls within the definition of medically necessary, and therefore, as long as you pay any change fees and all additional costs, no problem.

Again, this is the type of thing that — I see some amused looks from the government benches — but I point out that, although the issue may not be important to them, for the person who raised this issue with me, it was quite important. I'm just giving some examples to the Premier of why things change over time. The medical travel program changes over time. The needs of Yukoners change over time, and we're asking whether they are prepared to review it because the regulations themselves — which do require, by the way, Cabinet approval — have not been reviewed or changed in a while.

Hon. Mr. Silver: We're scratching our heads about the amused looks. I don't think anybody over here is doing anything else, other than listening to the member opposite right now, so I'll just let that go.

I hope what the member opposite can do — I mean, it's a very valid concern from one of his constituents. I wonder when the member opposite heard this from his constituent and when he sent the letter to the minister responsible. Because I don't think it has hit her desk yet. That's a very valid concern from a constituent, so we'll take a look again. We'll look upstairs to make sure that letter is there, because that's a great question and we'll definitely get an answer, once we receive that — if we haven't already — from the member opposite.

When it comes to health and aging — and I apologize for not answering this question the first time — we all know the road that we went down to get to Whistle Bend and we don't have to belabour the point of scoping around all through Yukon for a 300-bed facility and how hard that must have been, especially when this was not a campaign commitment.

This wasn't something that the Yukon Party campaigned on, yet all of a sudden — great news — we need 300 beds for the whole of Yukon, and now we are going to put them all in one and try to find someplace in Whitehorse for a 300-bed facility. I can't imagine how difficult that must have been for the members opposite to accomplish.

When you go back to the communities — when you go to Old Crow, Dawson City or Watson Lake or different communities — and talk to the elders there, thinking they don't want to go to Whitehorse to retire — that is the last thing the communities want. Whitehorse is the same, as far as all communities mattering, and every community needs its elders. The number 300 is justified Yukon-wide, yet the solution is Whitehorse only. We had a big problem with that.

I will correct the record as well. The member opposite spoke of some petition that the Liberals had. We didn't have a

petition. There was a petition but I didn't sign it. Nobody over here signed that petition. He is right that there was a candidate who did sign that petition. I suggested that person not sign that petition, but whatever. People have their free minds. We'll just leave that. Again, nobody over here had a petition. There was no petition from the Liberal Party, so I will correct the record for the member opposite. He knows very well that it wasn't our petition; he is being very clever.

As far as consideration of expanding the Whistle Bend facility, we have to staff it first. We have to get the plans right for the existing 150 beds, and that is going to be a mammoth task.

The previous government spent so long not planning for aging options for our elders, and then put this one-size-fits-all option together without planning for the operation and maintenance and without planning for the hiring. Where are we going to find the people to run these facilities? That's going to take some time, let alone to start talking about expanding it.

What our next step is — I know the minister is probably champing at the bit here to get into this debate — as far as aging-in-place options, as far as all communities mattering and taking a look at Yukon as a whole and reaching out to all the communities and what their options are when it comes to, in my opinion, one of our most important assets, which is our elders and the knowledge base that's there — to have everybody come into Whitehorse — I know it's something that the Third Party absolutely did not want to see either, and we share that.

Again, it wasn't a platform commitment but it came out. I think we spoke about this earlier today — as far as change orders and the concern by the Yukon Party. I believe it was the Yukon Party that talked about change orders. This side of the House thinks that change orders come so much more often —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: It was the Third Party that brought this up.

I think the change orders come when projects of this magnitude come out of the blue and when there's not a lot of planning for these types of projects.

Our plan is to build the evidence, and the next step; the Minister of Health and Social Services has talked about this. Aging in place is something we're looking at right now. Once we go down that road, we will take a turn and look at more options as far as our aging population.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, 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 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Monday.

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

The following document was filed May 11, 2017:

34-2-3

Health insurance coverage for Nadja Cooper, letter re (dated May 11, 2017) from Hon. Pauline Frost, Minister of Health and Social Services to Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge (Frost)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 14

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, May 15, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

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

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Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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| Hansard Administrator | Deana Lemke |

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, May 15, 2017 — 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 remembrance of Wendy Callahan and recognition for Run for Mom

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute honour to rise today on behalf of the Liberal Party to pay tribute to Wendy Callahan.

A celebration of Wendy's life was held on Saturday, October 22, 2016 at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Whitehorse. Today, I would like to celebrate her life in this House. This feels like a special place to do this tribute. Wendy's father, Rudy Couture, a long-time Sergeant-at-Arms in this Legislature, is joining us today. It's good to see you again, back in the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Couture.

Wendy delivered the mail in this building for many years. Several of us were very fortunate to have known her. In 2012, Wendy was nominated for a Premier's Award of Excellence in the individual category. These annual awards recognize outstanding achievement by a government employee. Wendy was a devoted Highways and Public Works employee. She was nominated for her work in the mailroom.

Her fellow employees who nominated her said — and I quote: "Her efforts as a fundraiser in the fight to beat cancer exemplifies how the public service spirit can extend beyond the workplace."

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, Wendy was dedicated to the cause. For years, she was consistently the top fundraiser for Run for Mom, a local event that raises funds for breast health in the Yukon. Mr. Speaker, Wendy was so ardent about fundraising for Run for Mom that she received national attention for her efforts.

On April 17, 2012, Wendy received the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award. His Excellency, the Rt. Hon. David Johnston, Governor General of Canada presented 28 outstanding Canadians with the prestigious award during a celebration ceremony at Rideau Hall. Wendy Callahan was undeniably an outstanding member of that group. Created in 1995 by the Right Honourable Roméo LeBlanc, the former Governor General, the Caring Canadian Award recognizes Canadians and permanent residents who have made significant, sustained and unpaid contributions to their community in Canada and abroad.

The award celebrates the example set by volunteers whose compassion and engagement are part of the Canadian

character. Wendy's engagement with Run for Mom surely set an example for Yukoners. Wendy started donating her time and efforts to Run for Mom in 1999 and raised over \$85,000 in those years. The impact that she made was immense, and we are lucky to have known her. Wendy will be remembered for her hard work and for her dedication. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. McLeod: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Run for Mom which takes place annually on Mother's Day. This year, the 19th annual Run for Mom is dedicated to Wendy Callahan, who dedicated a large portion of her time and her life to fundraising efforts for breast cancer and breast cancer awareness.

Wendy was well-known as a driving force behind Run for Mom. She began participating in the CIBC Run for the Cure in 1998, when she took part for her friend, Flo Kitz, who was battling breast cancer at the time. That particular fundraiser was a national event, with only partial proceeds staying in the Yukon. Of the \$40,000, a total of \$18,000 remained in the community, becoming a deposit on the territory's mammography machine.

The Run for Mom was launched in Yukon in 1999 by an organizing committee of volunteers, community members and hospital staff. The run, through the years since its launch, has raised over \$1.1 million, all of which has stayed in the Yukon. The remainder of the cost of the Whitehorse General Hospital's mammography machine — \$700,000 — was attained by the fundraising efforts of the community through Run for Mom.

In addition, funds raised were able to cover a brochure for women on what to expect during a mammogram, sponsor the Paddlers Abreast canoe team and to help send two local breast cancer survivors to the 2008 International Congress on Breast Cancer. These are tremendous achievements and highlight the impact a community can have by fundraising for a cause. As we've heard, Wendy was presented with a Caring Canadian Award in 2012 by the Governor General of Canada. Wendy, at the time, had raised over \$90,000 in her efforts and that number climbed significantly over the following years.

Wendy passed away in October of last year. She will be remembered always. Many of my colleagues and government staff will not forget the hard-working and energetic woman that she was. Working in the mailroom, Wendy visited different offices and departments throughout the day and few people didn't recognize her and say hello. She was a truly vibrant woman and is missed by all.

Wendy's efforts did not go unnoticed and will be missed and thought of with great admiration each year, and especially at this time. Her participation went above and beyond year after year. I'm pleased that this year's run is dedicated to her memory.

The Run for Mom is an overwhelming success year after year, with over 1,000 runners, walkers and cyclists taking part annually. I would like to thank each and every family and individual who contributed their time and fundraising efforts

this Mother's Day to make this year's Run for Mom a success for the 19th year and counting.

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to celebrate two things near and dear to my heart. These things overlap in such a way that it's nearly impossible to talk about one without the other. They go together like peanut butter and jam, beaches and sunscreen, volunteers and community — the Run for Mom and Wendy Callahan.

Just about everyone in town will recognize Wendy. She walked everywhere — from her home in Takhini to work downtown and back again — because Wendy loved to walk. I was 16 when I first met Wendy. At that point, she was the uber-efficient waitress at the No Pop Sandwich Shop. Even at that age, I recognized her skill and her gift with people. I loved watching her interact with customers. She knew everyone and enough about them to gently tease them when they visited. Her dry sense of humour was something that I always loved.

It was years later, in 1999, that I got to work with Wendy at The Chocolate Claim. I was baking and she worked the counter on Saturdays. There is a special time in that kind of business where, before opening, there was a calm before the storm with just the two of you in the place. If you're lucky, you like each other. If you're really lucky, you will become good friends. It was that first year at The Chocolate Claim that I got to see Wendy in action for the Run for Mom. In 1997, the Yukon had its first-ever breast cancer run, the CIBC Run for the Cure. I am sure it will come as no surprise that the community rallied behind the event, raising more than \$40,000, but because, as it was mentioned, the Run for the Cure was a national event, all but \$18,000 left the territory. The community's strong support and desire to keep funds within the Yukon meant that it was time to organize a run right here at home where 100 percent of the money raised would stay in the territory.

In 1998, an organizing committee made up of community members and hospital staff launched the very first Yukon Run for Mom to raise money for breast health. Since 2000, Val Pike has been the dynamo behind the Run for Mom. She and her dedicated volunteers make magic happen each and every Mother's Day, and for that we will be forever grateful. The grounds at the *SS Klondike* come alive with people from all walks of life. Walkers, cyclists and runners gather for live music, a warm-up and, of course, the countdown. Mr. Speaker, yesterday's cooler temperatures didn't keep the hundreds of participants away.

Wendy started her fundraising for the Run for Mom the same year that I started working at The Chocolate Claim, and she was incredible. She asked every single person if they were interested in donating — and to be clear, "no" wasn't really an option. No amount was too small, and she was gracious with every donation. At one point, I asked her how much she was planning on raising and, in true Wendy form, she stopped what she was doing, looked at me and said something along the lines of "the most", and she did every single year that she participated. When Wendy started working in the mailroom at

the Yukon government, not only did she have access to the hundreds of people she had already trained to be ready to donate, her empire grew. Armed with her fanny pack and previous years' pledge sheets, she would start collecting months ahead of time. She was that committed to the cause of breast health in the Yukon and that committed to the Run for Mom.

Yesterday, the Run for Mom honoured Wendy and her dedication to their event, and she wasn't just honoured for the money that she raised — the more than \$100,000 — but for what she brought to the community: her spark, her enthusiasm and her dedication. She faced her illness the same way she faced her life — with a positive attitude, persistence and a sense of humour.

With Wendy and her family in the gallery, I was able to tribute her here in April 2012 after she was awarded the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award. She never liked to be in the spotlight, so watching her squirm as she listened to all the nice things we said about her was smile-worthy.

Today is a little bit different, so today I thank the Run for Mom for their ongoing efforts to improve access to breast health in the Yukon. We thank them for their efforts to enhance the comfort of patients, to offer peace of mind, more certainty with quicker, more efficient diagnostic tools, and to their ongoing commitment to ensure Yukoners can receive the treatment that they need. I want to especially thank them for honouring Wendy at yesterday's run.

Today I get to honour my friend who was so much to so many. Wendy passed away on October 17, 2016, and her celebration of life was a good indicator of the life she had lived and by how many people she had touched. We were a diverse and colourful group that barely fit in the church. It was standing-room only.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Kip, Judy, Glenda and Rudy and her friends who are here today. She made an impact and that's all we can really ask for, so thanks for being here.

In remembrance of Florence Roberts

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to a friend and all-round amazing Yukoner, Florence Roberts.

Born in New Westminster, BC on July 17, 1943, Florence, at an early age, was someone to contend with, and everyone knew when she was in the room.

Florence graduated from nursing school, specializing in psychiatric nursing, and did her practicum at Essondale, later known as Riverview Hospital. She kept in touch with her graduating classmates throughout the years. She and her husband, Preston, lived in Mission, BC and decided to take a vacation to the Yukon. That was the summer of 1972. They fell in love with the Yukon and moved here in 1973, along with baby Lloyd, and soon they welcomed baby Jenny the following year in 1974.

When she arrived, Florence realized Yukon did not recognize psychiatric nurses. She worked tirelessly and, over the years, this did change. On August 1, 2009, an order-in-

council to amend the *Health Professions Act* to incorporate *Registered Psychiatric Nurses Regulation* was put in place in Yukon.

While they both had jobs in Whitehorse, the lure of gold mining was strong and they worked claims on Burwash Creek just west of Destruction Bay, then later at Mount Nansen near Carmacks. Jenny told me their house was always busy, full of life, laughter and food. There was always company, the phone ringing, a meeting to attend, someone to visit in the hospital — or just lend a hand with some event or do. She said that, at the house on the highway, there would be so many guests that they had to set up two tables — one for adults and one for the kids. If they ran out of room at the adult table, someone had to join the kids' table.

Through the ebb and flow of life, Florence met her soulmate, Alfred Gould, and they spent many years together, spanning 28 years. After a few years at the Royal Bank, she worked for Health Canada and then transferred to YTG Health and Social Services. Right to the last, she worked two to three days a week.

She was always involved in volunteering and giving back to the community. Florence was so well-known and she always was ready with that big, huge smile.

She had friends in every walk of life and loved to share a moment with all she encountered, usually with a story, just finding out what you were up to and offering her help.

Her hobbies were gardening and making gold jewellery. She got her nuggets from the mine that Alfie mined for many years and many of her pieces were works of art. In fact, Jenny is wearing one of them today.

Florence was interested in what happened in our city and decided to let her name stand for city council. For myself, who always voted in municipal elections, it was an easy mark. I knew Florence would be a solid, common-sense councillor — and she was. She was re-elected for a second term and served under two mayors: Ernie Bourassa and Bev Buckway. It was not uncommon to see Florence attend many events throughout the year. As Bev said in an article: "... if she thought something wasn't right, she set out to make sure some things got changed."

Florence was also one of the mainstays of the Yukoners Cancer Care Fund and stayed with the group right through. When there was an event, she was there at the front door selling 50-50 tickets and organizing the silent auction. Nothing was daunting for Florence. She was at our first meeting and, in fact, just before she was admitted to hospital, we e-mailed one another as I had just heard the news of her cancer. This last e-mail was dated January 3, 2017 and part of it reads, "Comfort and quality of life mean so much. I have such a wonderful circle around me, I can't lose. I tell my body to smarten up every morning and every night. Please let me know when the meeting with the Hospital Foundation is, as I would like to see that completed before much else transpires — Florence". That was Florence — making sure she had her voice heard.

Her cancer journey was short, but nonetheless traumatic for her and her family. Once diagnosed, she realized she did

not have much time and was resigned to comforting her children and Alfred. She left us on January 10 and the City of Whitehorse lowered their flags to half-mast in her memory — and what an honour. She will be missed — her infectious laugh and sense of humour.

I would like everyone to help me welcome to the House her daughter Jenny Roberts and a few others: Tammy Banks, the group from the Pioneer Women of the Yukon, Whitehorse Lodge No. 2, Susan Thirlwell, Marj Jensen, former councillor Jan Stick, former Mayor Bev Buckway and current councillor Rob Fendrick, plus many others who are here in person. Some are listening online to today's session, especially her son Lloyd.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Today I rise on behalf of the Liberal Party to give a tribute to Florence Roberts. There are so many things that Florence accomplished over the years. The member opposite did a very eloquent job of identifying some other fun and interesting things that Florence had undertaken during her time.

Florence, as was spoken about, served on Whitehorse City Council for two terms, beginning in 2006. During that time, she also on occasion held the seat of Deputy Mayor.

She was a noted volunteer with the Canada Winter Games, Arctic Winter Games, Yukoners Cancer Care fund, and the Red Cross health equipment loan program. She always volunteered at the City of Whitehorse Halloween and New Year's Eve parties and various other events at the Canada Games Centre. She supported many causes, including public transit — a huge advocate of that. She served on several boards, including the Whitehorse Housing Advisory Board, the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees and the board of the Yukon Multiple Sclerosis Society. She also served on the working group for psychiatric nurses that helped to develop, as was stated, the *Registered Psychiatric Nurses Regulation* introduced in 2009. Florence also served on the executive of the Yukon Employees' Union, Local Y017 and the executive of the Utilities Consumers' Group. In 1990, she was also the returning officer for the advisory council for the Hamlet of Ibex Valley.

A couple of fun ones — she also won the senior division homemade wine category in the Yukon Agricultural Association's 8th annual Klondike Harvest Fair event show in 2002 and was known as the "Yukon Yapper" on her CB radio.

I think the easiest way to sum up Florence's impact and what she was like is to tell a quick story. On January 6, I got a phone call from the mayor who I served under with Florence — Bev Buckway. She said, "Florence needs to see you, and you shouldn't delay." On the afternoon of January 7, I travelled to the hospital to see what Florence was calling on me for. Her family was there, so it took a bit of time, and then I had an opportunity to go and sit with Florence. As was so eloquently stated across the way by the member opposite, Florence still had a list of tasks and she was giving me one. I walked into the room — Lloyd was there — and she said, "Young man, sit down because I have something for you to do." She had just travelled back from Vancouver and had been

informed of her news, and she wanted to get back as soon as possible. The situation with the medevac wasn't as it should have been. She was upset about that, and she wanted to make sure that it got fixed. She wanted to make sure that it got fixed so that nobody else would have to go through a delay at an important time, and they would be back with their family. She said, "Make sure you sit down with the Minister of Health and Social Services." I committed to that right there. That would be done on Monday morning. She said, "I know" — and excuse me for breaking protocol — "I know Pauline, and I know she will take this on, but I want to go talk to her about it because I am upset about it. Please make sure it gets done." She was so brave. She said, "You know, young man, I am sitting with you here and we are not counting time in hours. We are counting time in minutes right now." I had an opportunity to give her hug. It just exemplified what type of person she was.

I have never sat with a person in a political world who, as was touched on, always had the courage to make the right call, no matter what the fallout was.

Her enthusiasm and energy for public service and for serving in a municipal government was second to none. The one thing I can take away is that her love for the Yukon and her love for her family — these were the most important things in her life.

Ms. Hanson: I am pleased to pay tribute to, obviously, a very well-loved woman, Florence Roberts, on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party caucus.

I want to express my thanks to Jan Stick, former MLA for Riverdale South as well as former city councillor, for this tribute. Jan knew, worked with and was friends with Florence for many years. Along with the others in this Legislature, we are so aware of Florence's contributions to the City of Whitehorse and her contributions to the many organizations in this community. If you had to borrow something from the Red Cross or try to park at Rotary Park during the river race, you would have Florence there to help you. If there was a walk for the MS society, Florence would be there pitching in. It's what Florence did. She saw a job or a task that needed doing and stepped up. Nothing seemed too small or too big for her.

Florence was a force to be reckoned with. We have heard some examples today. We all have many of them with her. She was a force in many individuals' lives. Besides her family and friends, Florence gathered what she called many "strays and orphans" around her. She spent time with her "old guy" at Copper Ridge, taking him out for rides, doing his laundry and being the family we all wish for in our lives. There were many who showed up at her door who knew that they could get a haircut, a helping hand with laundry, or just a good meal and conversation.

We also know that Florence loved travel. Whether around Whitehorse or world travel, a road trip with Florence was a never-ending storytelling trip. She had travelled all of the Yukon highways and side roads and had a story for every 10 kilometres.

Florence couldn't go anywhere without chatting up the person sitting next to her or wading into a crowd and making instant connections and friends. As Jan put it, one had only to watch her at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, where hundreds of mayors and councillors gathered. She always came away with new friends.

Many have described Florence as feisty and outspoken. She said exactly what she thought, but she also listened to others and considered their views and information. Florence always had an open mind and was respectful of others. Sometimes she even changed her mind.

So it was with shock and sorrow that we heard of her untimely and much too early death. It is a loss to Whitehorse and the whole of Yukon. We extend our condolences to her family and her friends and all of those who benefitted from her largesse, her love and her hard work.

In recognition of Yukon Francophonie Day

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, Monsieur le Président, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon government and the Official Opposition. À titre de ministre responsable de la Direction des services en français, je suis très très heureux, en ce 15 mai, de souligner la 11^e Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise, ainsi que l'importante contribution que notre communauté francophone a apportée, et continue d'apporter, à l'essor du territoire.

Depuis les célébrations de la Journée de la francophonie, qui ont eu lieu vendredi dernier au Old Fire Hall, le drapeau de la franco-yukonnie flotte devant l'Assemblée législative.

It is my pleasure as minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate to acknowledge the 11th Yukon Francophonie Day on Monday, May 15, and to recognize the important contributions, past and present, that our francophone community has made to the development of the Yukon.

The Franco-Yukon flag has been flying in front of the Legislative Assembly building since last Friday's celebrations of the Yukon Francophonie Day at the Old Fire Hall.

L'Association franco-yukonnaise vient tout juste de fêter le 35^e anniversaire de sa constitution. Au nom de l'Assemblée, je tiens à féliciter l'AFY d'avoir franchi cette étape importante — l'association joue un rôle fondamental pour maintenir le dynamisme de la francophonie yukonnaise.

C'est avec fierté que nous constatons la croissance spectaculaire de la communauté francophone yukonnaise et sa présence se fait de plus en plus sentir, que ce soit dans le secteur privé, sur la scène culturelle ou au sein du gouvernement.

Just recently, the Association franco-yukonnaise celebrated the 35th anniversary of its incorporation. On behalf of the House, I wish to express our warm congratulations to the AFY on this milestone and on the important role it plays in ensuring the vitality of the Yukon francophonie.

We are proud to witness the tremendous growth of the Yukon francophone community and its ever-increasing presence, be it in the private sector, on the cultural scene or at government level.

L'influence de l'AFY est particulièrement palpable dans le domaine des arts et de la culture. Je profite de l'occasion pour féliciter l'Association franco-yukonnaise et Cécile Girard pour le projet "De fil en histoires: Les personnages d'un territoire". Au printemps, dans le cadre du 150^e anniversaire du Canada, cet atelier de contes a été présenté à divers endroits au Yukon.

Le projet explore l'influence de la communauté francophone sur l'histoire du Yukon. Cécile Girard, une artiste francophone et Yukonnaise de longue date, a animé ces ateliers à Haines Junction, Dawson et Whitehorse. Les participants ont été invités à fabriquer des poupées à la main en s'inspirant des personnages historiques et contemporains du Yukon. Les créations seront présentées cet automne lors de trois expositions.

The AFY's influence on arts and culture is particularly noteworthy. I take this opportunity to commend the Association franco-yukonnaise and Cécile Girard, who is here today, for their Canada 150th project "Stitches In Time: Yukon History Makers", a unique storytelling workshop that has toured the Yukon this spring. The project explores the influence of the francophone community on shaping Yukon's history. Girard, a long-time Yukon, French-speaking artist, led workshops in Haines Junction, Dawson and Whitehorse, where people were invited to create hand-made dolls inspired by francophone characters from Yukon's history, past and present. The creations will be featured in three exhibitions in the fall.

Je tiens à remercier l'Association franco-yukonnaise pour ses efforts soutenus visant à promouvoir le caractère unique du Yukon auprès des visiteurs francophones. J'espère de tout cœur que l'application mobile pour le tourisme en français, lancée le 2 mai par l'AFY, connaîtra un franc succès.

Le ministère du Développement économique a investi 35 000\$ sur deux ans pour appuyer le projet. L'application mobile renforce l'image du Yukon comme destination de choix, améliore l'expérience des touristes francophones et fait valoir les produits et services touristiques du territoire. Elle fera certainement mieux connaître le Yukon comme destination touristique ici, au Canada et à l'étranger.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Association franco-yukonnaise for their continued efforts to promote Yukon's uniqueness to French-speaking visitors, and to wish them great success with the French tourism mobile application they launched this past May 2.

Economic Development invested \$35,000 over two years in this project. The mobile app aims to promote the Yukon as a destination of choice, enhance French-speaking visitors' experiences and showcase Yukon tourism products and services. It will most certainly increase the awareness of Yukon as a travel destination here in Canada and beyond.

À titre de ministre responsable de la Direction des services en français, je me réjouis à la perspective de continuer à collaborer avec l'Association franco-yukonnaise.

En fait, je m'apprête à examiner et à planifier la phase 2 de notre cadre stratégique pour les services en français. La

première étape consistera à mener une consultation auprès de la communauté francophone.

As Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate, I look forward to continuing our collaborative relationship with the Association franco-yukonnaise. In fact, we will soon review and plan phase 2 of our strategic framework for French Language Services, and this will begin with consulting the francophone community.

Enfin, j'aurai l'honneur de coprésider, avec la ministre du Patrimoine canadien, Mélanie Joly, la 22^e Conférence ministérielle sur la francophonie canadienne qui se déroulera en juin 2017, à Ottawa. Cette conférence aura une saveur franco-yukonnaise toute particulière.

Monsieur le Président, je demande à tous les membres de l'Assemblée de se joindre à moi pour féliciter la communauté francophone à l'occasion de cette Journée de la francophonie, pour le 35^e anniversaire de l'Association franco-yukonnaise, et pour la façon dont les francophones enrichissent l'identité et la diversité culturelles de notre territoire.

Finally, I will have the honour of joining Canadian Heritage Minister, Mélanie Joly, as co-chair of the 22nd Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie in June 2017 in Ottawa — a conference that will have a certain Yukon flavour in français.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating the Yukon francophone community on this Yukon Francophonie Day for the 35th year of the Association franco-yukonnaise and for the way it enriches our territory's cultural identity and diversity.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome: from the Association franco-yukonnaise, Angélique Bernard, André Bourcier, Isabelle Salesse, Roch Nadon, Nancy Power, Amélie Jalbert, Isabelle Carrier, Edith Belanger, Stephanie Bourret; from the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, Jean-Sébastien Blais, and his daughter, Julianne, of seven months; from Les EssentiElles, Marie-Stéphanie Gasse, Elaine Michaud, and Anne-Marie Leblanc; from L'Aurore boréale, Thibault Rondel; from the Partenariat Communauté en Santé, Sandra St-Laurent and Régis St-Pierre; from the Stagiaire du Carrefours Formation Mauricie, I would like us to welcome Justine Suzor-Lamy, Karine Parent, Martin Le Breton, Bryan St-Hillaire Bistodeau, Ivan Dario Tapia Chavez, Luc Toussignant, Stéphanie Brodeur; and from the Department of the French Language Services — a great team — I would like to welcome Patrice Tremblay, Lisa Légère-Melanson, Katharina Marcin, Myriam Lachance-Bernard, Sonia Watson, Amélie Caissie, Véronique D'Avignon, Coralie Langevin, Christine Lepage, Etienne Verstraelen, Joanie Maheu, Karine Virmoux-Jackson, Sylvie Painchaud, and lastly, just retired, Jeanne Beaudoin.

Applause

Ms. White: Merci, Monsieur le Président, je suis fière de prendre la parole au nom du NPD pour célébrer la Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise.

C'est toujours un honneur pour moi de rendre hommage à la Journée de la Francophonie Yukonnaise.

Cette année est toute spéciale puisqu'elle marque aussi le trente cinquième anniversaire de l'Association franco-yukonnaise dont plusieurs représentants sont ici aujourd'hui.

La journée de la francophonie est une occasion unique de découvrir et célébrer la langue française, la culture francophone et de souligner l'histoire et la vitalité de la Franco-Yukonnie.

Les francophones ont eu une grande importance au Yukon depuis les années 1800. Joseph Juneau, Émilie Tremblay et Jean Ladue ne sont que quelques exemples de pionniers francophones qui ont marqué l'histoire du Yukon.

La communauté francophone au Yukon est aujourd'hui en pleine croissance et elle dispose d'institutions reconnues. Le gouvernement ne cesse d'augmenter l'offre de services en français pour répondre à une demande bien présente au sein de la communauté.

La diversité de la communauté franco-yukonnaise ne cesse de s'enrichir avec de nouveaux arrivants des quatre coins du globe. Cette diversité renforce la communauté francophone qui elle-même contribue renforcer unir la population Yukonnaise dans sa diversité.

Je remercie tous ceux et celles qui continuent à jouer un rôle important au sein de la communauté.

En terminant, je me dois d'adresser un merci tout spécial à mes professeurs dans le programme d'immersion grâce à qui je peux m'adresser à vous dans la langue de Molière

Merci et bonne journée de la francophonie à tous et à toutes.

In recognition of Association of Yukon Communities

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today on behalf on the government and the Official Opposition to recognize the Association of Yukon Communities on the occasion of the association's annual general meeting. This past weekend was the annual gathering of municipal representatives and the Association of Yukon Communities in Faro — all communities matter. It was a great opportunity for face-to-face meetings, problem-solving and knowledge sharing. I want to acknowledge the great level of engagement that we had at that meeting. This year, we had the meeting in the beautiful town of Faro on the beautiful traditional territory of the Ross River Dena Council in the beautiful riding of Pelly-Nisutlin.

The Sheep and Crane Festival had just wrapped up, but we did manage to see a lot of wildlife this past weekend. In particular, I noted about 40 porcupines on the drive in. It was quite amazing. So maybe they are going to expand the festival.

As Minister of Community Services, my job is to make sure our municipalities are supported to provide programs and services — local solutions for local issues. Yukoners make their homes in municipalities. In their communities, Yukoners buy groceries, build houses and spend time with loved ones. Stable local governance means that Yukoners have stable and welcoming homes. The Association of Yukon Communities does invaluable work to make sure that all orders of

government within the Yukon work together to create healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities, and I thank them.

The Association of Yukon Communities began working toward sustainable and responsible local governments in 1974. Municipalities and local advisory councils play a critical role in Yukon communities. They are ready to listen to local issues and make change happen.

The Association of Yukon Communities supports local governments in solving problems for all Yukoners. In 1975, the association incorporated under the name of the Association of Yukon Communities, which allowed for municipalities and local advisory councils to be represented by the group. The Association of Yukon Communities has membership and voting rights in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which has allowed for local issues to be heard at the national level.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, the first vice-president, Jenny Gerbasi, was at the AGM this past weekend in Faro. She told me she was super impressed with the hospitality. So I would like to thank Mayor Jack Bowers and also the president, Diana Rogerson, for creating that hospitality. She was also extremely impressed with our level of engagement. She noted that the Yukon is the one territory or province in the country where 100 percent of our municipalities are members of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, so they always put us first on the list when they show all the provinces and territories.

For many years now, the Government of Yukon has been working in a collaborative, respectful partnership with the Association of Yukon Communities to help foster sustainable, responsible local governments. We work with the Association of Yukon Communities to ensure a long-term, stable and predictable source of funding for municipalities. We began the next round of work this past weekend.

Together, we are establishing a Yukon-wide solid-waste strategy to divert and deal with our waste in an environmentally sustainable and economically responsible manner. We work closely with the Association of Yukon Communities to ensure that infrastructure funding from the Yukon and federal governments addresses local needs.

Collaboratively, we work on providing sport and recreation opportunities and cultural experiences. We work on providing emergency services and emergency plans to best serve Yukoners. All of these topics, among others, were under discussion at Faro this weekend. At the Association of Yukon Communities' AGM, we continued these conversations and more.

As Minister of Community Services, I am so pleased to be part of these discussions. I would like to express my appreciation for the hard work that Diana Rogerson, the current president, and the rest of the Association of Yukon Communities executive and staff do on a daily basis. Each Yukon municipality has a host of hard-working individuals providing municipal programs and services — a shout-out to the mayors, councillors and city managers around the territory.

Over the years, there have been numerous success stories of our two orders of government working together for Yukoners. I look forward to continuing our respectful, collaborative and productive partnership with the Association of Yukon Communities in the coming years. Together, we will continue to work to achieve stable and sustainable local solutions that will continue to create welcoming, thriving homes for all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome into the Legislature today — first of all, Samson Hartland, a councillor for the City of Whitehorse; also Bev Buckway, the executive director of the association; Laura Eby, who is the manager of the association. I would like to also welcome some of the Community Services staff — Sam Crosby and Paula Nugent. I'm sorry if I missed the last person, but welcome.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: On behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus, I also take pleasure in paying tribute to the Association of Yukon Communities on the occasion of their annual general meeting.

I had the pleasure, along with my colleague, the MLA for Takhini-Kopper King, of attending this year's AGM in Faro. I also want to thank the community of Faro and the organizers for the excellent program that was presented and for the hospitality that we all enjoyed over the weekend.

The Association of Yukon Communities plays an important role in giving all communities an opportunity to speak as one voice when lobbying our federal or territorial governments for better services or considerations for their citizens — for us. Municipal governments are those that are closest to the people they serve and to the services they provide. When you consider that it is this level of government that oversees our drinking water, sewage, waste management, roads, recreation, fire protection and so many more services that we take for granted, we have much to thank them for.

I also want to extend our congratulations to Clara Jules for the recognition that she received this weekend with the Hanseatic Award. This award is presented annually to an individual who has dedicated their time and efforts to make their community and, in turn, the Yukon a better place for all citizens. Clara Jules has over 25 years of service as Mayor of Teslin, councillor for the Village of Teslin as well as serving as an elected member of the Teslin Tlingit Council. Her award was well-deserved.

As well, we salute Donna Istchenko from the Village of Haines Junction, the recipient of the Municipal Employee Award of Excellence, recognizing her professionalism, leadership and innovation in her job.

As we listened on Sunday morning to the thoughtful debate on the resolutions that the AYC members engaged in, I was struck again by the level of respectful engagement demonstrated by these civic leaders, as well as the thorough background work that went into the resolutions brought forward. As members of this Legislative Assembly, we will do well to make sure we pay close attention to the spirit and intent of the recommendations made by the AYC to the

Yukon government, and we will do well if we can work together to bring them to life.

In recognition of Teen Parent Centre

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of all of the members of this House to pay tribute the Teen Parent Centre and, in particular, to their Mother's Day celebrations.

Last Friday, the students hosted a Mother's Day brunch at the Teen Parent Centre to celebrate with students, their families and friends, staff and partners. Together, these dedicated people make the Teen Parent Centre a nurturing community that provides the support to create a healthy future for many generations. The centre provides essential programs and services to help young parents complete high school and to meet their needs for childcare, cultural and healthy family developmental skills, and scholarships.

The Government of Yukon is a proud supporter of this centre. The departments of Education and of Health and Social Services are part of a four-corner partnership behind the centre along with the Teen Parent Access to Education Society and F.H. Collins Secondary School. Today, we recognize the achievements of these young moms as they take on their new roles and responsibilities while working to earn their high school diplomas. Congratulations to these young mothers who continue to work toward completing their education. They demonstrate the value of education to their children and set a good example for them by making wise decisions to look forward to a positive future with a solid education.

Thank you to the Teen Parent Centre staff and board members for their important work in supporting these hard-working young people.

I visited the Teen Parent Centre last Friday afternoon and saw some of the amazing traditional clothing pieces that several students are designing, sewing and beading for their upcoming graduation. It is just one example of the life skills and opportunities that are available to students at the Teen Parent Centre. They were also making spectacular cupcakes, which I did not have, but were taken home and shared with their families and friends as a Mother's Day tribute.

I would like to welcome to the House today, Kathy Heinbigner, who is a teacher and director of the Teen Parent Centre, and three of her students. Thank you very much for coming.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?
Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise to welcome a constituent of mine, Allison Anderson, who has joined us this afternoon in the House.

Applause

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of personal privilege

Mr. Hutton: I rise on a point of personal privilege to correct a statement I made in this House on May 2. I mistakenly informed the House that the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges had met three times. In fact, they have only met once.

Speaker: Thank you for that clarification.
Are there any returns or documents for tabling?
Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Gallina: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to investigate the possibility of eliminating daylight saving time.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support environmental stewardship by developing initiatives that increase the use of renewable energy sources in Yukon.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the government to work with local producers to expand Yukon's agricultural industry and improve northern food security.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with industry to support small-scale clean energy initiatives to reduce the energy footprint of mining projects.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support marketing initiatives for prospectors and early-stage mining exploration projects in Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a flexible rural economic development policy and provide ongoing funding for local non-profits that will assist with the planning and implementation of community development plans and coordination of business support services.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the government to consult with community governments, First Nation governments and Yukoners to determine how it can better serve Yukon communities by decentralizing some of its operations and services.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the federal government, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Kluane First Nation, local communities, chambers of commerce, businesses, organizations and community members to increase access to the front ranges of Kluane National Park and Reserve of Canada along the Haines and Alaska highways for the purpose of creating more land- and air-based tourism and business opportunities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to invest in affordable housing in communities and in housing initiatives, based on a Housing First model, that meet the needs of vulnerable populations.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to establish enhanced mental health services to better serve Yukon communities.

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: Internet connectivity

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, the previous government had undertaken extensive work to analyze options for a redundant fibre optic line. At the time, the government stated that a line connecting the Northwest Territories and Yukon via the Dempster Highway was the best way to improve broadband opportunities in Yukon communities. Now the Liberal government is proposing to redo all that work. Regarding this project, the Premier stated to the federal finance committee — and I quote: “The final decision on the fibre line routes will consider the needs of Yukon residents as a whole and the business community as well as finding out where the federal money will come from for that.” Can the minister let us know exactly what considerations are looked at as they consider both the Dempster and a United States route for redundant fibre optics?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A fibre optic outage has a significant negative impact on Yukon businesses and residents. The Yukon government is committed to moving forward on a diverse fibre optic link to protect Yukoners from future telecommunication outages.

The Department of Economic Development has submitted two applications — as the member opposite touched on — as we look toward the Connect to Innovate federal broadband funding program. One application is for the Juneau link, which was touched upon, and which connects Whitehorse to Skagway, Alaska, through the south Klondike Highway and interconnects to Seattle. The other application is

for the Dempster route, which connects Dawson City to Inuvik along the Dempster Highway and interconnects with the Mackenzie Valley fibre line. There was some work done — not completed. As stated, there is a report and it was put online last week, both with Northwestel, who worked on it, and the government supporting. There has definitely been some analysis of that and it speaks toward the Dempster route.

Mr. Hassard: In the latest report released by the government about the estimated cost of the Dempster fibre line, it states that the cost estimates have been revised from \$32 million to \$58 million. One of the reasons that the report gives for this increased cost is that the Department of Highways and Public Works has stated that they do not want the fibre line to be in the already cleared highway right-of-way.

Could the minister tell us how much of this increased cost is associated with the change to the project design that was asked for by the Department of Highways and Public Works?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just to finish off, too, the process that we're undertaking is — once any federal funding is confirmed, which we're probably looking at the end of the summer for that, then we can finalize budget estimates and determine the requirements for Yukon government funding and that will help us with the final decision.

As per for the Ledcor report — to set the record straight, Mr. Speaker — \$58 million is not even the low point of the estimated cost. We are looking at about a 30 percent waiver. It is \$59 million on the low side and anywhere from \$75 million — and then if you brought a contingency in, it would be much more.

I think when the previous government made the commitment and stated they were building the line, they didn't have this information in hand. Can we look at building it and using the road as the right-of-way? Yes, potentially. Part of the challenge with that is that, through frost heaves and other challenges, we may be in a situation where the line gets cut all the time, so we have to use the right-of-way versus the middle of the road. But the member opposite makes a good point — there is about \$18 million in drilling over and above that and there are 1,100 waterways to cross. Those are certainly some of the major costs. Then of course we have to talk to the Northwest Territories — that wasn't done. There are a number of things that makes that differential of 30 percent part of this conversation.

What I and our department is trying to do — our government is trying to do — is reduce the risk, get a clear understanding of what this project looks like and get redundancy in place.

Mr. Hassard: One of the considerations that we have heard about is issues related to the privacy and sharing of information on infrastructure in a foreign country. Is the government considering concerns of Yukoners who may be worried about their privacy if the data and information shared on a fibre optic line in the United States could be subject to the United States *Patriot Act*?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'm not going to speak to the *Patriot Act* because that would be over my head — maybe the

Minister of Justice could. Certainly what we found was that as information flows from Canada and the US, in many, many cases we have data that transfers through. We have done an analysis of that. We have taken risk into consideration and we have looked at other relationships that Bell Canada has, which of course has a connection to Northwestel.

As we look forward and if I can speak specific data — if it was the Department of Defence or items like that, I can't right now, but this is a standard process. In many cases, when people are online, they are transferring data and it is actually going in and out of the country at all times, but I think it would be inappropriate for me to speak specifically to the *Patriot Act* on this. We're taking all things into consideration. It's really about reducing risk for Yukoners and still making sure that we have redundancy.

Question re: Dawson City Airport

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, during the 2016 election, the Yukon Liberals promised to pave the runway of the current Dawson City Airport. When he was in opposition, the Premier told Yukoners that paving the runway would help Air North bring more visitors to Dawson and boost the tourism industry. We know there is no new paving money in the budget this year.

Will the Premier commit to keeping his election promise and pave the runway next year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This Yukon government is committed to investing strategically in our infrastructure to meet the current and future needs of our communities. We're also going to comply with any regulations that we find on these runways. We want to make sure that the airports in Dawson City and other Yukon communities support economic activity as well as community safety.

The Dawson Airport functional plan is about 75-percent complete, Mr. Speaker. The completed plan will provide this government with all the information required to make airport investment decisions — all the information, Mr. Speaker. When we get down to finishing and improving our airport infrastructure, we're going to do so with all the information in place. We're not going to do so with sort of off-the-cuff decisions or without any evidence. We're going to make sure we have considered all of the implications of this when we make our decision.

Ms. Van Bibber: At a meeting on March 17, the Premier told the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce there were a lot of questions about whether the runway should be paved or not. He said the Yukon government will not just consider the needs of one single company or airplane; it has to be a good business decision and not a political one. It is starting to sound like the Premier is backing away from his clear promise to Yukoners and the clear commitment made in his platform.

Will the Premier reiterate his support for this project and tell us when they will pave the Dawson City runway?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This government is committed to paving the Dawson City runway — or any runway, for that matter — when we have all the information. We have not

collected all the information yet, Mr. Speaker. I have said that. We have a plan that's 75-percent done. It would be irresponsible for a government to make a decision — a political decision — with only 75 percent of the information. Once we get 100 percent of the information and we've discussed it as a caucus and with the community, we will make a decision that's in the best interests of Dawson City, in the best interests of this Yukon Territory, in the best interests of passengers who fly into Dawson City. That process is underway. As I said, when that information is finished, we will then sit down and make a decision and we'll make a good one.

Ms. Van Bibber: Earlier this year in Ottawa, the Premier told the federal finance committee that there were worries that if we pave the Dawson City runway, money might have to be diverted from other regional airports. In order to live up to his election promise, the Premier must pave the Dawson runway very soon.

Will he commit that, in doing so, there will be net decrease to the funding available for capital or maintenance on other Yukon airports or aerodromes?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. Again, we all know where this story started — the previous Premier at Roundup announcing great news: "We're going to pave the runway." That was a Yukon Party promise at the Roundup 2016. But what we're finding out is that the homework wasn't there as far as Nav Canada, as we heard from the Minister of Highways and Public Works, but also the money wasn't there and it wasn't figured out from the Yukon Party government. Unfortunately, as a new government, we are forced to pick up the pieces on yet another project that could have been dealt with years ago.

I will reiterate, as well, that we are not going to pave runways this year because the work required to do so has not been done. The engineering work has not been started, never mind completed. The funding has not been identified for the infrastructure funds available from the previous government, and we're not going to dive into a project without the proper information or without accessing all of the information that we need.

We will continue to work on this project and we will develop a proper plan for improvements to the airport, including pavement. Nobody wants to pave this runway as much as I do — to the member opposite's question — but Highways and Public Works is requesting that Transport Canada review the functional plan and confirm the consultant's finding. We are going to move as fast on this project as we possibly can, knowing full well that the homework done by the Yukon Party was not done properly and we are left in a situation where we can't move forward on this in this year.

Question re: Mine closure security

Ms. Hanson: When Yukon Zinc shut down the Wolverine mine in 2015, after only three years of operation, it left all Yukoners on the hook financially. \$3 million of the \$10-million security that the mine was supposed to have with

the Yukon government was nowhere to be found. This was in large part due to the previous government's willingness to cut the company a break with their payment schedule. Yukon businesses were also left on the hook with over \$4 million owed by the defunct mine. Yukon Zinc managed to come out of creditor protection with a plan that would see the contractors who were owed more than \$5,000, paid 11.5 cents per dollar.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister know how much of the over \$4 million owed to Yukoner contractors and businesses was eventually paid out to those contractors and businesses when Yukon Zinc closed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost: no, I don't have a number for you exactly on the amount of money that was paid after the closure. It was certainly a lesson, I think, for all of us. This is a continuing conversation that happens across the country. I know there has been a lot of work done in British Columbia on this exact conversation. Certainly, at the mines ministers meetings this year in August, there is going to be a broader conversation about security and impact. I think, for all of us this weekend, we had an opportunity — I know the member opposite was on a tour that we did of the Faro site. It certainly brings to light, as we move forward, the importance of having the appropriate security in place and, at the same time, making sure that we have an industry that can still move forward.

I apologize — I will have to dig and see what numbers I can get for you, but certainly I am comfortable making that commitment to you to try to find those numbers.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member opposite for his undertaking to get those figures.

Mr. Speaker, the *Miners Lien Act* currently allows shareholders to lend their company large amounts of money, which can get repaid in the case of a bankruptcy before local contractors and suppliers get their due. The *Miners Lien Act* could be changed to prevent Yukon businesses from being left with the choice of getting cents on the dollar for contracts entered into in good faith or nothing. This government can help ensure local suppliers and contractors are treated fairly when a mine goes out of business. This would provide greater certainty to local businesses. It would be a way to strengthen the public's confidence in the overall local benefits of our mining industry.

Has the minister considered amending the *Miners Lien Act* to make sure that local businesses and contractors are given priority when a mine goes into creditor protection?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, I have not looked at this potential change that could make things better for Yukoners, but I certainly would like to work hand in hand with the member opposite on taking a look at that and seeing if a more advantageous set of governance could help us do that.

When you look at the Wolverine case, for instance — or the Yukon Zinc piece — yes, it's a rough story. I certainly watched from the sidelines, working in the private business sector at that point — but looking to see all the tools that we can use, while still not being able to restrict industry because it's such a difficult thing as we look forward to still make sure

that private business can work the way it should and that the corporate structures are the way they should be. Certainly, there's a history across the country, not just in Yukon. We saw it this week with a conversation about a uranium mine in the prairies as well.

I appreciate the advice on that and I will certainly work with EMR and Economic Development to take a look at that and see if there's not something there that can help us in the Yukon.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for his agreement that this is important — that Yukon contractors and businesses, just like the Yukon public, shouldn't be left picking up the tab when a mine closes its doors. As the minister indicated, we did — along with other colleagues in Faro this weekend — tour the Faro mine site. We saw and we heard that Canadians will be paying to clean up that mess for centuries to come — centuries.

Mr. Speaker, with Yukon's current royalty rate structure, local benefits of mining largely lie in the economic activity generated for local businesses and contractors. They deserve greater protection if a mine goes under.

In light of the minister's openness to looking at this, will the minister commit to consulting stakeholder groups on the means to strengthen the protection for local businesses and contractors in the *Miners Lien Act*, and will the minister commit to starting that consultation this year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that's a great idea — making sure there are tools available to us to support Yukon contractors. I would just ask that you give me a little bit of flexibility in first being able to speak with the Yukon Chamber of Mines, the Whitehorse chamber and the chambers that represent contractors outside of Whitehorse. At the same time, I think that I would like to also have an opportunity to speak with the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board on this particular topic as well. I can start the conversation as early as this weekend when we are at the gold show. I know that there will be, not just the representatives from the placer miner industry, but a lot of other miners who are hardrock miners will be there.

On this one, I think I would reach out to you to see a good path forward. Time is of the essence, but as we're in the House it's quite busy. I would even think that probably the previous minister would have some insight into this one. This one is about helping contractors and Yukoners, so maybe we should just put politics aside on this one and get together to figure out some tools that we can use to help Yukoners.

Question re: Collaborative medical care clinic

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are fortunate to have two clinics in this community that provide specialized service to Yukoners. One is the Yukon Sexual Health Clinic and the other is the Yukon Women's MidLife Health Clinic. The first provides sexual and reproductive care to Yukoners of all genders and ages, and the second provides care and support to women approaching, experiencing or are beyond menopause. These clinics opened in 2014 and have been busy ever since, offering drop-ins and evening hours, and they do

not require a person to have a family doctor. The funding for both of these clinics is up for renewal and has as yet only been extended for the first three months of this fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, can these two clinics expect to hear about their funding, which is set to expire at the end of June of this year?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. I can commit or verify that department staff are meeting with the respective clinics right now to come up with a solution that will address and ensure that the clients who access these facilities are provided the necessary services.

I'm sure that we'll find a quick resolution to that and I can assure the member opposite that we will find the solutions. I would be happy to sit with you after to give you a little more detail.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for that answer. That's good news for the clients and patients of those clinics.

These clinics offer excellent services that would otherwise be difficult and expensive for individuals to access. In the 2017-18 budget, we see that Health and Social Services has now recognized the need for the referred care clinic and has made the decision to provide ongoing funding for this clinic, not year-to-year funding. The Yukon Sexual Health Clinic and the Yukon Women's MidLife Health Clinic both provide needed services to Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister commit to long-term funding to avoid the uncertainty that comes with the current year-to-year formula for both of these clinics?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, thanks for that really great question. I think that what we are really working toward is long-term sustainability of the services we provide to all citizens of Yukon. Most definitely, we will look for longer term solutions as was previously committed to. There is temporary funding support to these respective clinics. This government and my staff are working toward finding a longer term solution.

Ms. White: It sounds very positive so far. These two clinics cannot keep up with the demands put on their services. They're open in the evenings and provide drop-in hours. Many individuals using these clinics do not have family doctors but they are able to provide services such as birth control, Pap smears, and IUD insertions as well as a myriad of other supports. These clinics often provide services that persons without a family doctor would have to go the emergency room to access. These clinics save money and they increase the health and well-being of our community.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister consider increasing the funding available to these two clinics so that they can meet the current and ongoing demands for Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, again, I'm going to maybe just recite what I said earlier — that we are working toward a longer term collaborative care model in Yukon — looking at what we can do to ensure that we provide services for all Yukoners. If that means an adjustment in our budget, we will ensure that we have an evidence-based decision-

making process that involves and includes all health care professions in the Yukon as well as working with our respective communities and perhaps the care centres in rural Yukon. Yes, we are working toward stabilizing long-term funding and long-term service delivery for all Yukoners.

Question re: Watson Lake economic development

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some questions today for the Minister of Economic Development regarding southeast Yukon and job opportunities for my constituents.

Last year, prior to the election, the Yukon Party government put out a request for qualifications that included a biomass heating project for Johnson Elementary School in Watson Lake. The tender closed on October 18 and two Yukon companies were deemed eligible under this RFQ.

Can the minister update the House on where this process is at and when the project will proceed as this will create jobs for Watson Lake and area?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just on that particular case, on the biomass project — at least one of the proponents who played a role within the process has shown great interest. The member opposite, appropriately, has made sure that I'm aware of the interest from that individual and pushing the process — to make sure that the process moves forward. We have had discussions with the individual. Part of the challenge is the scope of work that the individuals who have gone through the early process feel is necessary to make sure that it's a viable project needs to increase. The early work was to look at providing a biomass infrastructure and to help that facilitate another energy source for a significant amount of, but maybe not enough, infrastructure.

We have been asked in discussions with Energy, Mines and Resources to keep that conversation going, so I don't have the exact date right now. What we're trying to do is make sure that we listen to the business people of Watson Lake on this particular project so that we can understand what they feel is the most appropriate way to go forward on this project.

Ms. McLeod: This year of course, as we all know, marks the 75th anniversary of the Alaska Highway and Watson Lake has played an important role as a transportation hub since this highway was built. Visitor and commercial traffic on the Alaska Highway is a major economic driver for my community.

How much is in this year's budget to promote the 75th anniversary of the Alaska Highway and where can we direct interested people who want to find out about any such events occurring during this year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just for the record, I think the questions are broad. They are all about economic development in southeast Yukon. I think that we have touched on the expenditures this year for the 75th anniversary and I think it falls more under tourism. I would be happy — under the theme of economic development and Watson Lake, one commitment I made to the member opposite was to make sure that I sat down with representatives

from the municipality. I have done that. I had a great meeting on the weekend with the Mayor of Watson Lake.

We are now submitting a proposal, based on the interest from them, for a pilot project in Watson Lake. What we're looking at doing is a project to help the business owners improve the facades of each business. It has been successful in eastern and central Canada, as well as northern British Columbia. The mayor is excited about it. We would be looking at no cost for the municipality, but an opportunity to really support Watson Lake as it is the entrance to the Yukon.

There will be more details on that, but certainly working within some of the existing programs to pilot that in Watson Lake to help improve the experience for visitors and then, in turn, provide more jobs and really kind of get things going as I have committed in this House over and over again in the Watson Lake area.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, lot availability is extremely important as we want to make sure that as many people as possible get to live in Watson Lake as a result of potential mine openings in the area, particularly Kudz Ze Kayah and perhaps even Howard's Pass.

As of this morning, we had one residential lot remaining and a limited mix of other types of lots. We hear that the Community Services minister mentioned over the weekend in Faro that the Yukon government would like to have two years of lot inventory in the Yukon in every community.

What is the target number of lots for Watson Lake and when does the government expect to reach that number?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will put my Energy, Mines and Resources hat on for this and still answer the question. What we talked about in Faro on the weekend — actually I had an opportunity to talk about lot development throughout the Yukon. Essentially the commitment we have made is — there is a mix of lots needed, not just residential, but we need agricultural lots as well. The commitment is to make sure that we work with all the municipalities from now through until early fall. The director who works with me on this particular case has committed to going out with our staff. You look at somewhere like Teslin where there has actually been some specific upward trends in population. We may need to be in a situation where we move lots more quickly but, at the same time, we have to work with the village to understand how they want to see lot development move. What we have come to find out is that there have not been a lot of those conversations that happen between municipalities and the department. What I want to do is at least understand exactly what each one of these villages or towns — depending on the situation — wants to see happen and then make sure that our strategy on land development is consistent with what they need. We certainly understand and hope for opportunities where we see resource development then lever into population increases where people want to not just work, but live in these communities. I agree with you completely, but these are conversations that need to continue to happen over the next six months.

Question re: Energy supply and demand

Mr. Istchenko: The Yukon Liberal's 2016 election platform included a commitment to remove LNG from qualifying for the independent power producer protection program and launching a comprehensive re-examination of the IPP. This commitment is notably absent from the minister's mandate letter from the Premier. Can the minister tell us where his commitment is? Also, is there any impact on the mining community as a result of it?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There are a couple of questions there. Is there an impact on the mining sector? In the conversations that I am having with the mining sector right now, it has not been flagged that it is going to be a deterrent or a negative. We have at least one particular project that has a long way to go. It is moving in a good direction, and certainly the member opposite and I had an opportunity to be on-site there a week ago and visit the site, and I think there are some great opportunities. There are discussions between Ferus when it comes to LNG with a series of different mining operations, but it is not that simple. There are big questions. How do these projects move forward? I hope they all move forward. Then it is: How do you actually build infrastructure to make sure that, if you do have something on-site that is generating energy, how do you then put it into a community? That is a bigger discussion, and we are probably a long way from seeing that.

The early work is IPP. Within that right now, as I have stated before in the Assembly, there are some quick discussions or early discussions that are happening in the Kluane riding — certainly between Kluane First Nation and affected parties. We are moving to have the right people at the table so that we can continue to have these discussions on the IPP and make sure we have the right platform and regime in place so that we do have an opportunity to use those sorts of tools.

Mr. Istchenko: I don't think I got a clear answer on the launching of a comprehensive re-examination of the IPP.

The 2016 platform also included a commitment to launch — and I quote: “pilot projects in renewable energy storage (e.g. liquid hydrogen).” Launching a liquid hydrogen pilot project in the Yukon was a specific commitment made by the Liberals. We haven't seen much detail on this plan as of yet from the government.

Can the minister tell us what his plans are to fulfill his commitment?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Sorry if I wasn't clear, but I think the question could have been clearer too.

On the first point — because there are a couple of things there — when it comes to a re-examination — it's not a re-examination; it's building the IPP. It's not done. Part of the challenges — I'm looking at the terms of reference. There are some EMR people there. There are some people from Yukon Energy. We can have these discussions later this week when we bring both the corporations in and have a discussion about it — and found out that my president of the Yukon Development Corporation isn't even part of the terms of reference in the discussion at the table. So no, I'm not in a position of re-examining. I'm going to build it so that we can

have an IPP and we can make this move ahead, because it's not done.

Mr. Istchenko: Another election commitment from the Yukon Liberals that is notably absent from the minister's mandate letter is to launch a feasibility study of connecting Yukon's electricity grid to either BC or Alaska. We know the potential benefits of this work, but we also know that there are considerable costs associated with this kind of infrastructure development. There had been previous feasibility work done on this topic but, now that the government has committed to do a new study, we are looking for details on that.

Can the minister tell us when this work will begin, and will he tell us if the costs of the study will be borne by Yukon government or by the Yukon Energy Corporation?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think we've had some discussions earlier in the Legislative Assembly about the Skagway piece — it was asked to me before. As I stated before, it's not a priority right now — the Skagway piece. I find the conversation on the BC piece intriguing. I think that conversation changes as we go through time. But at this particular time, as I've stated, when it comes to transmission, the focus is really about taking the engineering report that was previously completed, seeing if there are dollars available, and looking at the Stewart-Keno line. That's the first piece. There are a whole bunch of other items.

I think as we go through YDC and YEC, we're going to have a number of discussions and, really, it can come to light where there are more pressing issues for me at this time with these organizations than figuring out how much the plan is going to cost to look at connecting Yukon and BC, who is going to undertake it and who is going to pay for it. That's certainly something I would love to be focusing on, but there are a lot of other items. As we go through the week, we'll be talking about those other items.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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 (Mr. Hutton): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*.

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. 201: *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to welcome again to the Legislative Assembly my Deputy Minister, Kate White. I will cede the floor to the opposition for questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Cathers: In continuing debate on the budget, I would like to just return to a question that I asked the Premier when we last debated the budget. That is, as it pertains to the land protocol and lot development protocol signed between the Yukon government and the City of Whitehorse — whether the government is considering and making changes to that and secondly —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Sorry to interrupt the member opposite. I would just like to acknowledge that we have Mayor Brown here from Watson Lake. I would just like to welcome him on behalf of all of us to the Assembly.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: When we last debated the budget, I asked the Premier several questions that weren't answered but I'm going to return to one specifically to begin with, and that is with regard to the land protocol between the Yukon government and the City of Whitehorse and the lot development protocol — whether the government is currently contemplating any changes to those agreements.

Secondly, since the Department of Community Services is currently taking the lead in doing lot development in a way that was not envisioned or intended by the protocol, whether the government is going to make changes to reflect the current reality and/or to transfer more authority and financial resources to the City of Whitehorse — and if the second option is the case, what the government's view is on the capacity of the City of Whitehorse to deliver in that particular area?

Hon. Mr. Silver: In general debate, I will answer the general question of — no, we're not contemplating any changes to how that is happening, and right now there are ongoing negotiations. What I will do is I will cede the floor to the Minister of Community Services to get into a little bit more in-depth information based upon his department.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will try to respond to the member opposite's question. The City of Whitehorse had originally approached the Yukon government to consider taking over land development. It is my understanding that they have withdrawn that request, so it will continue to be the Department of Community Services that is carrying out land development.

I note that we have allocated \$24.5 million, I believe, in this year's budget toward land development for Whistle Bend.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer from the minister. I'm a little bit surprised that we didn't receive that from the Premier since the original document was actually signed by the Premier and by the mayor, which was one of the reasons we were asking this question at this point in time.

The Premier has talked a lot about evidence-based decision-making and we heard a number of comments, including earlier today from the Minister of Highways and Public Works in Question Period, where he reiterated some of his past statements about how this government will not make off-the-cuff decisions and how they are focused on evidence-based decision-making. The first of my questions in this area relates to the government's decision to add a third Supreme Court Judge.

What is the full operational cost of adding that third judge position and what is the full capital cost of making the renovations that we understand are necessary to accommodate the offices of a third Supreme Court justice?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It's not this territorial government's decision to add a third Supreme Court Judge. That is a decision of the federal government. Supreme Court judges are appointed by the federal government all across the country, including here in the territory. The bill that is before this House involves the potential, or the possibility, that a third Supreme Court Judge will be appointed by the federal government. At this point, that is intended to be permissive only, in that our legislation here in the territory currently restricts the Supreme Court bench to two Supreme Court Judges.

In the event that the federal government decides to name a third Supreme Court Judge here in the territory, we have suggested that the legislation — the bill — that will be before this House for further discussion will permit that to be the case.

It has not been requested by this government. I'm not sure if it was requested by the former government. Certainly, the Supreme Court bench, in my understanding, has made submissions to the federal government about the requirement for a third judge, but that will be their decision. By "their" I mean the federal government and the federal government alone. There will be some costs borne by the territorial government. I don't have them in front of me. They will be for office furniture and perhaps some renovations to the current space so there would be a place for a third Supreme Court Judge to sit. There will be no requirements to change any courtroom configurations or anything else in the courthouse that I am aware of at the moment. I don't have those figures. I did have some discussions with the department about what

they might be, and I can get them for you, but I don't have them with me here today. With respect to the salary or the benefits — all of those are paid by the federal government.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, I note that the Premier avoided answering the question. I would note in this area here — again, the reason I'm asking this question in general debate relates to the Premier's statements and the statements of other ministers about evidence-based decision-making. It was interesting — the remarks we just heard from the Minister of Justice, which suggest that the territorial government was simply a bystander in this decision. In fact, from the news release dated April 26 where the minister announces the introduction of legislation to allow for an increase in the number of Supreme Court Justices in the Yukon from two to three, the quote from the Minister of Justice certainly would lean a reader to come to the conclusion that the government was supportive of this request.

Secondly, it should be noted that, lest the territorial government indicate that they are simply a bystander in this regard, if government was not willing to table legislation to allow a third justice to be added, then it would simply not be the case.

My questions for government would be: first of all, are they indicating that this is a federal decision made without consultation with the territorial government? Secondly, can they explain why in the past it has been indicated by previous ministers of Justice — myself included — and by the department that this request was unlikely to come from the federal government unless there was a territorial government request made for it? Thirdly, can they explain who is paying the O&M dollars of staff required for additional resources and what that total cost would be? Fourthly, if indeed this decision was made by the federal government without consulting with the territorial government, is the Premier going to raise this with the federal government and be a little more assertive in requesting the Prime Minister not to make unilateral decisions such as the offshore decision where the Premier only received a courtesy phone call 30 minutes before the Prime Minister signed a binding agreement with the President of the United States about Yukon's offshore waters?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have no difficulty whatsoever answering the honourable member's questions, but I guess the concern I have is that, if he doesn't like the answers, then he accuses me of not answering them, and that's not in fact the case. Certainly, I have been quoted and had a news release in which we were supportive of this decision.

The answer that I gave you a few moments ago indicated that it was not the decision of this territorial government to appoint a new judge, which is what your first question indicated.

The federal government will make that appointment, certainly with the support of the territorial government, but the territorial government cannot do so on its own. The legislation that will come before this House in the form of a bill will be to facilitate that decision, should the federal government so choose to make it.

The O&M costs and the renovation costs, the costs of a desk, a chair and some other furniture that I have indicated are going to be absorbed by the Department of Justice in the coming year and as such do not appear as a separate line item in the budget mains for 2017-18.

Mr. Cathers: It's interesting here. The reason we're asking these questions is in fact the fact that it was — a request from the senior presiding justice of the Supreme Court for a third judge is not a new one and we do respect where that concern comes from, but the simple fact of the matter is that, in the past, the department has consistently recommended to ministers, including me and my predecessor, that because, according to the department, the cost estimate as we understood it was an increase of over a half-million dollars to operation and maintenance to accommodate a third judge, and the department as well indicated that we were doing just fine with the significantly cheaper approach of using deputy judges.

The question in this area is how government reached this decision, and why the political decision was made to not listen to the recommendation of staff of the department in this area.

Secondly, for a government that has repeatedly indicated it's committed to evidence-based decision-making and claims that it is working on budgeting better than any other government in history — and in fact claimed that as a reason for its choice to wait six months before holding the first real Sitting in the Legislative Assembly — to hear from the minister that apparently they haven't costed out the O&M and that the capital will come down to a desk and a chair — this is a little bit, shall we say, interesting — because the other characterizations would be unparliamentary.

Will the minister or the Premier — either one of them — confirm that there are not going to be any renovations required to the Andrew A. Philipsen Law Centre or the law courts side to accommodate this third judge?

I again reiterate the question: Why did the government choose to make the political decision to ask the federal government to add a third Supreme Court Judge when in fact that a half-million dollars a year in funding would do a lot more in other areas of both the justice system and areas such as addictions and mental health?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm sorry — I'm a bit puzzled but I will attempt to re-answer the honourable member's questions.

He has made an assumption that I have not taken advice — actually accused me of not taking advice — from the Department of Justice officials when he's not aware of whether or not there was any advice from the department officials and what that might have been. Certainly, I greatly respect the authority and the officials in the Department of Justice and their knowledge of this matter before it came to my desk.

The reason that no decision — let me just say it this way — figure in the mains budget is because it is nowhere near \$500,000. I am sure that the members opposite's memory may be incorrect on that point. I didn't say I didn't know the numbers. I didn't say there wasn't any costing. I said I don't have them in front of me and I am happy to get them for you,

but it is nowhere near \$500,000. Despite the last question, I said there would be some minor renovations required. I think I have answered all of the points that the member opposite has made with respect to this.

I guess I am trying to provide the information that is being asked for and I have no intention of doing anything but providing that information. I am somewhat taken aback that, despite the fact that I am providing those answers, I am getting comments back that are, I would say, borderline insulting. I appreciate that while the member opposite may not like the answers, I am providing them for him, and I will continue to do so.

Mr. Cathers: I know the member is new to this House. I know that the new Liberal government waited longer than any government in territorial history before convening the first session, but I would point out to the member that in fact there are going to be tough questions from the opposition. When, from our perspective, the government's answers don't hold water or don't stand up very well in the light of day, we are going to ask those questions. If she chooses to find it insulting or borderline insulting or if the Premier finds it insulting or is tired of standing in debate and answering questions, which is typically the role of the Premier in general debate on the budget, then we will send them over a box of Kleenex and our sympathies. But in fact, this is our job as opposition to ask these questions.

The information that we had from the Department of Justice previously was that the operations cost of adding a third judge were in excess of a half-million dollars per year, because on top of the fact that a judge at over \$300,000 plus benefits in terms of total cost is the single-most expensive piece of the system that can be added, with the possible exception of a doctor who is a specialist, there are additional administrative costs within the system to support that judge that are required. From what I had been informed previously by officials — and I would expect that advice would continue to be what the minister is receiving — there would be potentially significant renovations required. In looking at the budget, we don't see a single dime budgeted for the capital costs of renovating the law centre.

Again, the question for the Premier in his capacity as head of the government, the chair of Cabinet and the chair of Management Board is that for a government that claims to pride itself on evidence-based decision-making: Did the government make the decision without understanding the O&M costs and the capital costs? If it did fully understand the O&M costs and the capital costs, will it be accountable as it told Yukoners it would be prior to the election? Will the Premier stand in this House and tell Yukoners what the total O&M costs, including administrative support, are for adding a third judge and what the capital costs are renovating the law courts building to accommodate that judge and their staff?

Hon. Mr. Silver: With respect to the position of the opposition, we don't need to hear about Kleenex and all these barbs that are coming with the member opposite's question. We have answered the question now — I believe it's the third time that the minister has stood up. If the member opposite

has some additional information from his previous role that he wants to share with us, then please bring it forward. I know that things have changed since then. There was this talk about oak panelling, for example, back when he was in there — absolutely was not a necessary consideration for these costs. So that money back in his day has been whittled down and it is being absorbed by the department.

I believe, Mr. Chair, this is now the third or fourth time that we've answered the member opposite's questions. The reason why I'm allowing my Cabinet minister here to answer some questions is because this isn't general debate; this is very specific debate and we want to make sure Yukoners get specific answers.

I'm sure the Leader of the Third Party would like to have some general debate questions as well — this being the third day in a row of the member opposite asking very specific questions. I guess what we're really doing here is we're in Committee of the Whole for every department until the member opposite decides otherwise. That's fine, but we were just making sure that we are answering the member opposite's questions. I would ask him to move on to another question because we have answered this three to four times already. He can continue to say that it's his belief that there's more money — that it's more money and it's more money — okay, we heard him. Now, Mr. Chair, we've answered the question and we would like to move on.

Mr. Cathers: I would remind the Premier and to remind those listening that in fact, we're not the government anymore and the current information about this, including the estimated costs, that it's now up to the current government — the government that allegedly prides itself on evidence-based decision-making to actually make available to the public in keeping with its commitment to be more open and transparent. If the Premier says the cost estimates for capital and O&M have changed from what they previously were when I was Minister of Justice, then the onus is on the Premier and on the Minister of Justice to provide that information.

Again, the Premier may find that some of these questions are really specific, but the reason I'm asking him these questions in his capacity as Premier is that he told the Yukon public and told the media that the reason the government was delaying calling the first real session of the Legislative Assembly — this one — was because they needed time to understand the finances of the territory and get the budget right. Again, just as we established with the carbon tax that the Premier has not booked a single dollar in the budget to accommodate the costs of the federal carbon tax, in this area we believe that they have not booked properly the O&M and the capital costs for the addition of a third judge, nor made that decision based on proper evidence.

I'm going to move on to another area, since it appears I'm not going to get a full answer from the Premier to this question — I will have to return to it later. That question again relates to what is booked in the budget and what is not. The Premier and I spent a lot of time on Thursday debating the Premier's statement to the federal finance committee wherein the Premier said, "We're looking to remove power from our

debt cap ...” Again to recap very briefly, I noted the fact that with \$198.5 million remaining under the debt cap, there’s no need to request a change to that OIC unless one wishes to borrow more than \$198.5 million.

My question for the Premier is: What political direction has the Cabinet or the minister provided to Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation as it pertains to three specific areas? The first is the resource plan — whether they have directed YDC and YEC to focus on the high-, middle- or low-load scenario in doing their planning. The second area is with regard to the Yukon Energy Corporation’s application for a general rate increase. How much are they applying for to the Yukon Utilities Board? How much of a rate increase are they requesting? Thirdly, what political direction has the Premier provided as far as his interpretation of the duty to serve a clause under the *Public Utilities Act* and whether that includes requiring the government to put in at public cost new infrastructure for large industrial customers, who would then buy the power at a rate that does not reflect the infrastructure costs?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First and foremost, I think we’ll start with the IRP — and thank you for the questions.

The IRP, for those who don’t know, is sort of our long-term resource plan, which essentially gives an opportunity for the Yukon Energy Corporation to identify a series of options that they would then use to identify how we would deal with producing energy and power in the future.

Shortly into the mandate, the Yukon Energy Corporation, which had been working on an analysis for a series of time, identified after the election had been completed a series of three strategies. That’s essentially what the member opposite is speaking to. Each portfolio of energy that we would look at — the power we would look at — would essentially have different types of infrastructure that would be put in place. Those portfolios would take into consideration fuel such as diesel generation, increased water storage, maybe the supplement of battery storage, potentially looking at LNG — a number of items.

What the Energy Corporation tried to do was to take a look at the mandate letter that was provided to me, take a look at what the platform is and then try to align it with what was the most appropriate — sorry, Mr. Chair, what is the time limit on my answer? Twenty minutes —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Okay, 15 then.

Essentially what they looked at was a series of options that would be available and then taking into consideration the direction that the government would give. As the member opposite stated, there are different ways that the Energy Corporation could go and then of course part of that conversation has to happen between the Energy Corporation and the Yukon Development Corporation. They would then have a discussion, looking at the financing and what’s available now.

The federal government has proposed a series of different programs and, because of those programs, you would need to then be diligent and, to be appropriate, you would then take a

look at those programs, use them and look through that filter to identify if your original resource plan and the assumptions you made were the right way to go, because some of these programs would give you substantial revenue that you could lever to look at renewables.

As we’ve heard from the federal government, essentially, there has been a real discussion out there about trying to make sure that we reduce the use of diesel.

It’s a bigger discussion. It’s not just about the IRP, but we’re going to go down that road and we’re going to talk about rate and things such as that but also the Yukon Development Corporation. As the board continues to work, they’re looking at opportunities to also help communities that are off-grid.

When we look at the different costs and then we look at what the strategies are, there were three different figures. If I’m off a bit, later this week we will have the opportunity to have the corporations here and we can have those discussions.

Part of the issue would be that there would be an opportunity to look at these other funds and then see if you could use them for renewables. The first number is a little over \$200 million — it’s about \$207 million, I believe — and that looks at a series of items. I don’t have the chart here with me, but it looks at potentially upgrading some existing infrastructure. It looks at a series of strategies on increasing water storage and then it also looks at building infrastructure. Actually it would be building infrastructure in the riding of the member opposite who is asking the question. Maybe where he wants to go with this is — he probably wants to see us use the most cost-effective strategy. That would mean that the member opposite would probably be supporting us building the diesel infrastructure in the middle of his riding, based on how he is going with this conversation. Maybe he’s not, but we can discuss that later.

That strategy — just over \$200 million — takes us into an N-1 scenario, and what an N-minus-1 scenario for all of these means that — let me step back. If you remember what happened in December — we had the power go out and when the power went out, or we had a shutdown in Aishihik, it was kind of a scary moment because we were in a position where we did not have energy for a time and we didn’t have power. It really gave us an eye-opener of what happens with long-term — are we prepared for this? What happens with a lack of power from a long-term perspective? I’m not an engineer and I don’t have that technical background, but what an N-minus-1 really means is: What happens when you take into consideration one of your biggest pieces of infrastructure such as Aishihik and it goes down? How do you deal with that? That’s the scenario.

You need to have a backup, is the philosophy behind this. You need to have a backup so that, if it goes down, you can then put something in place. When they look at IRPs, they take into consideration — do you look at the first option which is just over \$200 million?

Do you actually take into consideration what is the quickest way to get power online? Diesel — most people don’t like to hear that answer, but that is the solution to it —

with a series of other items. In the IRP, the first portion we are looking at is upgrading existing infrastructure, potentially building new infrastructure that would use diesel, taking into consideration a battery system that could also help us over a period of time. That would be the \$200 million. The next one we are looking at is, I think — and I know I am going to get in trouble on this, and the Member for Lake Laberge probably has a number in front of him — about \$350 million. I could be wrong, but it is in that mid-range.

That takes into consideration more renewable and sort of moving away from diesel. That would be another significant cost, but what we have to do is once again look at what the federal programs are and how they can offset the cost of that particular infrastructure if we looked at the second option.

The third option is over \$400 million. That is an interesting one because that doesn't just take into consideration maximizing how we use our renewables; it also takes into consideration sort of a maximum industrial load. What happens if we have a tremendous amount of activity? Of course, some of that activity that is going to happen from an economic development standpoint won't be close to grid. We have talked about the line — the Stewart-Keno line — and there was some good work done. I think that during most of the last mandate that the member opposite is asking me about, he was in a leadership role in the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation. Most of the things that happened in Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation were under his watch, so he knows this very well. Part of that would be the early work on the Stewart-Keno line.

As was stated by the Member for Kluane earlier today, what happens with IPP and LNG? As I said, some of those projects — there is a vision to have projects use LNG and then — would there be an opportunity to use that excess energy or to produce more energy and then help communities that are currently on diesel? That is a third part.

The first stage of what we have to do is that we have to work through the appropriate processes and Management Board on the requests that have taken place for some of the initial work that has to be done. That is the process we are undertaking now. Yukon Energy Corporation puts a request together and says that this is the initial work they need done. They then transfer that request to Yukon Development Corporation and, in turn, we would submit it to Management Board and go through the process. Then we would have to make a decision on approving those funds. That is the early part of it. We are really talking about spending at Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation. That is an interesting process that is happening — it's not interesting; it's just a standard process. That will give us some more efficiencies. That will give us some more opportunities to look at increasing our ability to produce power.

The next question that was asked was: How do we pay for that? Once again we're looking at: Do we lever federal money? What was asked of me — I attended a board meeting with Yukon Energy just last week and part of the conversation was: How do you go through a process? They said,

"Inevitably we want to spend money." They have a long-term plan. We have to spend more money. Certainly we're not contemplating anything at this particular time that would put us above CAPP because we talked about CAPP, where we are.

Over and above that, my focus right now is to really make sure that the finances — before I start thinking about the finances of supporting Yukon Development Corporation and working in concert with them to then have big infrastructure spending, there are some other things we have to right-size. I want to make sure that things at the Development Corporation are in a good financial position and then I want to make sure that we get the early work done.

I could be wrong and I'll look here. The member opposite talked about rate. I think the question is: What is the charge? It's something along those lines. Right now, some of the work that has to be done this year is to prepare to look at that. I know that the officials are pulling together the early work on that. The challenge is that what we have seen in Yukon is there has been no rate in four years. Part of the challenge with that is, I think — when you're in business and going through things, you want some level of certainty. You need to have some level of certainty.

I think this week it will be important to understand why that hasn't happened. I think normally it occurs, sort of in a more structured way, but at least over the last four years, I don't know why it happened — I don't know. Maybe it was that we were going into an election cycle — I'm not sure why. But what it certainly does is that it does not lead to certainty for business. Essentially what happens is you keep spending and you keep spending and you keep spending each year. Then, normally, certain costs that you would spend money on — you then go to the Utilities Board and say, "Would these costs be appropriate for us to then integrate into the rate?" Of course everybody wants to see that process happen sort of systematically, but when you keep spending, keep spending and keep spending every year, but you don't want to have that conversation, or you don't want to go through that process for some reason — when you do end up going there, of course all those costs keep adding up.

We see big capital buildings being built, but we don't have the O&M — we talked about that a bit.

This is just about energy and cost-over framework. It would be inappropriate for me to not take into consideration the total framework of government in answering this question.

Then we have these other expenditures that happen at the corporation, so we have to figure that out as well. The officials at Yukon Energy can speak to that. They are coming in this week and I'm sure there will be a question, but inevitably, at some point, you have to make those decisions.

The first question was, I think: How are you dealing with the IRP? What direction have you given Yukon Energy? To be fair, I didn't give Yukon Energy direction. I work with Yukon Development Corporation. Certainly with Yukon Development Corporation, we've asked to do a couple of things. First, let's look at a governance policy so that as we talk about rate, we have it in a way that it's systematic. It's not controlled by the whims of individuals. It actually is

something that is done in a systematic way. Second, let's make sure that we understand what's happening with federal funding and then take a look at the IRP — the three different options — to see if those options have changed. Over and above that, let's make sure that we have a submission to Management Board so that we can look at some of these very high priority items that we need to do.

I think that, for the most part, covers those three items. To be fair, there have been no decisions to start expanding — for the Member for Lake Laberge — other than understanding what comes to me as a formal request from a Management Board item. There hasn't been anything else that has been talked about for long-term spending. It's a plan that has been looked at — or it's a draft plan — and certainly there are a number of items and some of those are testy items. I think it's going to be interesting to try to look at some of those items like diesel that we first talked about. I think the best thing to do this week is use that opportunity on Thursday to speak with the officials from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation. I'll stop there.

If we're going down the same route of questioning, I would like the member to please enlighten me — maybe as you ask me a question — about why we haven't gone to rate for four years, because I haven't found that yet in a briefing note or I haven't understood that yet. I'm coming from a private business background where I like certainty and understanding of expenses. You're very eloquent, so just weave it into the next question you ask me — but explain to me why we haven't gone to rate in four years. Thank you.

Mr. Cathers: I will actually answer that question asked by the Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation and note that one of the reasons that in the past rate increases have sometimes taken some time in between them is the cost of a rate filing by Yukon Energy. As the minister will understand and can confirm with officials, typically those costs are well over \$1 million to do that regulatory process.

In fact, I'll give another specific example of when we put the microgeneration policy back in — I'm having a mental blank on the year that it was put in — government looked at that at the time, although ultimately it was our view that the cost of the microgeneration policy should be included within the rate base at the time the cost of YEC and Energy, Mines and Resources — doing that through the formal rate process would have been substantially higher than the cost of Energy, Mines and Resources absorbing those costs internally. Because of the nature of the way the YUB functions and the high cost of preparing a rate submission and responding to the questions from the board itself, this has an effect on the timing of applications for a rate increase.

What I think I hear the minister saying is that he is indicating a desire to move toward a more regular schedule for rate filings. I think that is probably a good idea — to move toward a typical calendar reflecting what would normally occur for applications by Yukon Energy Corporation.

I appreciate some of the information provided by the minister in response to my questions about Yukon

Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation. I would note as well that in regard to one specific comment the minister made about resource options and the possibility of putting diesel generators out in my riding by the station at mile 5.1 on the Mayo Road, I would give the minister a warning that I would be shocked if my constituents are supportive of that option. They would be very concerned about the noise. Even the concept of battery storage at that location is one that I think there would be public concerns about, and I would encourage the minister, the Premier and those involved in that to discuss with the boards of Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation the possibility of looking at other options. For example, I would refer to how, during the construction of the LNG generators that were put in, the option of adding a third generator on-site was considered. There were other options considered, including land available across the road that could potentially be used either for LNG expansion or for diesel generators or battery storage as an alternative option.

Returning to other questions, I would again note the one specific question that I would encourage the Premier to answer because it relates to two departments. It relates to an act that is under the responsibility of the Minister of Justice and corporations that fall under the responsibility of the Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation — a question of what his view is on the duty to serve under the *Public Utilities Act* and whether that includes, in his opinion, government being required to pay for infrastructure to serve large industrial customers or whether, as we have stated in the past when in government, they have the view that those investments in infrastructure should only be made if there is a net benefit to the territory and to Yukoners as a whole.

Moving on to another one of the corporations that I have questions about, as I noted in my remarks in second reading on May 1, we are concerned in this budget by the line item that is available for the Yukon Hospital Corporation because we had understood, based on projections and discussions with the now former chair, that the hospital's needs for this fiscal year were higher than what we see in this budget. The question for the Premier would be: Did the budget requests change for the Hospital Corporation from what we had understood it was going to be, based on those discussions with the chair that I referenced or do they feel that this current budget is adequate? Again, based on my understanding of that from discussions with the former chair and at Management Board, we had understood that based on increased cost pressures, including cost projections, increased costs of chemotherapy drugs, increased volume of chemotherapy, increased volume in the medical imaging and lab department and increased staffing costs associated with the emergency room expansion and, last but not least, the fact that the hospital's current funding agreement is based on 75-bed occupancy and it has currently been running closer to 100 percent — we are concerned about the number in the budget.

So again, the question for the Premier is: Did the actual request change from what we understood it would be or did

the Hospital Corporation in fact, as we expected, request three percent more in its operational budget than is here?

My next question regarding the hospital is that we don't see any funding included for the Meditech replacement project for the hospital's electronic health information system. Is the government committed to working with the hospital to fund that replacement project or have they made a political decision not to approve that?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, that's a very unique question for general debate, so I will get my Minister of Health and Social Services to answer the question. I would ask the member opposite if he could tell me where his source of information is coming from — if he can provide for us the source of these numbers that he's quoting in the Legislative Assembly today — that would help us as well to get together and to compare them with the Minister of Health and Social Services. I will leave it to her to get into the specifics.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Chair: Sorry, Mr. Cathers. I'm not sure, I didn't catch you there. You might have been first, but I was automatically attuned to turning this way.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The response with regard to the 75 percent of the funding — historically the Yukon Hospital Corporation had an agreement with the Yukon government. It was structured in such a way that it was an arm's-length agreement, so we really didn't have, as government, direct hands-on involvement in terms of health care programs delivered from the hospital.

I think what we really attempted to do with this budget was to look at an opportunity to work with the new chair and CEO to identify what the priority needs are for Yukoners; to look at a health care model that meets the needs of all rural Yukoners. So we have really taken a strategic approach, as with every department of the Government of Yukon — and in my areas of responsibility with Health and Social Services, Yukon Housing Corporation, Environment — and we have sat down with departments and really spent a lot of time identifying what the key priority areas are. How can we meet those priorities within the time frame that we've been allotted — looking at the next 12 months?

In our department, we have opportunities to work really closely with our DMs and our finance directors to come up with some solid strategies, good business cases and good business models. We have two community-based hospitals and, in those hospitals, we're seeing that the community input and their concerns and what they want to bring forward is a true collaborative care facility — a health care facility that will really provide a broad spectrum of services and supports. That was not considered. We didn't really have input into what and how the Hospital Corporation designed its strategic plans for the Yukon — or even its business and budget plans and its business models.

This new relationship was struck with the Department of Health and Social Services and the Hospital Corporation. It's a mutual agreement. It's an agreement that they have agreed to. The new chair — I have met with him on numerous occasions — as well with the CEO. We're really working hard

to design a longer term plan, so this opportunity with this new lease on a one-year operational funding agreement to sustain the hospital and the services that the hospital is currently providing is not — I wouldn't say it's jeopardized or it is affected. They have sufficient resources in which to provide continuous services. What this does is it allows us to look at a longer term business strategy that will better align with some of the integrated services that are not being provided right now. I'm going to give you some examples.

What we're hearing from the physicians in the community in Dawson City and in Watson Lake is that the longer term care programs that are necessary, that are essential — physio, for example, optical care, and dental care. These are things that are not offered in the communities, and that wasn't in the program or the profile of the hospital. Yet we have two very expensive hospitals. Historically, we had to increase our physicians in the facility in Dawson City, so of course those things are going to be provided at an added cost. So a better people-centred approach and helping Yukoners to thrive — what does that look like? This is, I think, a really great opportunity to work with the hospital, to work with the health care facilities in the rural centres and try to elaborate further on just really meeting the needs of the communities and looking at the strategic priorities and general direction. That will come from the Hospital Corporation and the board, and they'll help to design that. They have that mandate now. They have the mandate and the direction to proceed with coming up with a plan that works for them. In that plan they will have a strategic vision — perhaps a requested enhanced budget that will address their needs and the needs of the two facilities that currently don't have all of the services and supports they require.

Mr. Cathers: Unfortunately I didn't hear an answer from either the Premier or the Minister of Health and Social Services to my question about what the hospital's budget request was. In answer to the Premier's question, as I noted in my preamble, this question is based on my understanding from discussions with the chair and former minister, as well as Management Board information that we had prior to the election, that — as the minister knows, the departments' O&M call letters for both capital and O&M are typically due in September. Based on the information we had, prior to the dissolution of government for the election, we had understood that the hospital was going to need more money than we see in this year's current budget. If that information has changed, between September and April, we would be happy to hear that, but in the absence of it, the question I would ask again for government is: What did the board actually sign-off on? What was government-approved in terms of the request?

If the Premier, as Minister of Finance, believes that the funding available for O&M for the Hospital Corporation is adequate this fiscal year or understands, as we had from the information that we had via Management Board and the now-former chair prior to the election — whether there is an additional three percent in funding that we had understood — for reasons including increased cost of chemo drugs, the increased volume of chemotherapy, the increased volume at

medical imaging and the lab, and the increased staffing costs associated with the emergency room expansion and, last but not least, the fact that hospital is running close to 100-percent capacity rather than 75-percent capacity.

The other question I asked that I did not get an answer on is whether government is committed to supporting the Meditech replacement project, which the hospital has been working on for the past few years — because we don't see any funding in the budget for it — or whether government has decided not to support the replacement of the Meditech system at the hospital.

Hon. Ms. Frost: To answer the question about the request from the Hospital Corporation on this year's funding request — we have not allocated a three-percent increase in their budget. We have enhanced their budget by one percent. That will allow them to really look at a solid, well-thought-out business plan for the two community hospitals. We have built two hospitals and not really put a lot of thought or plan into a solid collaborative-care model. This is an opportunity for them to do that. They have committed and they are prepared to work with the department to come up with a plan. At that point, I know for a fact that they will present to me and Cabinet a solid business plan that defines what they need in terms of supports, O&M expenditures and cost overruns. We ran into some cost overruns with the infrastructure that was built. A good example of some of the challenges that we are confronted with is having a physiotherapist go in three days a month. Is that sufficient? No. They want a further, perhaps full-time position in the community. They are requesting optical care in the community. There is general maintenance on the hospital.

We are flying in and taking in, whenever there is a request for general maintenance, services from Whitehorse. Does that make sense? That doesn't make sense to me. It doesn't make sense for proper services that this new hospital requires. We are looking at what we can do to collaborate with the elder-care facility in Dawson City and how we can look at shared services. What can we do to enhance, with Yukon Housing Corporation, maintenance and supports? We are looking at working with Yukon Medical Association as well on some further opportunities. What we have also considered in this process, and what they are looking at, is making better use of the e-health system — looking at how we can start accessing and utilizing a system that was put in place a few years ago but is not being used very effectively. What can we do to concentrate on using that process to eliminate and decrease some of the costs? Rather than flying in someone when required, we can start using technologies. As we've expressed earlier, through Highways and Public Works, we have expanded and upgraded our e-health system through the lease on a Genie process so that allows us quicker services, quicker access, reduced time and reduced costs. That cannot happen without the collaboration of the hospital board and without the collaboration of the chair and the CEO to ensure that we're on time, we're on target and we provide essential services that are required, but we can't continue to just react to the pressures.

By giving a long-term funding agreement without any accountability back to the government is no longer acceptable. We cannot sign a blank cheque for \$64 million and say to the Hospital Corporation, "Here's \$64 million" — and then they come back with a supplementary request for cost overruns and added expenses. That is something that we're not prepared to do, so we've asked for a longer term plan. Similar to what we're doing with our departments — take the time, strategically align yourselves with all of the motions that are happening with the e-health, with other service providers in our communities, and looking at what we're doing within our government.

That, I believe, is fully understood and we are working and providing the necessary supports to the Hospital Corporation. They have collaborated and they are cooperative and excited about the prospects of coming forward with a longer term plan that will best align with the needs in collaborative care processes of Yukoners — and, in rural Yukon, maximizing the services and the facilities we have in Dawson City and Watson Lake.

Mr. Cathers: While I appreciate the answer from the minister, I also have to say that I'm quite concerned by it. The minister has indicated and noted there is only a one-percent increase to the Hospital Corporation as we had seen from the budget. Again, we note that's less than CPI — the rate of inflation. If the minister — and if the Premier in his capacity as Finance minister would look across the country at the average annual growth in other health systems — in fact, based on the most recent report that I saw comparing, again in this case, provincial health systems — not the territory's health system — the average annual increase in health costs across the country dating back to 1972 had been fairly consistently around eight-percent increase per year.

I would hope that the Premier, as a former math teacher, would be able to figure out the difference between an eight-percent increase and a one-percent increase. In the case of the Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services, they, in my belief, do one of the best jobs of any health system in the country of managing costs and do not require an eight-percent health increase. But to hold them to one percent is insufficient, in my view, and again what I asked both the minister and the Premier for — and they have not committed to — is to let us know what the board of the Hospital Corporation actually requested because, based on our understanding that prior to the election, they were expecting that they needed at least a four-percent increase in O&M funding this year.

I also didn't receive an answer on the Meditech replacement.

Another comment of the minister's that I am specifically concerned about is when she refers to a longer term plan. I would encourage the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister of Finance to both give their heads a shake and recognize the fact that when you are looking at the costs anywhere within the health system, this is one of the areas of government services that is hard for even the most competent administrator or manager or deputy minister or board chair to

predict. That is because anything within the acute system especially — they have to respond to what walks in the door. They can predict trends sometimes, but when there is a spike, for example, as the Hospital Corporation is seeing in the area of the number of beds that are currently filled by people who are effectively in assisted living or continuing care levels — I know that at one point in the past fiscal year they were running at around 40-percent capacity. I understand from physicians I have spoken to that this is about the case currently and that about 40 percent of the volume of the hospital beds are being occupied by people who should ideally be in a continuing care facility.

When those pressures occur — when more Yukoners get diagnosed with cancer, when more Yukoners than expected in any given month break their leg or are in a car crash — all of those things create a cost to the system that is beyond anyone's ability to precisely predict. What we did in the past, and I would sincerely hope that the current government will recognize the importance of doing this, is recognize that when those unanticipated spikes in volume occur, there are times in individual years when a spike in certain services or surgeries can require additional budgeting. If the Premier is indicating that the current government's view is that they are going to require the Hospital Corporation to come up with a long-term plan and meet with the budget, then the only thing that the board will be left doing within that envelope is that they will have to give staff direction around tightening up in other areas to accommodate those increased cost pressures. This is no different from, for example, the areas I gave in a previous example on debate with the Finance minister about the fact that an unusually high forest fire season can result in significant cost spikes — for example, in 2013 — I believe that was the most recent year that we had high forest fires — the additional amount required by the Department of Community Services in the area of wildland fire management to meet the costs of a higher than normal forest fire season was an additional \$7.5 million in increased resources. The department and staff of Wildland Fire Management couldn't accurately predict that, nor could they predict how close a lightning strike or a campfire would be to individual communities. They couldn't predict how close to the community of Carmacks a forest fire would be in 2013 based on the previous fiscal year or on the weather reports. So when those pressures come, the question will be: Will this current government do as we did and fund those critical health care needs or is the minister and the Premier now saying that they are going to require the board and corporation to hold within those resources even if needs are higher?

I'm going to extrapolate that to another area within the area of Health and Social Services. The medevac flights that occur are a significant cost to the system. They are done based on when any of the many people request a medevac flight due to an emergency situation or the need for medevac in or out of the territory.

Is the government indicating that, within the area of the Department of Health and Social Services, they are not going to fund higher than normal volume years for medevac flights

and they are going to direct the department to absorb it from within?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am going to attempt to respond to the questions that were all over the place, from firefighting to God knows what else. I am not quite clear on what I am supposed to respond to.

I believe I responded to the question earlier that we have an agreement with the Hospital Corporation. The previous agreement that the Hospital Corporation had expired on March 31, 2017; now the proposal that perhaps the previous government had does not align itself very well with this whole-of-government approach. We are working with the Hospital Corporation to align itself better with the services, projects and programs that we are expanding on.

Could we and could this government have afforded an additional \$5.2 million in 2017-18 for the Hospital Corporation? No, so what is the accountability attached to that \$5.2 million that was the request, which puts the total up — that automatic built-in increase of four percent? Well you can't automatically build in an increase of four percent without justification or without proper planning around that.

The Hospital Corporation and the opposition well know that if we're seeing intense pressures and if there's a request from the Hospital Corporation and they are feeling that the current funding they are receiving is insufficient, then there is an opportunity for a supplementary request, which we're working through with them. I just met with them last week to really go through that plan, to go through their vision, to go through their supplementary process of what they would like to see to be better prepared for the outcomes.

There was no accountability previously. It was just, here's a bunch of money, go run the hospitals. Go build the expansion on the hospital, what types of services and programs — how much is the O&M going to cost? Those were things that perhaps were not considered long term. Are there enhanced projects or initiatives that you would like to see? They have a facility at the hospital with the new ER department. There is a whole shell area in the top of the facility they have some long-term plans for and they would like to expand. If that's their vision for five years, then we need to know that as a government so we can start aligning and planning with them properly. I'll stop there.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I just want to add and ask again of the member opposite: Is he asking us to break the law? When it comes to medical travel and medevacs, as the member opposite knows, we have a responsibility and an obligation. The Minister of Health and Social Services was very clear in the response to these unforeseen situations. That's exactly what a supplementary budget is for and the member opposite knows that.

Mr. Cathers: It's interesting. We're apparently seeing a different pattern of debate here in general debate than in the past. I would note to the Premier that of course I'm not asking government to break the law. My point was comparing the minister's unrealistic attitude and the Premier's, in his capacity as Finance minister, unrealistic attitude toward cost pressures in the Yukon Hospital Corporation to what would

happen in the area of medevacs and medical travel if government were to force the department to absorb within.

For example, in that area, if Cabinet — Management Board — were to refuse to provide additional funding to Health and Social Services to meet a legislative obligation, they would move heaven and earth trying to find the money, but there's a certain point where, if Cabinet will not provide adequate financial resources to a department or corporation, they have no choice but to cut services to meet legislated or critical responsibilities. That is what we're concerned about. We heard the Minister of Health and Social Services admit that the Liberal government has underfunded the Yukon Hospital Corporation by over \$5 million this fiscal year. We will be watching this area here.

Another area I would like to move on to is the fourth board I'm asking questions about here today with regard to the Yukon Housing Corporation board. We know the government's decision to fire all of the members of the board back in January. The question is: Will the government make clear what that board was recommending prior to being sacked, and what new direction has been given, especially as it may differ from the recommendations made by the previous board?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I just want to clarify that the Yukon Housing Corporation board was not fired. Their terms were all expiring at exactly the same time — talk about corporate inconsistencies. All of the board members' terms were ending at the same time, so they were not fired. Their terms expired.

Mr. Cathers: The minister may wish to reconsider that statement and retract it later, because there were members who were terminated two weeks in advance of their appointments on the Yukon Housing Corporation board. I heard from members who learned of the minister and Cabinet decision to fire them after the orders-in-council were published. The minister's statement is not factually correct. She may wish to correct it because government did remove members prior to their termination dates, then had a rather staggered series of orders-in-council, adding new members and then adding new members again and leaving the Yukon Housing Corporation — I believe it is still currently without any rural representation after Cabinet chose to make a political decision and fire those members.

The member can debate the nuance of it, but the question again for the Yukon Housing Corporation board is: What was the board recommending to the minister and to government prior to their termination? Will they make that public and make public what political direction has been given since that time to the Yukon Housing Corporation board? Circling back to the two questions I asked previously, which were what the budget request was for the Yukon Hospital Corporation and whether the government will make that detailed request available — understanding as we do now that the minister has admitted underfunding the Yukon Hospital Foundation by \$5 million this fiscal year? Also, will government make available the information about how much of a rate increase Yukon Energy Corporation is applying for this fiscal year?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Unfortunately, I can't respond to the last comment, but I can respond to the two previous comments around the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We are not underfunding the hospital. The Yukon Hospital Corporation is delivering the same on par services that they have been providing to Yukoners historically. What they have been tasked with is to provide an opportunity to provide a detailed plan on deliverables — on how and what we can do to support them fiscally and through program and service enhancements, if necessary — to better align with e-health, Meditech processes, medical travel and physician negotiations. There are many things happening at once, such as consistent pension solvency. What are we doing to best align all these matters that directly impact the Yukon Hospital Corporation. At the end of the day, what we really want to do is ensure that the services that are provided to our citizens of Yukon are timely, efficient and, if it's an emergency, there is no doubt whatsoever that they will be given whatever support they require.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation — and the member opposite is well aware that the supplementary process will address any of those shortfalls, if there are any, in a timely fashion. It's a great opportunity for the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the board to work with the government and work with the Department of Health and Social Services — and they are. I am happy to say that they're quite happy and excited about trying to find the synergies that perhaps were not there before.

The Yukon Housing Corporation board — what mandate did we get from the Yukon Housing Corporation board previously? You have a housing action plan that the Yukon Housing Corporation board participated in. You have the anti-poverty processes that the Yukon Housing Corporation board participated in. There were a few things happening with the Yukon Housing Corporation board that really just looked at infrastructure.

This new Yukon Housing Corporation board will align itself with addressing some of the Housing First models and trying to implement more efficiently and more effectively the alignment with the federal resources that are coming down, looking at what is happening with the municipalities, looking at an effective use of the municipality matching grant, for example, and what we can do to ensure that communities like Ross River, like Watson Lake, and some of the communities that are having some infrastructure challenges, what we can do to assist and provide and look at best practices in the Yukon.

The Yukon Housing Corporation board has representation from rural Yukon, I can assure you of that. We have a rep from Carcross and we have a rep from the community of Haines Junction.

Chair: Would the Committee members like to take 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.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to wrap up my remarks on budget debate here — at least for the time being — in the interest of allowing other members to ask questions. I would note too, in conclusion, that, as the Premier and ministers have not appreciated being asked questions in general debate — and I would again remind members that although that didn't occur in the last Legislative Assembly, this in fact has been a long-standing practice in this House where the Official Opposition Finance critic would ask the Premier questions affecting areas across the budget and significant policy questions, particularly as it pertains to the direction the Premier may have given ministers.

In concluding my comments, at least depending on the response from the other side — I think I am concluding my comments for the time being — I would just note that what we have learned in debate on the budget is that, despite the Premier and the government's claims that their reason for delaying calling the Legislative Assembly to table a budget and have the first real Sitting of the Assembly since taking office for longer than any other government in Yukon history — their supposed reason for it was taking time to understand the budget and to get the budget right. What we have learned is that there are a number of areas where the current budget does not have it right.

They haven't booked the costs of the federal carbon tax despite the fact that it will come into effect this fiscal year. We have seen the Minister of Health and Social Services acknowledge, before retracting her comments, that they have underfunded the Hospital Corporation by some \$5.2 million this fiscal year. We have seen the Liberals today in budget debate and earlier in Question Period backtracking away from election commitments, or at least saying they are going to examine them, and that includes whether the Premier will keep the promise to his constituents about paving the Dawson runway and the commitment that the Liberal government has now said that they are examining whether or not they will keep their commitment to raise the small business investment tax threshold.

We have heard that either the government asked for and supported the request for a third Supreme Court Judge without understanding the costs, or that it knows but won't tell members and the public what those costs are. The Minister of Justice claims she has the numbers now, but she refused to disclose them and, while contesting my recollection of what officials had indicated in the past and that it added about over a half-million dollars in O&M plus capital, the government that got elected on a promise to be more accountable and transparent wouldn't tell Yukoners or their elected representatives what those costs were.

We have seen as well a bit of an incredible answer about the debt cap. When I asked the Premier about his statements in front of the federal finance committee on April 4 of this year, where he said — and I quote: "We're looking to remove power from our debt cap..." When I questioned the Premier about the fact that there remains \$198.5 million in unused capacity under that debt cap and why someone would request a change if they didn't need or intend to borrow more than that \$198.5 million, what the Premier characterized it as was — like applying for a Visa card that you didn't really intend to use, which we find, again, a statement that simply does not make sense.

We have seen as well a lack of transparency earlier today in debate, where the government refused to tell us their view on the duty to serve under the *Public Utilities Act* — how that applies and whether government would borrow money or fund infrastructure solely for an industrial customer and put the taxpayers at risk of the future bill — much as what happened in the case when the Faro mine closed in a previous era under Yukon government.

We heard no answer from the Premier on what he considers sufficient public consultation, despite the fact that we have heard complaints from a number of Yukon citizens, including school councils that complained about the lack of consultation on the budget, the fact that some were given a mere 19 days for input on the school calendar. In the case of one of the school councils — in Watson Lake — they, in fact, received the letter after the deadline for consultation, so they had less than zero days to provide their answer.

We have seen a lack of transparency from the government on what the Yukon Energy Corporation is requesting for a rate increase, or the government's views on it. We have seen a lack of transparency on what the Yukon Hospital Corporation requested for this fiscal year, although the minister admitted it was \$5.2 million more than they provided them. We have seen a failure to answer questions about what the former board of the Yukon Housing Corporation recommended, prior to being axed by the government, and what political direction has been given since that time, especially that which may contradict those previous directions.

Again, we may return with questions — and we will — but for the time being, I will cede the floor to the Leader of the Third Party, unless the comments from members opposite require response.

Hon. Mr. Silver: What we heard was a lot of speculation and a lot of opinion and no actual questions from the member opposite, so I will cede the floor to the Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Cathers: I would point out that I asked a number of questions. The Premier just chose not to answer them and to characterize them as not real questions. We're not getting anywhere at the moment. I'll cede the floor to the Leader of the Third Party and look forward to further debate on the budget, and maybe the Premier will get around to answering questions, not just the ones he likes to answer, and might remember what he promised Yukoners in 2016.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, to the member opposite, I'm saying in that last diatribe or whatever we want to call it, there were no questions.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Mr. Cathers, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The term "diatribe" has been ruled out of order in this House before.

Unparliamentary language

Chair: I suspect it probably has. Mr. Silver, can you find another word perhaps to describe the member opposite's speech?

Withdrawal of remark

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't know if I can find another word. I will retract that one, but it's hard to find another word for what that was — but that was no question.

So because there were no questions, I have no answers in that last statement from the member opposite. By all means — to the Leader of the Third Party.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a little difficult to know where to begin after what we've just been put through over the last many, many hours of "general debate".

Some of the things that have been said over the last several days and most of this day by the Finance critic, the Member for Lake Laberge, with the Official Opposition bring to mind a proverb, Mr. Chair, from Luke, which is really simple, it says: "Physician, heal thyself" — the tendency to be critical of others when in fact one might want to look at the source of some of that criticism.

It has been interesting and at times challenging. Having sat in the Official Opposition for the six years prior to this — it has been fairly rich to hear the Member for Lake Laberge waxing on about the creation of jobs outside Whitehorse in terms of rural Yukon and over the tenure of the Yukon Party when, in fact, we've seen that it was incredibly Whitehorse-centric in every sector.

There are many, many things, but that's not why we're here today. We're really here to talk about — despite the fact of the focus of the Yukon Party on — I'm not quite sure what their focus was, but it certainly was a long and winding road.

There are a number of general questions that I have, and I hope we can move out of this "general debate" rather quickly and get into what we have to do within — the members are all aware that tomorrow we are at the halfway mark of this Legislative Assembly and we have a significant amount of work to go through to get through all departments, as well as at least one or two pieces of legislation. It does concern me that what we've seen is the attempt of the Yukon Party in Official Opposition to do exactly as they did in government for 14 years, which was to prevent real debate about the real issues in each of these departments. There are substantive questions, and to suggest that, in general debate, ministers should be speaking without their deputies here reflects a real

disrespect for the legislative process. I really am saddened by that.

I do have some questions to the Premier as Finance minister. I would like to go back — surely when the Premier and his colleagues were preparing for the election, they looked at the projections for what was happening under the Yukon Party with respect to the real decline in total tax and general revenue. We saw the decline from at least close to \$40 million from 2013-14 to 2015-16. In addition to that, we saw a real decline in total corporate tax revenue.

What I am curious about from the Premier is, based on their oft-stated assertions in this Legislative Assembly that decisions would be based on evidence, what evidence did the government use to determine that it made sense to reduce corporate taxes by a further 20 percent? What evidence across Canada is there to show that a reduction of corporate tax rates does increase job creation and research and development? From my understanding and from my research, everybody from the Governor of the Bank of Canada to the former Conservative Finance minister of Canada has said it hasn't. In fact, what we are seeing are record levels of corporate holdings not reinvesting.

What makes this government believe that, just because the Yukon Party did it for 14 years, that this is going to somehow change? I'm looking forward to hearing from the minister.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the general question from the member opposite when it comes to tax revenues. As we all know, the tax revenue system is very volatile from year to year. Over 2013-14 on to 2015-16 fiscal years, government tax revenues did experience a 30-percent decline, which meant a \$40-million drop from the base of \$136 million.

Corporate income tax accounted for \$24 million of the decrease, and personal income tax accounted for \$14 million. When you take a look at the corporate income tax side for 2015-16, that decreased by 80 percent to \$6 million from a base of \$35 million in 2013-14. However, in the budget of 2014, the Yukon government reduced the small corporate rate in that place from four to three percent, which was a 25-percent drop in that rate. Then the personal income tax experienced a 19-percent decrease over the two-year period, which can largely be attributed to the budget of 2015 reductions of the first three tax rates.

When we made our decision for the corporate rate, that decision was based on getting our system in line with the rest of Canada — taking a look at what the rates are across the board and putting ours in that middle-of-the-road area. In doing so, we believe we will — and we'll find out, based upon the results of this year — next year, we'll take a look to see if this attracts any investment and any corporations coming here. That is the intent for the corporate rate.

When it comes to the small business tax rate, taking it down to zero was a campaign promise that, when we looked through the Department of Finance and had more conversations about thresholds and limits that this can create, we decided that we needed to do the right thing as opposed to the politically expeditious thing. We are going to reduce it

again to get it into that average or just below average rate. I think what we have done in this first year is we have taken these rates and put them into a comparable rate for the rest of the other jurisdictions in Canada, especially those that we compete with the most — the ones that are going to be on the west coast. We want to take a look at the small business tax because, again, taking it down to zero percent was to do something that we now believe may not necessarily accomplish that goal. When we now take a look at that threshold that could be created by a small business, if we want small corporate businesses to grow, if you don't have comparable rates between those two tax structures, then what you might end up doing is creating more of a threshold for people to do things to stay under that \$500,000 mark each year as well. That was something that we didn't do a good enough job in our campaign of taking a look at.

What we want to do is put these two rates in a certain place right now, get some evidence, find out if it accomplishes the goals that we set out to accomplish and then go back and assess it. With the small business tax rate, we also want to take a look at more of sole proprietor consideration as well. That is where we are going to open up the conversation to all the members of the Legislative Assembly and the business community. If we are not going to do the small business corporate tax cut all the way down to zero percent — let's say we find out that, yes, you were right not to put it down to zero because of the reasons that you have identified — we still feel like there is an added obligation to small businesses that are not corporate, but are actually sole proprietor. These are the mom and pop shops that if you go up and down Main Street, you will see that most of these businesses are not, in fact, corporate businesses. They are mostly sole proprietors.

That is the intent. We will see if our cuts making it more competitive has a Keynesian response to it, and from there we will go forward and see if we have made the right determinations.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate it and understand the theory that the minister is putting forward, but that theory has not proven itself out in terms of investment. That was my question: What evidence is there to show that? Yes, we saw that in the previous federal government where we wanted to lower thresholds for environmental assessments, so we all go down to the lowest level possible. We all have to go down because that is what people tell us — that lowering corporate taxes is going to somehow make sure that it all trickles down. Guess what, Mr. Chair — it hasn't been trickling down. There are other tax tools available to a government.

What evidence does this government have in making this decision — in particular making this decision in advance of its expert advisory panel on financial matters? I would have thought that while we were considering the financial tools available to us, we would await the outcome of that Financial Advisory Panel, which I would hope or assume — or maybe the Premier can clarify this because we haven't yet seen the terms of reference — that all tools that will be looked at, not simply where we are paring programs and services, but what tools are available to this government as a government. So:

evidence, and why was the decision taken prior to receiving the considered opinion of this expert advisory panel that we understand will be reporting in October?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the concern from the NDP, but this may be where fundamentally, as far as ideology, we might disagree.

Alberta is a good example. If you want to take a look at evidence-based decision-making, when Alberta reduced their corporate tax rate, what they saw were companies coming to Alberta. That rate then jumped up under the NDP, and those companies left afterward. It was succinct information based upon a decision by the government.

There's also a school of public policy document that has just come out showing that competitive tax rates do matter. I think this might be where we're going to agree to disagree. In the five-year mandate, we will have the information as to whether or not that has that effect in the territory.

I will say to the member opposite that those are provincial examples. There might be differences in the territories. We have a different consideration here. She may be correct; we may be correct in this; we'll find out as we move forward. We think we had enough information to make the decision to make comparative tax rates, because those comparative tax rates have been proven in other jurisdictions to have an effect on the economy and have an effect on attracting corporate interests.

Ms. Hanson: Yes, I understand that we may be coming at this from a different lens perspective, and maybe there's another lens I would like to suggest to the Premier. When we look at the focus on corporate and business tax cuts, what we're ignoring is that those people who are in the middle and lower income range spend the money they have. They're not investing in the Bahamas or someplace else, or looking to shed even more taxes by other offsets.

When we look at instruments that are available to ensure the vitality of the economy and to ensure the vitality of those very small businesses — we're talking about small businesses — it's the person who is the pensioner, the working poor, the lower income, who spends their money in those grocery stores and at the service station.

In the Yukon, what we're finding and what we know is that pensioners, the working poor and lower income people earning up to \$44,700 pay a tax rate of 6.4 percent. If we're really serious about being comparable, then why wouldn't we look at making sure the tax rate for lower income people is comparable, for example, to Nunavut's, which has a lower income tax bracket of four percent, or even BC at 5.06 percent, or Northwest Territories at 5.9? Why does Yukon government want to lead at taxing the poor and the lower income?

For example, under the Yukon Party, the surtax on higher income earners was eliminated, but the poor and the lower and middle income was untouched. Why wouldn't we want to be using that as a form of stimulus? Again it goes back to the question: Why are these decisions being taken in terms of tax tools in advance of the expert advisory panel that is supposed to be — I'm assuming and I'm hoping the Premier can

confirm — looking for robust evidence for making financial decisions for this government?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I completely agree with the member opposite as far as the financial panel helping out in that context of deciding what future decisions we make as a government to help the economy, whether it be for income tax or programs and services, access to training — the gamut.

Again, I would say on that piece of — if we're going to go in and take a look at personal taxes, I think it would be smart of us to take a look at the Financial Advisory Panel. I am looking at the professional advice that we would be getting through that agency to get that evidence to compare cross-jurisdictionally. When you take a look at just numbers comparatively outside of context of other programs and services offered — whether it be through social services, health or education training, then yes, you're looking at comparable numbers. You can make one argument, but if you take a look at the raft of programs and services offered in the Yukon when it comes to marginalized individuals, low income — I think that there are other ways of making sure that, if there is a discrepancy or if there is a disproportionate situation, then we can look down that road as well for the evidence to make sure that we are offering a balanced system when it comes to helping out those who are marginalized.

I will say as well when it comes to the corporate interests, these large corporations do make an economy in the Yukon and attracting these companies — they supply the jobs and services for the small businesses. They attract small businesses because there are so many spinout career opportunities from these larger corporations as well.

I do agree that we have to take a look on the social side. We have to take a look at programs, services and taxes that are paid by our lower income individuals. I would say, respectfully to the Leader of the Third Party, that with the use of the Financial Advisory Panel, that's where we develop the evidence to see where we should focus our attentions from here on forward past this budget.

Ms. Hanson: I would point to the Premier that the suite of exemptions and other forms of assistance in addition to corporate tax cuts and other tax cuts for wealthy people in this territory isn't exclusively with respect to the corporate tax cuts. We have a whole suite of other advantages and exemptions that flow through just about every other department. It's not just Health and Social Services; it's not just on the socially disadvantaged. That's why we are surprised on this side that, in advance of its advisory panel, the Yukon Liberal Party, when it has an opportunity, has entrapped itself in what Standard & Poor's has identified as one of the concerns that the territory's ability — and I'm quoting here — to increase revenue is constrained as a result of the *Taxpayer Protection Act*, a piece of ideologically driven legislation that was put in place by the Yukon Party and that stipulates that the Yukon government can't introduce a new tax or increase an existing one — in particular, personal income, corporate or fuel taxes — without a referendum.

Now, as far as an anti-democratic piece of legislation, it couldn't get much worse than that, but that's there. When we

start looking at the implications for a government — if we look on the evidence that the Premier thinks that the previous corporate tax cuts have generated more revenue — the evidence tells us it didn't generate more revenue. It was exactly the opposite. People didn't come flocking here because there were low taxes. They didn't come for that reason. What makes us think that one more 20-percent cut is going to do it?

There is a fair amount that needs to be considered when we look at these those kinds of approaches. Just in terms of the general things — is the government waiting for an assessment and having the expert financial panel look at the implications of their campaign promise to increase the small business investment tax credit from \$1 million to \$5 million, prior to making good on that commitment? How is that going to be addressed? It's not in this budget.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I absolutely apologize — I missed the final question as I was talking with my DM here. I will respond to a couple of things here. As far as the *Taxpayer Protection Act* — I think everybody here knows exactly what is going on. The primary principle is articulated in the statement of: "... in order to maintain fiscal stability and integrity, it is desirable to avoid accumulated deficits." That would be the ideology behind it, and I would agree that this is a policy put in by the Yukon Party government. I will be interested to see if the advisory panel has an opinion on this.

We know that, in other jurisdictions, there is not a lot of evidence that this actually does have a desirable effect, but again, that is one of those conversations that I would love to have in the Legislative Assembly. I would like to see all three parties put their views forward on the *Taxpayer Protection Act* — as an act, not necessarily as anything else. Is it accomplishing the outer goal to avoid those accumulated deficits? I am sure that the Yukon Party will have a differing opinion from the NDP on this one. It will be interesting to see what the advisory panel says on it.

Back to the picture of the corporations — I still believe that competitiveness does matter. If you take a look at our partner governments that surround us and you take a look at the rate here for corporate taxes — Nunavut at 12 percent, BC at 11 percent, Alberta at 12 percent, Saskatchewan at 12 percent, and Manitoba at 12 percent. So again, for us getting from 15 percent down to 12 percent — to me that makes sense on a competitive nature and to me it makes sense on being competitive with other jurisdictions, and we'll see.

I think there is also the concept of timing being everything. We are taking a look right now at a lot of international interests, and to be attracted to the Yukon — for mining companies to have their corporate headquarters here — that would help the economy — again, those other smaller businesses — those other sole proprietors — who can make a lot of economic headway by attracting these larger corporations. It is still something that we believe we want to look into and it's something that we did look into as a campaign promise. We'll see the evidence afterward — if we're correct or if the member opposite is correct as far as

seeing the results in our economy based upon these reductions in the tax rate to make us more competitive.

I would ask the member opposite to ask me that final question again. I just didn't hear it and I apologize.

Ms. Hanson: It's really not necessary. I just wanted to go back. I think we'll need to go into the departments. We have four of them to try to get through this afternoon.

I want to make a comment with respect to — because it does speak to the issue of taxes. Yes, I hear the minister opposite assuming and hoping that making more breaks for corporate interests will turn things around brilliantly, and we would hope that this proves true. I would point out that, when we look at the expectations with respect to how we share or how we access revenues from Canada, it is not just on the corporate tax side, but it is also personal taxes. That is why I asked that question — the balance that needs to be there. There is an assumption — and I heard it implicit in one of the responses to the Member for Lake Laberge about this notion when there was some discussion about THSSI and that is really important because we have to be able to provide the same level of health care as every other Canadian. What is often overlooked is that there are two parts to that. In section 36.2, it is quite clear. It talks about the importance of, in Canada, our expectation that there is the ability to provide essential public services of reasonable quality to all Canadians, but it comes with a quid pro quo. When it comes to dollars to do that, the payments to ensure provinces and territorial governments have sufficient revenues to provide — and the key language here is to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services and reasonably comparable levels of taxation. If there is a constant race to push the taxation levels down, at what point do you determine what is in the public good and what taxes we will support? How will we do that?

There is an expectation in Canada that taxation does have a purpose. It is part of social contract. I think there is a need, as government, to be looking at not just that Yukon has a special place in the heart of federal governments — yes, that constitutional obligation is there, but it means that we have to play too. If we constrain ourselves so much that we are at the stage now where we have increased — not decreased — our dependency in a post-devolution world — but increased our dependency on the federal government — that more of our revenues come from the feds as opposed to us generating it and we take away some of the key tools that we have, I don't see how we demonstrate as a government that maturity that fulfills the obligations in section 36.2. I would be interested in the Minister of Finance's views on that.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, if you could ask me the other question that I have missed, we will get back to it.

I think there is definitely a sweet spot here. To say that we have the same number of mechanisms for income tax for individuals as we do for corporations, that might not be necessarily so. We are seeing on the federal basis too an increase in offers from the federal government as far as the income tax system. We can get into that on another day, but

just to the point of it, if we keep on pushing down, what is the limit? That is a very good question from the member opposite. Our response to that is we stop pushing down when we become competitive. I had this conversation with the federal Minister of Finance as well. It wasn't lost on him when we were negotiating for more money for health or we were at the finance ministers' meetings watching our own-source revenues comparatively. This conversation came up and he agrees with me that you have to be competitive. My whole point to him was that we need to make sure that we're competitive with our neighbouring jurisdictions. On the one side, where he's watching provinces and territories reducing their taxes, especially when it comes time for elections — and that was his comment — it wasn't lost on him that the Yukon needed to get into step with the rest of the jurisdictions around.

I agree that you need to find that sweet spot. To answer the member opposite's question of when do we stop pushing down, we stop pushing down when we are competitive.

Ms. Hanson: One could say there are a lot of Third World countries that are really competitive, but you know what? They don't deliver any public services. They don't have roads; they don't have health care. I kind of think that's not exactly where we want to go.

The question the minister had asked me to repeat was the question with respect to the election commitment around the small business investment tax credit, and whether the lack of it showing up in this budget was an indication that the government intended to have it be subject to study and review by the Financial Advisory Panel before they made a final decision on what room there was to provide that tax credit.

This was an initiative that an NDP government of some time ago put in place, and it was slowly grown, but we couldn't get the threshold increased under the previous government, so we are hopeful we will see that. We have spoken over the years with the private sector partners that would see the opportunities for them, as opposed to having to go out to borrow money at high cost as Air North so successfully did — create incredible customer loyalty and returns to citizens by allowing them to be shareholders in one of the corporations that we all treasure.

That was the gist of that question, Mr. Chair. While I'm at it, the Premier, in his reference to the Minister of Finance, triggered a question I had. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources outlined some of the options they were looking at with respect to energy proposals, with the low- to high-cost scenarios. We looked at those over the last year or so ourselves. I want to know what conversations the Minister of Finance has had with the federal Minister of Finance with respect to whether or not any of the proposed infrastructure projects in Yukon are going to fall within the purview of the proposed infrastructure bank the federal government is pushing through Parliament. According to the former parliamentary budget officer and also according to every source in the media, the federal government has taken this omnibus bill and broken it into committees in a rush to get this bill through — Bill C-44.

I'm sure the Minister of Finance knows the concerns that have been expressed by many, both left and right, on the implications of the infrastructure bank, which has taken \$35 billion of the \$180 billion that has been proposed over the next decade for infrastructure and, instead of using the federal ability to borrow at about 2.2 percent over 30 years, is looking at giving private sector companies a return on their investment of 10 to 12 percent. That costs us money and it diminishes our ability to make our infrastructure dollars go further.

I'm curious as to whether or not there has been any indication from the federal government that any of our projects in Yukon would be required to access funds through the infrastructure bank.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Before we get into the bank, basically I guess the question when it comes to the small business tax credit is: Is the credit the best model? That is the question. Where should that rate be? That would be a question to the panel with an emphasis on how we need to do more for our sole proprietors. I do agree that we're not interested in a race to the bottom at all when it comes to the corporate rates, but what we are interested in is being competitive.

Now when it comes to specific questions or conversations that we've had with the federal government in terms of the federal infrastructure bank, we have not had specific questions on that particular option from the federal government, nor can I stand here and explain to the member opposite why the federal government decided to go in one direction or another as far as allocating their funds, but we are excited to see all of the federal infrastructure dollars that are becoming available from the federal government and we believe that our departments have done a substantial job making sure that Yukon's case — our aging infrastructure, our need to not only just replace but to modernize — has been well-represented in Ottawa and we're using our relationships well in that regard to make sure that First Nation and municipality issues as well are getting to the federal table to have these conversations when it comes to federal infrastructure money coming down.

So whether it be from a federal infrastructure bank or whether it be from other pockets of money — waste water, you name it — we're going to do our best to allocate the funds necessary to get Yukon's fair share.

Ms. Hanson: I raise this question with respect to the infrastructure bank because at least two of the three areas that the Minister of Finance and the consortium that they put together to advise the government on creating this infrastructure bank, which is all private sector — two of those three are areas that could have implications for Yukon with green infrastructure. That's significant. We heard about this this afternoon. If we have to borrow at 10 to 12 percent — or if the Government of Canada is — it means that we are going to have diminished access to resources. Public transit — I don't think trade corridors are that high of a priority, although I stand to be corrected, so far for the Yukon, but green infrastructure and public transit are areas that we've heard from communities over and over again on — public transit and green infrastructure.

I guess my question to the Minister of Finance is: Will he instruct his officials then to have some comparative analysis done so that we can be prepared to make a bit of push-back? Should there be a direction that that's where it goes? We heard in the previous government that any infrastructure, had it been built, was going to have to be financed through P3 Canada. There's a significant body of evidence that says that not all P3s — public/private partnerships — are equal, and not all of them deliver what is expected. There is a whole series of assessments that need to be done. In this case with the infrastructure bank, the issue of cost is significant.

I'm hopeful the Minister of Finance can provide that assurance to this side of the House. I will leave it there.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I can't comment on whether or not the federal government's decision to use one option or the other — the infrastructure bank or whatever — is going to influence or affect the dollar values that will be downloaded on to the provinces and territories. As far as a rate analysis, we're always interested in making sure that we get the best bang for the buck, so we're always going to commit to making sure that the conversation is being had, whether it be at the annual Finance ministers' meetings or in our regular conversations. It's always going to be a large part of the analysis that my department does when it comes to working in partnership with Ottawa.

Mr. Hassard: I have a couple of questions for the Premier in general debate. First, just to clarify, I am curious if the Premier believes that the Juneau route for the fibre redundancy would provide redundancy to as many northerners as the Dempster route would?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Whether I know it for a fact? I don't know for a fact which one would provide more. I would assume that, because one route goes up through Dawson and other communities, it would probably provide more redundancy for other communities, but I would ask a question like that, which is pretty specific for general debate — asking my opinion as to how many people are going to be provided with redundancy, I don't have those numbers in front of me. The Department of Finance doesn't have those numbers in front of it.

For me to speculate on that, it's probably not the best place in general debate for that question, unless I'm misunderstanding the question from the member opposite. I think it would be better answered by the minister responsible.

Mr. Hassard: I wasn't looking for numbers; that wasn't where I was going with it. I was just curious as to your take on it. My larger question is: When you talk about the cost or when we look at the cost of fibre redundancy here in the Yukon, I'm curious how you calculate for the number of people who are going to get redundancy using one choice over the other.

My opinion, and probably the Minister of Economic Development's opinion as well, is that going up the Dempster obviously provides considerably more citizens with redundancy — and I say northerners, not just Yukoners, because it obviously helps other parts of the country as well.

My question is: When you're determining the cost of redundancy for Yukoners, or for northerners, how do you factor in how many people are going to be affected by the redundancy? Obviously it is important for all of the north to get that redundancy — not just Whitehorse, Watson Lake and Teslin.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will just say in general — and I will give my minister an opportunity to speak to this as well — when taking a look at the two different options, I think a lot has changed since the opposition was in government, as far as taller values. I think we have more evidence to support more pinpointed dollar values than was left with the previous government. I would also say in general that redundancy is one issue. Reliability, competitiveness, speed of service — those are not more important, but those are important as well. When you are taking a look at all these considerations together, then you make a decision based upon the facts that are provided to us.

If the minister would like to expand upon that, I will give him an opportunity to do so as well here in general debate.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Part of what we're trying to figure out through the process — and to be open on this one, that is exactly it. Probably the work that was undertaken previously and some of that work — while the member opposite was in Economic Development, there was a lot of good early work that was done but, as the Premier stated, there are some things that have changed.

The first thing that has changed is, when you look at a southern route, there's now a pipe — for lack of a better term — there is a pipe that goes to Skagway. I think when the previous government was looking at all the variables, there wasn't that infrastructure in place, so that exists right now.

Part of what we have been trying to do in analyses is exactly that. You can't make a decision on this project and leave out northerners — and it also affects the NWT. If you were looking south, how do you make a decision on this thing and not make sure that you still have the occupational health and safety pieces covered and all those other elements? It's not just about redundancy for that shortened period of time when the line gets broken by a backhoe in Fort St. John, but how do you take into consideration those other items?

I think what has been fair — ministers worked with me a lot — is when we look at this, we know that the microwave infrastructure that is in place that Northwestel has — although aging, it does give us that redundancy as backup for the northern piece. Part of those conversations is: Do we still have the complete redundancy? I'm sure there is somebody at Northwestel and there are probably others who could say, "You might have gotten it a little bit wrong", but what we have come to understand in our due diligence is you could go south, you have to re-loop, you have to make sure that you have agreements in place with a series of different organizations — four at least, I think — and you have to be able to make sure that you have the pipe that goes all the way from Skagway to Juneau to Seattle and then you have to loop back. I think you inevitably have to be in Edmonton. I can't remember.

I apologize — I don't have any notes on it here right now. It's fairly specific. To be fair — absolutely: If you are looking at a decision here, you have to make sure that you take into consideration what the impact is on northerners — all northerners and, as you stated, Yukoners. Those are things that you can quiz me on as we go through this, because we are looking at all those things.

Mr. Hassard: Just as a word of advice, I think that — when you speak about how we need to look at cost and speed as well, I think that was the mistake that the previous government made right off the bat too — trying to find something that covered everything. That, in my opinion, is the wrong approach because you need to break it down and do it one step at a time — otherwise you will never get there.

I am curious — whichever route the government chooses, I have heard that this government feels they should own the dark fibre, so I am curious. Does the Premier plan on doing the maintenance, all of the costs of that? Would that be done through the Yukon Development Corporation?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Just a comment on "I've heard". It sounds like we are getting into the American government system of leaders saying, "I was told something." To the member opposite, I'm just kidding.

I know that with the previous government and the Juneau route, that is exactly what would have happened — right? If the previous government went forward with the Juneau route, they would have had to create either a separate Crown corporation or get one of the current ones to take it over.

We are looking at all options, and we are having fantastic conversations when it comes to Northwestel — some really frank conversations. I think what is happening this time around is that we are putting more cards on the table, as far as variables — what is important. I totally agree with what the member opposite is saying as far as, if you look at a catchall of everything, you might not accomplish the goals. You do have to specify what is more important to Yukon businesses. Is it speed or redundancy? I am sure different businesses are going to have different answers to that question. I know for a fact that I have some constituents who are working in technologies — in the tech sector — in Dawson City who would say speed is more important to them than redundancy, which is interesting to me because I, as an individual in Dawson at my computer at home, would disagree.

I think a lot of people who aren't necessarily in the business sector in Dawson would disagree with that.

So you are right. You have to take a look at a full picture. It is not just about redundancy alone, it's about the best deal for Yukoners that we can make and making sure that the decisions we make today don't impede decisions at later dates as well. There is more to come on that. I do have to say that the conversations have been frank with Northwestel, and with the public servants. I think we are making some really good headway. I guess there will be more to come on that when we get down to line-by-line in Committee of the Whole.

I will say as well — not that we don't mind answering these questions — that there is no budgetary line in this

budget for this particular field of questioning, but we are happy to answer any other questions the member opposite has.

Mr. Hassard: I won't have any more questions on that. I was just curious and it was a good opportunity to be able to ask that. I know one last comment: I always spoke about fast, affordable and reliable and I will stand by that it doesn't matter how fast or affordable it is — if it isn't reliable, you don't have anything.

Moving on, Mr. Chair, on the weekend, the Minister of Community Services spoke at AYC about the list of community projects. He said at the AYC that the list being used would be that of the previous government — the list that was put together by the previous government. We also heard over the weekend that today there would be some announcements on those projects and when they would be moving forward — and it is. We do have it in the budget, so I'm sticking to the budget.

Can the Premier update us on whether there are any announcements upcoming or when they may be upcoming on those projects?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The list of the clean water and waste-water funds that we were originally given — we didn't deviate from that list. I think I said here in the Legislature — and I will check again — that a couple of the projects dropped off for — I would have to check to be sure, but I think it is regulatory reasons. I have seen the draft submission, which will be tabled here I'm hoping in the next day or two.

What I can do for the members opposite is I can go over that list at any time. It's just going through the process to make it a tabled return, but we have the list. We have our expectations of when each of them will get to the tendering phase, which I think was the pertinent issue you were raising through your questions, and I'm happy to share it with you shortly.

I even texted the department today saying: How long will it take to get through the Executive Council Office? How soon will we have it to table here? But I have the information ready for you.

Mr. Hassard: I will tell everyone just to be patient for a few more days — thank you.

Last week, the Leader of the Third Party asked a question regarding the roads between Ross River and Faro, and the Minister of Highways and Public Works did respond. In his response he said — and I quote: "I will tell the member opposite that I have instructed my officials to start the engineering work and pre-planning. Coming into this role, I have discovered how much preparation and work has to be done. You can't just send the BST trucks out to start laying down road surfaces."

Before the question, I would just like to say that the crew in Ross River always does a marvelous job of maintaining that particular stretch of road. But of course, without BST, as the weather deteriorates, so do the conditions of the road, being that it is a gravel road. Since the minister has indicated that he has instructed officials to begin the engineering, can the Premier tell us how much money will be spent on that particular stretch of road?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, as you can imagine, I wouldn't have that information at my fingertips. As far as the engineering, it is an interesting concept. The minister and I have talked a lot about a whole-of-government approach, or an evidence-based decision-making process, when it comes to which roads need to get done. We are going down that road and it's an interesting conversation we're having with our departments. It seems that there are certain areas that have had more engineering done than others — that would be a fair statement — and what we want to do is take a look historically.

I would ask that this question, as far as the specifics on that particular section and the engineering reports for that specific section — it is probably not a question for general debate. What I'll do is instruct my Minister of Highways and Public Works to have that answer ready for you when we get to his department or, if that's not sufficient, we can ask for the officials to come in today and let us know.

Mr. Hassard: I know the functional plan has been done, but it was interesting that the minister said what he did in Question Period. When we were at a briefing, the department said the functional plan was complete but they didn't have any — or it didn't sound as though they were moving forward with any engineering or projects in that particular area. It definitely piqued my interest when I heard the Minister of Highways and Public Works say that and then I didn't see anything in the budget pertaining to that. I just wanted to ask that question.

Another question I had is: What are the Premier's ideas, moving forward, with the legalization of marijuana? Will that be done through the Yukon Liquor Corporation? If so, do we have money in the budget for training of the staff if that's the route this government is looking at taking in terms of distribution of marijuana?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Back to the question on highways, a general question and answer — as far as transportation planning and engineering, we do have \$5,314,000 in that budget. For a general answer, that's what we have Yukon-wide, and then we'll get the minister to respond as far as the particular areas that are going to be taken into consideration this year — and also showcasing a plan moving forward for more of a whole-of-government approach or whole-of-Yukon approach when it comes to which communities get the chipsealing and which ones do not.

When it comes to the issue of cannabis, we're still in the early conversations with the federal ministers. We know that they have set some parameters, I guess, so we're still in preliminary conversations right now with all the departments here. Because there was not a lot of information known before the budget was prepared, and then these rules came out after that process, any conversations right now within the departments will be internalized and we'll be taking part in that.

Internally, the options are currently being prepared, but as far as any dollar values, you're not going to see any dollar values in this budget that pertain particularly to cannabis, and any departments that are going to be working on this bill will

internalize those costs for now. This begs the question of what supplementary budgets are for. As information comes from Ottawa and if there is a need for additional funding, that would be something that would appear in the supplementary budget.

Mr. Hassard: Would that be the same for monies for enforcement as well?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, if there were some additional costs that the RCMP brought forward because of whatever plan that we pick, then obviously that be a supplementary budget consideration as well.

Mr. Hassard: Can the Premier, as Minister of Finance, tell us, in fact, if lowering corporate taxes actually creates a net increase in government coffers due to increased payments in personal income taxes?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The answer would be yes, because of the dividend tax credits that are available.

Mr. Hassard: Does the Premier feel that it wouldn't be beneficial to continue to lower the corporate tax rates then?

Hon. Mr. Silver: This would be something where, at a certain point, these things don't work out. I talked to you before about the sweet spot. Sorry, Mr. Chair, I talked to this House about where we decided what that rate should be based on competitiveness — not based on a race to the bottom, but a competitive nature.

Again, there has to be a certain place where all of a sudden that just doesn't make as much sense. We believe that by being competitive with the other jurisdictions that surround us, we're at the best place for this to be the most beneficial for Yukon taxpayers and for our economy.

Mr. Hassard: I'm curious how the Premier feels about, or whether he has any concerns with, the — I will say "slowness" in the tendering of seasonally dependent contracts?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think what we have done is a good job of making sure that the special warrants got out so that these considerations would happen. In this year, our first year in the Legislative Assembly, we can do more. I believe that we can do more. We did make a commitment that we would get these contracts out earlier than the previous government did. We have a five-year mandate. We hope to get that accomplished this year, moving forward into the next budgetary process.

I would share the member opposite's concerns when it comes to local contracts, and I would say that we're going to try our best and I think we're going to make some good strides in making sure that the contracts get out earlier than the previous government did have them out. We committed to that in our campaign process.

It didn't happen in the first year and I'm sure that the member opposite can understand why, as far as all of the considerations we had to put into this budget, but it is a commitment that we're proud that we made, and we will stick to it and also to the five-year plan. To us, that is going to bring the certainty that we need as far as developing the industries for these corporations. To have a competitive field in every community would be advantageous to Yukoners. To make

sure that the competition is a local consideration in areas where they know, in the next five years, where the government is going to turn their focus as part as taxpayers' dollars — I think that this helps the industry to prepare and it also helps the competitive nature of those industries in all of the communities.

I think we need to do a better job in that capacity and we have committed to doing so. I know the members opposite wish we had those commitments out. They must love those commitments because they wanted us to get them out of the door right away. It would have been great to have everything ready this year, but what we did was the best we could do in the circumstances we were given. We got the special warrants out the door so these contracts could get out. We are turning a page to make sure we have a long-term plan on a five-year basis, but also every year getting those contracts out earlier.

Mr. Hassard: I guess we'll continue to agree to disagree on that. I am curious — when the Premier is back on his feet, if he can let us know how many of those seasonally dependent contracts are still in the hopper, waiting to move forward. Maybe that will come from the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Mr. 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

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, 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 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following written question was tabled May 15, 2017:

Written Question No. 14

Re: proposed highway improvements at the Carcross
Cut-off (Kent)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 15

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, May 16, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

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

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| Ted Adel | Copperbelt North |
| Paolo Gallina | Porter Creek Centre |
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Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
May 16, 2017 — 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 remembrance of Ray Magnuson

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great honour today that I stand to pay tribute to one of Yukon's transportation pioneers, Ray Magnuson.

Ray passed away this past December after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. Ray was born to parents Manne and Anna Magnuson on March 4, 1937 in Atlin, BC. He was the first child of Manne and Anna, and was followed a few years later by their second child, Ingrid. The times didn't allow Ray to pursue a formal academic education, but there were plenty of life's lessons to be had for a family carving out a living in the remote northern town.

Ray and Bobbie were married May 22, 1956 and wasted no time starting a family. This marriage that endured 60 years was born from a schoolyard romance. Ray and Bobbie had two boys, Robert and Patrick, when they left Atlin and a third, Eric, was born while they lived in Swift River. Their only girl, Sherry, the youngest, was born in Teslin.

Ray Magnuson's career started in the early 1960s when the wonder and excitement of the Yukon's transportation sector called his name. Beginning his career in Swift River as an equipment operator, he and his family would later travel through the territory while he carried out foreman positions in other communities such as Teslin and Haines Junction.

In 1972, when the highways were devolved to the Yukon government, Ray began to look at options for improvements for Yukon highways throughout the territory. In reviewing the costs associated with maintaining the gravel roads, Ray believed there were cost-savings to be found, and he would soon prove it. The harsh weather conditions in the Yukon causes the gravel highways to deteriorate very quickly. This was among the biggest challenges for highway maintenance at the time. Ray believed that there had to be a better way. His research concluded that a possible solution was the use of bituminous surface treatment — BST, as we know it today — a treatment applied on top gravel surfaces that would harden and become a more robust surface similar to that of pavement. Used with great success in the south, it was untested in the Yukon climate. While there was a large amount of scepticism — and you can believe that — from his peers, Ray felt passionate that this was a good solution and led the pilot in 1973 anyway.

The first test section occurred on the strip of Alaska Highway near Teslin. After a series of Yukon-specific tests, it was deemed a viable solution for the Yukon gravel highways. Ray was relentless in proving to his peers that this was the right choice for Yukon. Sticking to his guns, BST was implemented on Yukon highways throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Many of us do not remember travelling along gravel roads, dodging the flying rocks and slowly vibrating through the dust. It is visionaries like Ray whom we can thank for the innovative Yukon-tailored solutions to our Yukon highways. BST is still used on the vast majority of our highways. It also remains the cheapest option for our climate and our conditions.

In 1981, Ray began a position as a director of highway maintenance with the Yukon government, a position he held until his retirement in 1990. During his tenure, he led a number of various projects, such as implementation of the new VHF radio system and improving the Yukon's transportation maintenance fleet to accommodate the Yukon's growing transportation system and, of course, our growing population. He was also responsible for adding and constructing roads, including the winter road to Old Crow. During his tenure, he expanded Yukon highways by 500 kilometres.

In 1990, Ray received the BC and Yukon National Transportation Award of Excellence for his lifetime contribution to transportation in the Yukon. In 2005, Ray was inducted into the Yukon Transportation Hall of Fame for his contributions to the Yukon highway system. Improvements to our highways have affected the lives of everyone throughout the territory. The highway is not only an important piece of our history, but it continues to serve as a portal for our economic prosperity.

While working on this tribute, I thought I would talk to a few people who have worked with him in the past. I had the great pleasure and the opportunity to chat with George Nagano, who I believe is working his last year with the Department of Highways and Public Works, he told me, at the tender age of 84. He worked with Ray back in the years on the Dempster Highway. He said you knew Ray was in the area when you saw his station wagon coming down the highway. Sometimes it might have summer fuel in it and it might need to get warmed up to get going again. Always being open to new ideas, listening to the different camps and different areas — like when an employee once asked if they could take training for air brakes — that was something Ray supported. George reminded me of something we had all heard at Ray's funeral — something about dynamite, beavers and a culvert being blown up, but I don't really want to get into much more about what Ray had said, or what George had said, Mr. Speaker.

I chatted with Mike Johnson and Mike is in the gallery here today — a previous deputy minister of Highways and Public Works. He told me that when he arrived in the territory to work for a construction company, he had learned that the contractors had respect for Ray. He was seen as a senior YTG person and wasn't regarded as a bureaucrat — more like a

John Wayne figure. If you were honest and fair with him, he was with you. In those days, if you worked for highways and did a day's work, he might ask you if you had any brothers or sisters. I think now we call that the Public Service Commission.

When I mentioned to my dad, Ed Istchenko, who is also in the gallery today, that I was doing a tribute to Ray, he said, "Ray sure was a fair man. He was the one who helped me transfer from Mule Creek to Haines Junction." That was where my mom and us kids were. I do remember missing my dad — being gone all the time — and I was sure glad when I started seeing him home every night.

Improvements to our highways have affected the lives of everyone throughout the territory. The highway is not only an important piece of our history but continues to serve as a portal, like I said earlier, for our economic prosperity.

I'm honoured today to stand and pay tribute to Ray and acknowledge his tireless contributions to the Yukon and our highway system.

I would like to welcome in the gallery today Ray's wife of 60 years, Roberta Magnuson, his children Robert and Sandy Magnuson, Sherry, grandchildren Jennifer, Melanie, Bradley, Cory, Jenny, Staci and Savannah. I think my mom and dad are here, and Michael Johnson is here — so please welcome them to the gallery.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today on behalf of the government and the Third Party to pay tribute to Raymond Magnuson, a long-time Yukoner who made his mark on our transportation system.

Ray was born in Atlin in 1937. He grew up on placer mining creeks in and around Atlin and also worked at his family's sawmill. Once he started driving, he hauled railway ties from the mill to Carcross for use on the White Pass railroad.

After meeting his wife Roberta, or Bobbie, in Atlin, they moved to Swift River, where Ray started work in 1960 as a heavy-equipment operator for the Department of National Defence. That was the beginning of a long and innovative career working on the Yukon's highway system.

In 1964, when the Alaska Highway was transferred to the Department of Public Works, Ray followed suit, becoming a road foreman in Teslin and later in Haines Junction. In 1972, he moved to Whitehorse to become the eastern area superintendent of highways for the Yukon government.

Ray was a pioneer, Mr. Speaker. The next year, in 1973, faced with the high cost of maintaining Yukon's then-gravel roads and with the even higher cost of paving them with asphalt, Ray started testing the use of bituminous surface treatment. BST is cheap compared to asphalt and relatively easy to apply, but it needs to be reapplied on a regular basis, as we have all learned. It was used widely and effectively down south at the time, but was thought to be a non-starter in the north on account of issues related to permafrost. Ray didn't think so. He wasn't convinced. In 1973, he applied BST to a four-mile stretch near Teslin. Over the next couple of

years, he extended BST north of Teslin and south through Watson Lake, and he was impressed with the results. BST was working for the first time in the north, and the cost-savings compared to asphalt were significant.

These successful tests helped Ray to convince his superiors that the treatment could be applied in the north and would be an effective way to maintain Yukon highways. Now, more than 40 years later, more than 40 percent of the Yukon's roads are covered with BST, and as the guy responsible for those roads, I am very grateful for his work. It is a lot cheaper for us to maintain them because of that.

Ray became the Yukon government's director of highway maintenance in 1981 and remained in the position until he retired in 1990. That year, Ray received the BC and Yukon National Transportation Award of Excellence for his lifetime contribution to the transportation in the Yukon. His transportation legacy was recognized again in 2005 when Ray was inducted into the Yukon Transportation Hall of Fame as a transportation person of the year.

In addition to his work modernizing Yukon's transportation network, Ray was a passionate and engaged member of every community he lived in, including Marsh Lake, a place he called home for many years. Ray was a dedicated member of the Yukon Order of Pioneers for more than 25 years and served as the president of the Whitehorse Lodge No. 2 in 1979.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon is lucky to have wooed Raymond Magnuson from Atlin, as Yukoners have benefited considerably from his work to improve the quality and safety of Yukon roads and the strong community connections he fostered over his lifetime. Ray and Bobbie's family, their children and their grandchildren, have dedicated their lives to the public service. That is a true legacy, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I would like to welcome Roberta Magnuson, Ray's wife of 60 years, and their children and grandchildren to the House, including one of my constituents, Melanie Magnuson.

Applause

In recognition of National Police Week

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the Yukon government and the Third Party to recognize Canada's National Police Week, occurring this year from May 14 to 20. National Police Week began in Canada in 1970 as a way to connect with communities and increase awareness about the services that police officers provide. This week is an ideal time to highlight the vital role of the RCMP and that our territorial police service plays in the safety and security of Yukoners and Canadians at large, and at home and abroad.

Yesterday's report was issued by the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP. That report includes 10 recommendations that will contribute to improvements to the force. As many of you know, Yukon's 20-year agreement with Canada for the use of the RCMP is in place until 2032. Indeed, at the signing of the 2012 agreement, we reaffirmed that the RCMP is our police service of choice. We are

well-served by the RCMP in all of our communities. As a matter of fact, recent Statistics Canada figures show that the Yukon is bucking a national trend — not the first time. While other parts of the country have seen the number of police per citizen decline, the ratio of police strength increased in the Yukon in 2016. This is owing to a four-year resource plan for the RCMP and significant investments made in front-line and specialized police services over the last decade.

The Department of Justice has also sought to strengthen reporting to the police about criminal activity and has provided start-up funding and ongoing support to Yukon Community Crime Stoppers Association and program. Our department's work with the RCMP, First Nations, and the Yukon Police Council continues to ensure that the values, culture and history of Yukon are reflected in the priorities of the RCMP. The Yukon Police Council is unique in Canada in ensuring that the voices of our citizens are heard and taken into account in setting policing priorities.

After receiving the recommendations from the Yukon Police Council and advice from the Department of Justice, I recently confirmed the following Yukon policing priorities for 2017-18 with commanding officer Scott Sheppard of the RCMP. They are: to continue enhancing prevention, investigation and enforcement activities related to violence against women; connecting and supporting children and youth, including those at risk; proactively responding to emerging public safety issues and trends in criminal activity; fostering stronger relationships with communities and First Nations; improving responses to vulnerable populations; and improving traffic safety and compliance with the safe-driving measures.

A strong police presence in all of our communities helps the Department of Justice fulfill one of its essential mandates and to support community safety. We work closely with the RCMP to ensure that the administration of justice is well served in all Yukon communities and localities.

The RCMP is a vital partner in our activities. Every year we celebrate the contributions of Yukoners to community safety through the Community Safety Awards. The RCMP, first responders, community programs and individual citizens are recognized for their dedication. This year is no exception. The awards are scheduled for tomorrow night, and while I will not spoil the surprise by revealing any names, I can tell you that among the recipients being honoured are four RCMP representatives. As part of the community safety awards event, 11 RCMP members will receive RIDE awards, which stands for Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere. These awards are presented by Mothers Against Drunk Driving to recognize efforts to combat impaired driving.

The RCMP is also a valued member of the department's Community Safety Committee where innovative models of supporting community safety have been explored and will be implemented in the future.

Complementing and partnering with the RCMP since 2006, the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* has provided a means to respond to Yukoners' concerns about illegal activities that make their communities and

neighbourhoods unsafe. The safer communities and neighbourhoods unit — also known as SCAN for short — investigates complaints about habitual illegal activities. They have had a significant effect on disrupting criminal activities. Since the legislation has passed, 800 complaints have been received and dealt with through various means. From January 2015 to December 2016, the SCAN unit received and investigated 123 complaints of illegal activity and took action on 24 of them. A full 98 percent of the complaints involved illegal drug trafficking. This unit continues to work with community associations, housing agencies and First Nation governments to make communities safer. To date, SCAN has signed protocols with five First Nations to investigate activities on their land and enforce evictions, if need be — again, a leader in Canada.

The RCMP continues to build strong relationships with First Nations, stakeholder groups, such the women's coalition and non-governmental organizations. I have a few examples of those. Last September, Sergeant Lockwood, the detachment commander from Watson Lake, worked closely with the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society and the Liard First Nation so that RCMP members could attend a three-day Kaska culture camp. While there, they learned traditional medicine, values and culture and went fishing, hunting and berry-picking. This was a great chance for RCMP members to meet local elders and form lasting relationships.

For the last two years, Haines Junction RCMP members have attended the muskrat camp with Kluane First Nation. This is a camp that helps KFN youth learn about gathering food and traditional practices from their elders.

In another example of the RCMP supporting community relationships and youth, two female First Nation youth from the territory attended the RCMP training academy at Depot in Saskatchewan for the indigenous youth leadership week.

In further community collaborations, First Nations and local community leaders have been involved closely in the hiring process for detachment commanders, including the new commanding officer of the Yukon RCMP, Chief Superintendent Scott Sheppard.

The RCMP's four-member specialized response unit, known as the SRU, continues to investigate cases of sexualized assault, domestic violence and, in some cases, elder abuse. The SRU also provides feedback, advice and support to any assigned RCMP investigator who may be investigating those kinds of cases to ensure that investigations are consistently carried out to the highest standard.

Three months ago, the RCMP took part in Operation Northern Spotlight. Officers from the Whitehorse detachment and the Toronto Police Service worked together to give victims of the local sex trade and vulnerable persons a safe way out of exploitation. Whitehorse women's groups worked with the local RCMP on a safety protocol, entitled "Together for Safety". It outlines how the RCMP will work together with women's groups and citizens to foster a community that is safe for all women. Together for Safety partners include Les EssentiElles, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle and many others. All

partners and the RCMP from Whitehorse share a common goal: to improve response services to women in the Yukon.

A member of the Whitehorse detachment travelled to Vimy Ridge last month, as part of the 32-person national troupe honouring the 100th anniversary of the pivotal World War I battle. Many others have been honoured with long service awards with the territorial service insignia saluting at least five years of service to Canada's northern territories.

To commemorate Police Week, the Whitehorse RCMP is inviting all Yukoners to their annual police and community barbecue on May 19, this Friday, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in front of the Whitehorse detachment on Fourth Avenue.

On May 23, at 2:00 p.m., many will be gathering to celebrate the re-dedication of the RCMP cemetery in Dawson City. This will be followed by a church service and a large community barbecue for Dawson and the surrounding area. All those in the Klondike area are cordially invited and encouraged to attend. We unfortunately will be here and we can't go and celebrate that re-dedication.

Almost lastly, later this summer, the famous RCMP Musical Ride will be here in Whitehorse on August 12 and 13 as part of the celebrations for Canada's 150th birthday.

I would like to end by highlighting the exemplary service of one of the RCMP's senior members who will be leaving Whitehorse very soon. Inspector Archie Thompson, who could not be here today, is the officer in charge of the Whitehorse detachment. He has been promoted to superintendent and is moving to the east coast, where he will be based in Clarenville, Newfoundland and Labrador as the district operations officer for the east district. On behalf of the Government of Yukon and the Department of Justice, I have thanked him and will do so personally for his service to Yukoners while he has been here in our communities. He has built strong relationships and built a lasting legacy for the work and the support of his work for community safety here in the territory. We will send him our best wishes, of course.

I would also like to, in closing, salute all the other members of the Yukon RCMP during National Police Week for their continued dedication and commitment to our territory and its citizens.

Along with my colleagues here in the House, I will ask you to join me in welcoming today superintendent Brian Jones, the officer in charge of Criminal Operations for M Division; Lesley McCullough, the deputy minister for the Department of Justice, Allan Lucier, the assistant deputy minister in charge of Community Justice and Public Safety for the Department of Justice, and Jeff Ford, the director of Public Safety and Investigations with the Department of Justice. Thank you for being here.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Police Week across Canada and in the Yukon.

National Police Week, which takes place this year between May 15 and 21, is a time to reflect on the dedication of police officers to the safety of our communities in the

Yukon and across the country. It's also a time to honour police officers for their contributions to public safety and security and to recognize the many things the members of the police force do across the Yukon, including in their volunteer time.

National Police Week, through community events, reinforces the partnership between the police and the public. Members of RCMP detachments across the Yukon have contributed a strong presence to our communities. In the Yukon, policing efforts extend to areas including: targeting violence against women; responding to trends in criminal activities; response to vulnerable populations; supporting at-risk children and youth; fostering relationships with First Nations as well as relationships with communities; and traffic safety and compliance.

It's important to note that community safety is a shared responsibility of the police and the public. With the reinstatement of Crime Stoppers to Yukon, we hope that this will provide another avenue for people to come forward with knowledge of property crimes and criminal activity happening in their communities or among their acquaintances.

Another notable development was the creation of the Community Safety Committee tasked with engaging service providers in a working-level dialogue on policing and public safety issues.

The recent opening of the new 911 dispatch centre has helped expand the 911 service across the territory. I would like to acknowledge the work of not only all who contributed to that, but the RCMP members and the RCMP auxiliary police constables who provide their volunteer service to assist the RCMP in crime prevention initiatives and community events across the territory and provide an important addition to policing and safety in the Yukon.

I would also like to acknowledge the victim assistance volunteers for their work and as well the work of the Yukoners who serve on the Yukon Police Council for their work in helping develop policing priorities for the territory and allowing community input on policing services. It's a pleasure, on behalf of the Official Opposition, to recognize the work of the RCMP and all its members and their dedication to keeping the Yukon and our communities safe.

I want to acknowledge the volunteer work of individual members across the territory in participating in community events, engaging with the public in a positive manner to educate and provide support to community-based initiatives. It has often been said by many communities that the existence of a community hockey program for youth is often in large part dependent on the volunteer efforts of RCMP constables in communities.

RCMP members also provide alcohol and substance abuse education workshops for students, run group sports in our communities and integrate themselves into all parts of Yukon society by building strong relationships.

Again, thank you to each and every one of our Yukon RCMP members for their service to the Yukon. I would just like to note in closing that in fact the existence of the territory with its boundaries and the existence of the Canadian

boundary with the United States is in large part due to the work of the predecessor to the RCMP, the North-West Mounted Police, through the work of Inspector Sam Steele and the detachment based in the territory at a time when the border between Canada and the United States was in dispute. Their work is recognized and credited with establishing border posts that eventually became the basis for our border between Canada and the United States. So they deserve that recognition.

In closing, I would just like to join the minister in welcoming superintendent Brian Jones, acting deputy minister Lesley McCullough, assistant deputy minister Allan Lucier and director Jeff Ford to the gallery. It was a pleasure working with you during my time as Minister of Justice, and I know that you're continuing to work hard on behalf of the people throughout the territory.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors?
Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling a legislative return in response to a question from the Official Opposition House Leader from May 2 regarding the status of clean water and waste-water infrastructure projects.

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

Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions?
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 Government of Canada to introduce regular, independent, mandatory testing for banned pesticides and other harmful chemicals in medical marijuana and to make the results available to the public.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to contract with an independent air-quality expert to test Closeleigh Manor according to the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers standards for indoor air quality with regard to:

- (1) air particulate accumulations;
- (2) mould;
- (3) adequate ventilation rates; and
- (4) volatile organic compounds.

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: Dawson City Airport

Mr. Hassard: Yesterday, we learned of yet another campaign promise that the Liberals want to change now that they're in government. The Minister of Highways and Public Works said there isn't enough information at this point to make a decision about whether they will pave the Dawson runway. He, in fact, called the Liberal promise "off the cuff".

During the election, the Liberals were so sure about this that they made it a signature commitment to their tourism platform. As a matter of fact, it's right there on page 5. As much as they would like to point the finger on this one, they wrote their platform and now they are responsible for delivering on it.

So I will give the minister one more chance. Can he confirm that the Liberal government is, in fact, going to keep their commitment to pave the Dawson runway?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank goodness this question was asked today. I was worried they weren't going to take their opportunity. Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government remains firm on its commitment to pave the Dawson City runway.

At my request, departmental officials are hard at work, looking at the options available to complete this project. Why? Well, because I learned upon coming into this job that the groundwork had not been done — not done. That was frankly a surprise to me, but that was the inheritance — a financial deficit and a groundwork deficit.

So here we are, doing the hard work of government to try to make sure we get this job finished. Right now, departmental officials are doing that hard work. They are going to come to me with a lot of options and a lot of information. When I have compiled all that information — which I had hoped had been done before but hadn't — then I will consult with my colleagues on the government benches and we will make a decision.

Mr. Hassard: That is an interesting answer from the Minister of Highways and Public Works, considering that the business case analysis was done and the functional plan was underway. Maybe the minister will want to rethink his answer on that one.

Mr. Speaker, over the past few years during his time in opposition, this was a pet issue of the Premier's. He asked the government about it numerous times and was critical that the government would not act more quickly. He seems to have changed his mind. There is no money in the budget for this project and there's no money in next year's forecast either.

Let me quote a previous question from the Premier himself on this topic in the Legislative Assembly. In 2015, he asked — and I quote: "Why is paving the Dawson Airport not a priority for this government?"

Mr. Speaker, my question is: Why is paving the Dawson Airport not a priority for this government?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I just answered that question, and I said that paving this runway is a priority for this government. I don't know where the member opposite is getting his questions, but I answered that before. This government is committed — I will say it again — it remains firm on its

commitment to pave the Dawson City runway, and so I think it doesn't get any clearer than that. I don't understand why he is saying there is no money in the budget for this project. There is money in the budget. There is a quarter-million dollars this year to complete the work needed to make an evidence-based decision on this project. Evidence-based decisions, as we all know, result in long-term success for capital projects, and through this process, this Liberal government will continue the work necessary to pave the Dawson City runway.

There are also hundreds of thousands of dollars in the budget this year to resurface the runway because, as the members opposite know, that resurfacing has to be done to make sure the runway is usable, and this government wants to make sure that our community aerodromes — those scattered across this great territory — continue to feed the economic prosperity of the Yukon.

Mr. Hassard: Clearly the minister got a new briefing note today, because that sure isn't what he was saying yesterday.

A quick read of Hansard over the past few years will show you that these are not new questions. The Premier knew that there was work to be done when he put this promise in his platform. It makes us wonder now: Is he backing away from his promise?

We hear two conflicting answers from the minister.

For my next question, I would once again like to quote from a previous question that the Premier himself asked about this specific topic right here in this Legislature — and I quote: "... why did the government make the promise to pave in the first place if it had no intention of following through with it?"

Let me ask the Premier today: Why did the government make the promise to pave it in the first place if they had no intention of following through with it?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. It wasn't just one time in the Legislative Assembly that I did get to my feet and talk about getting this project off the ground for the economy's sake — not only for tourism, but also for the mining sector.

I was at Roundup when the previous premier announced great news: "We're going to pave the runway. Not in our mandate but after the election."

You would assume that, after making a statement like that, the due diligence would have been done. When we formed government, one of the first files I inquired about was this one. The one that I wanted to make sure was out the door as soon as possible was this one. It turns out the homework wasn't done. It turns out that Nav Canada — that's the biggest piece right there. We're still at the 75-percent mark as far as that goes and we're waiting to hear from Nav Canada.

Again, nobody wants this done more than I do. Nobody wants this done more than the town of Dawson City, which is in the Klondike riding that I represent. But again, when this side of the government came into power, we found out that the due diligence wasn't there. Once bitten, twice shy with promises in Dawson. We're still waiting for the rec centre though that was promised by this previous government, and I

remember bringing up those questions year after year and hearing "Rome wasn't built in a day — wait until the next budget, wait until the next budget." I will guarantee you that we're going to do this with the evidence that we need to make sure that we are moving forward as fast as possible with this commitment, and I still stand here today completely committed to paving the runway in Dawson.

Question re: Election commitments

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked a straightforward question about a commitment in the Liberal platform but I received no clear answer. In their platform, the Liberals promised to — and I quote: examine "the feasibility of connecting to the British Columbia or Alaska grid".

Yesterday, the minister was dismissive and said it's not a priority. Well, it was the Liberals who decided this project was a priority when they put it in their platform. Now it seems they're changing their minds.

The question for the minister is simple: Is this going to be another broken Liberal promise?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you to the Member for Kluane for giving me an opportunity to go back to this one.

Certainly, yesterday, the conversation was about, as I remember it — have you looked at this project? Have you looked at the connectivity between Whitehorse into Skagway? Also, have you looked at the connectivity overall with the grid?

As we look at that, certainly, what I've been able to do is take a look at a series of projects that are on our list. Some of those projects are a priority — meaning right now with this budget, what has been handed-off to me, what I can move out the door in the short term. As I stated, there is \$4.1 million that has been completed on the Stewart-Keno. I think that the members opposite felt it was a priority — maybe they didn't move it ahead, but I think we all feel that it's a big priority to work on when I talk about transmission. There is still the opportunity on what's going to happen with Moon Lake. That's a different discussion. How does that play into the connectivity off the Skagway grid connectivity?

Also, over and above that, does it still make sense? Part of that whole justification was fuelling or selling energy as well in Skagway, and do we have enough from that particular project?

There's still more work to be done. Are we going to look at connectivity to Skagway? Absolutely. Do we look at a BC grid connect? Absolutely. But at this particular time, I have to figure out — and I think we'll talk about it even more this week.

It is going to be a fun week to discuss all the things that are happening. We have to look at what is happening with Yukon Development Corporation, where we are going with the IRP — the resource plan. Those are the first things to get done.

Mr. Istchenko: There are Yukoners who voted for the Liberals because they believed that they would keep their promises. They promised to do a feasibility study of connecting to the BC/Alaska grid. There are two ways they

can do this, Mr. Speaker. Either they can commission a study and pay for it themselves or they can direct the Energy Corporation to do it. In one case, the taxpayers pay to keep the Liberal promise and in the other, the ratepayers pay.

My question is simple for the minister. If he plans on keeping his promise, someone will have to pay for this study. Who will it be?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'm going to continue to be polite to visitors in the gallery. You know what? First of all, when we look at where this is going, there is a series of things within the mandate and there is more than five or six months to get it done. I think everybody would understand that — really focusing on the Stewart to Keno line, number one — understanding how we're going to deal with the IRP, which are three different solutions of how we're going to build out.

I know within our first plan, the Member for Lake Laberge said that there was a feeling that there was not support even for the first plan because of some of the effects on constituents, so that is going to be a challenge. We also have to figure out how we're going to pay for the Stewart-Keno line, which was not done. There was infrastructure money in place, but it was never identified. The Management Board submission must not have gone through the process. These are key things.

The mining sector is coming and saying that we need to make sure that we have power for some of the projects, like Alexco and Victoria Gold. The members opposite stood in front of me and said, "This is the Yukon's next gold mine." So I ask you, do you want me to spend my time and money from our corporations right now focused on a grid connect to Skagway and take away from where our resources should be going for Yukon's next gold mine? You tell me, because we can go through the questions and play a game about "you made a promise". I have four years to fulfill my mandate. I will get them done, but right now I think we all know where the priorities are.

Mr. Istchenko: Yesterday I asked the minister about the Liberal platform commitment to launch: "... pilot projects in renewable energy storage (e.g. liquid hydrogen)." Launching a liquid hydrogen pilot project in the Yukon was a specific commitment made by the Liberals. I didn't get an answer yesterday, but I hope I will today.

Can the minister tell us what his plans are to fulfill his commitment?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Little bit out of line for the first two questions, but I think we can continue to move on it.

First and foremost the question was asked of me by the same Member for Kluane — what's the plan with Yukon Development Corporation? Are we going to look at where the mandate is going to go? So we know right now, as we go through the budget, there is \$1.5 million that has been allotted this year. The Yukon Development Corporation board is in a position right now with building a governance structure to look at renewable projects. Some of the renewable projects could be wind energy in communities that are in his riding; solar, which would be in Old Crow; also, we have geothermal

requests right now to do early drilling in Watson Lake and Ross River; we have Teslin looking at biomass.

There are a series of things within storage — to be clear on that one, there are different types of renewable storage. We have storage in the Southern Lakes, which are ongoing conversations that are going quite well. There are some people in the Southern Lakes area that want to have conversations that are community groups and we have committed to that and with the Minister of Community Services. Then we are also looking at Mayo and those conversations. Using storage in that particular context — yes, the commitment to looking at battery in the IRP is identified.

When we look at the time capacity of the storage and the cost, it is big, but it is certainly our first option as we look forward. That is part of where we are moving forward, as well as looking at a series of other items that are available to us as we look at creating energy.

Question re: Social assistance rates

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Poverty continues to be a reality for many individuals and families in the Yukon. It has been five years since the government of the day reviewed the social assistance rates. Along with the increase came a commitment to adjust some of the social assistance rates to inflation. Yet, year after year the Whitehorse Food Bank sees an ever-increasing number of clients because social assistance isn't enough to live on. Can the minister tell this House what the social assistance rate increase was for this year?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I'm not able to respond to that direct question about the costs. I can get that, certainly, and bring that back to the member opposite.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that commitment. Any person who has been to the grocery store lately and bought food for themselves or their family knows that the price of healthy food is increasing at an alarming rate. People relying on social assistance, whether in Whitehorse or the communities, are seeing higher costs and less money to cover all of their food expenses. These high costs combined with unchecked rent increases force many Yukoners to choose between putting healthy food on their table, buying school supplies for their children or getting the medication that they need — a choice no one should have to make. Government needs to stop managing poverty and start eliminating poverty. When does the minister intend to review the social assistance rates for Yukon families and individuals?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I can say right now is that the Department of Health and Social Services is looking at the whole of their services — all of the services that we are providing — to ensure that we are not trying to address one specific issue and resolve one specific issue. We have a crisis in some communities and we are trying to balance our budgets, balance our programs and rightfully address the pressures and the needs of Yukoners. I do appreciate the question and appreciate that there are some major concerns. We will definitely take that under advisement as we look at

the department's strategic alignment with its funding, its sources and its program delivery to all of Yukon.

Ms. White: In 2012, the previous government released its much-touted *Yukon Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy*. This strategy was the accumulation of several years of research and collaboration with over 25 community NGOs. The vision was stated as being — and I quote: “A Yukon where social exclusion and poverty are eliminated...” Today the document is not even available on the Health and Social Services website. What happened to this report? Has this current government scrapped the *Yukon Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy*? How will this government take action to make the vision of a Yukon without poverty a reality?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am not going to speak to historical documents that I am not familiar with. What I will speak to is the fact that we are looking at a homelessness strategy. We have a housing action strategy. We have collaboration between the Yukon Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services department staff — senior deputy ministers — looking at coming up with a strategy to look at a Housing First model. We are looking at partnership arrangements, and we are, in that process, looking at addressing the very pressures that we are seeing in our society.

That's looking at social inclusion. We're looking at transparency, and we're looking at opportunities to ensure that the resources we have best align with the needs of Yukoners and align with those who may not have direct access or limitations in their lives. We want to ensure that every Yukoner is successful and has opportunities to be contributors to society. It's really important that we take all of the programs we have, put the efforts behind each individual in our communities and give them a home, give them services that they require and programs that they —

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Dawson City daycare

Ms. McLeod: The very first platform commitment that the Premier ever made came well before the 2016 election. In this Legislature, the now-Premier promised to pay for a new building to house the Little Blue Daycare in Dawson City. The Liberal government has had a hard time living up to the promises it has made but this one was made directly by the Premier himself for his own riding, so surely this is one that is at the top of his list.

On December 15, 2015 he asked — and I quote: “Will there be \$1 million in there...” — the budget — “... to build a new home for the Dawson daycare — yes or no?”

The Premier is now in a position to answer his own question. Has he allocated \$1 million to build a new daycare in his own community?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The simple answer is no, that \$1 million is not in this current budget, but what we are doing is champing at the bit to get up to Dawson and to talk to the partners in Dawson. We're left with a situation from the previous government with different options on the table, to be fair. Those options include what's going to happen to the

McDonald Lodge. It also includes other options for social housing and also options for the prenatal society — things that weren't taken care of by the previous government. What we're going to do is we're going to work under the platform commitment that all communities matter. We're going to sit down directly after the Sitting of this Legislative Assembly with the community of Dawson and make sure that we prioritize who goes where. It's not a matter of “if”; it's just “when” and also “how” these things come together.

There are lots of considerations — from the palaeontology centre, which was, I believe, the commitment of the Yukon Party to put that where the McDonald Lodge is. We think that some of these commitments didn't actually have the community's input behind it as a whole and we want to go back to the drawing board and take a look at all of those commitments, prioritize from the municipality's point of view, the First Nation's point of view — but also the prenatal society, the Little Blue Daycare and social housing — and take a look at all of the options, involving also the Klondike Development Organization for the statistical analysis needed.

Ms. McLeod: I heard a “no” and then I heard a “yes” and then I heard a “maybe” so I'm not quite sure where the answer is there.

Mr. Speaker, this was the first commitment that the now-Premier ever made to Yukoners. He stood in this House on the 15th and said that a Liberal government would fund this facility. He promised \$1 million to build a new home for the Dawson daycare.

Is this a promise that he intends to keep?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We're seeing a theme with the Yukon Party. We answer the question and they make it sound like we haven't answered the question. I believe one of the original commitments from the Yukon Party in the 2011 election was to build a brand new rec centre in Dawson City and they didn't do that, and I believe that would be around \$60 million.

But I digress. The answer is no, that \$1 million is not in this current budget. It's not. Are we going to do it? Yes, we are. We made a commitment to it and we stand by that commitment. But again, we also stood by that commitment of evidence-based decision-making and so we want to make sure that the decisions we make moving forward involve the community in these capacities and we can't wait to have that conversation with Little Blue Daycare.

I want to thank the folks who work in, I believe, Yukon's last remaining not-for-profit daycare. I'm not sure if the Watson Lake one is still going. I heard that they were having troubles there but I could be corrected on that.

But again, it's definitely not the rule to have a non-profit running these agencies. Sometimes they stand outside. Sometimes they don't get the necessary funding they need. Also, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has an amazing hiring policy with their daycare, so it's really hard to maintain the quality comparisons when you take a look at a not-for-profit agency compared to a government one.

We're going to work with the communities to make sure that we have some training provided as well to make sure that

we keep hold of the Little Blue Daycare to keep on providing professional services that they do provide for our community.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you to the member for that response.

Mr. Speaker, daycares in communities throughout the Yukon took notice of the commitment that the Premier made with regard to the daycare in Dawson City and he was very clear. He said that the current space was too old and was unsafe for children in his community.

He said that a Liberal government would provide funding — \$1 million was the number he suggested — to help provide what he called “a new, safe building for the Little Blue Daycare to occupy”.

There are many daycares throughout Yukon communities that would appreciate the Yukon government providing \$1 million for a new daycare building. My question is simple: Is his offer to fund the construction of new daycare buildings open to all communities or only his?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe I answered the question as far as the Little Blue Daycare in Dawson. I think that when it comes to rec centres, when it comes to daycares, when it comes to mental health services and when it comes to the gamut of services offered by this government, we will take a whole-of-government approach to these commitments. We will take a look at the evidence and we will move forward, based upon an open and transparent process that uses evidence to make our decisions.

Question re: Mining within municipal boundaries

Mr. Kent: On the eve of the Dawson City International Gold Show, I have some mining-related questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Mr. Speaker, in December, after the Yukon government rejected a proposal for a placer miner to work his claims near the Dome Road, the minister made a number of commitments in the local media. One of those — and I'll quote from the media report — the minister said: “I want to see this proponent have the opportunity to access the gold that's part of his claims”.

Can the minister update the House on where those discussions are at and when he will be in a position to honour his commitment to this placer miner?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you for that question. I think we'll probably have lots of questions related to placer mining this week and I'm happy to answer them.

Certainly, early on this mandate — the first couple of days, of course — we were dealing with the Slinky mine. We were at a point where there was certainly some conflict between the municipality residents, First Nation user groups and the owner of the claims. The commitment we made at that time — the commitment the member opposite is speaking to — was to bring in someone who was trusted by all parties — KPMA, the municipality, the First Nation — to be able to facilitate conversations.

We did reach out to an individual who was a former employee of Energy, Mines and Resources. That work is now being undertaken. I had a discussion — I haven't spoken with

the owner of the claims. I did speak with the Mayor of Dawson City last week. I have a meeting with him on Saturday during the gold show. We continue the conversations with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. What is the time frame on those discussions to get to an answer on Slinky 2? I wouldn't say that I could nail it to 30 days or 60 days. I want to make sure that we have the right amount of time to come up with a solution versus boxing it in on 60 days and then getting to a point where there is still a conflict. I think the key to this is that it has been a challenging file for others who have handled it — for the people in the community — and so we are trying to get to the right answer. I can come back with some other notes on the timeline.

Mr. Kent: Mining within municipal boundaries is an issue that had come up a number of times during my tenure as the Energy, Mines and Resources minister and of course has come up since this new minister has assumed the portfolio. In fact, in that same media report, he said that he did recognize the larger issue that also needed to be addressed, and that is the question of mining within municipal boundaries. He said that the government will meet in the new year — again this was a December report. He said that the government would meet in the new year with First Nations, the Association of Yukon Communities and other stakeholders to come up with an action plan. Can the minister tell us what work has been done with respect to this action plan he promised? How many meetings have taken place? When can we expect a draft plan for review?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First and foremost, it is a good time to ask this question. Tomorrow morning at 9:00, I have another meeting — at 9:15 a.m. actually — at CYFN with First Nation leaders to continue the work on the memorandum of understanding that we signed, which is a key table for that particular area. As for the KPMA — we are there this weekend. There are two meetings on Friday with the Klondike Placer Miners' Association. One is with their directors from 1:00 to 2:00 and then another after that — I think from 2:00 to 3:00 — which gives us this opportunity.

I have met with the KPMA — really at this point I am in a series of meetings. A lot of our discussions have to do with current hot topics. I will say just for the record that we are committed to helping communities develop policies and approaches related to mining within municipalities in a manner that respects the needs of all residents. Mining in municipalities is not a new issue, and to address this issue we will take a collaborative approach, which I have just touched on, that provides certainty for miners while taking into account that all land use activities within municipalities, including mining, are subject to mining laws, municipal zoning regulations, development regulations and land use planning through official community plans. Our priority is to work in partnership with municipal governments to build sustainable and diverse communities and diverse economies that support local solutions to local problems.

Mr. Kent: Perhaps when the minister is on his feet to answer this third question he can update us on what

discussions he had at the recent AYC meetings in Faro with respect to that issue.

The Premier has spoken in the past about the challenges with respect to the existing placer claims that overlap the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in subdivision in his Klondike riding. He has commented that the placer miners need to be compensated for their claims as it is not realistic for the residents to move. The mining community is looking for some reassurances from the minister. So on their behalf, I will ask the minister to make a commitment that there will no expropriation of mining claims without a reasonable amount of compensation paid to those claimholders.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The discussions first — I'll just make sure we have them on record. The discussions at AYC were really focused around land. The real interest from municipalities was based on wanting to see land availability — as the Member for Watson Lake touched on yesterday — for agriculture and residential. What we have done is we made a commitment to sit down with each municipality throughout the summer and into early fall to have those discussions. Right now, there are some court proceedings that are underway. Certainly we are quietly watching that because I think it will have an impact on how these particular items are identified.

The Member for Lake Laberge had reached out last week in Question Period, I believe it was, asking about his particular riding where there is some concern right now. It's not in a municipal boundary, but it's in a hamlet and certainly we're trying to work through that item as well. We're trying to look through the legal proceedings and how this will change that discussion.

Sorry, that was the first part of that question and I believe the third part is — sorry, I apologize — concerning what's happening with the post-AYC and compensation. I think where we are is that the Premier, to be fair, came out and made some statements during the early part of the election. What I'm trying to do is make sure that we don't have to get to these particular hard decisions. There is the Yukon Surface Rights Board, but I think we can go through a process to actually come up to remedy these things, so we don't have to look at —

Speaker: Order, please.

The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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, May 17, 2017. They are Motion No. 23, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North, Motion No. 21, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre, Motion No. 18, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, and Motion No. 36, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of personal privilege

Speaker: Minister of Health and Social Services, please.

Hon. Ms. Frost: My apologies — I am actually wanting to, at this point, rise on a point of personal privilege, before I go into the bill. Is that appropriate at this time?

Speaker: I will hear you now, but in the ordinary course, I am advised that would be during the Order Paper period. But for now, yes, I can advise the House that I have received your written notice and I have the content of what you intend to clarify with the House. I will allow it at this time.

Hon. Ms. Frost: My apologies. It was indicated to me that I was to rise after Question Period and that is why I rose now, so my apologies for that.

Speaker: Just for the record then, the Minister of Health and Social Services, please.

Hon. Ms. Frost: So I rise on a point of personal privilege. Yesterday, in answering some questions from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, I provided some information that was out of date, so I want to take this opportunity to correct the record.

The question dealt with the Yukon Sexual Health Clinic and the Yukon Women's MidLife Health Clinic. I indicated yesterday that meetings on these clinics were occurring. The meetings to ensure the continuation of these two very important clinics have already taken place and funding remains in place until the end of October.

Funding for the two clinics — the sexual and reproductive health clinic and the Women's MidLife Health Clinic is provided through collaborative care funding as part of the Yukon Medical Association's negotiated agreement. That agreement expired on March 31, 2017, and negotiations around the physicians' agreement will begin later this summer. The previous agreement was for five years. However, we have agreed that the government will continue to fund the two clinics until the end of October, six months beyond the expiry of the agreement so that these two very important services can continue with no break in services. We will continue, however, to explore further options with the Yukon Medical Association.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, minister.
Government Bills.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 5: *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act (2017)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 5, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. Frost.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 5, entitled *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act (2017)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services that Bill No. 5, entitled *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act (2017)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. Frost: We have drafted these amendments in one bill because they are very intrinsically linked in providing rights for transgender and non-binary Yukoners. We are committed to having legislation that protects the rights of all Yukoners. This amendment is part of the bigger omnibus bill that we promised, which is the review of all Yukon current legislation, policies and practices to ensure we meet the rules and social standards of LGBTQ non-discrimination.

Part 1 of the bill refers to the amendment to the *Human Rights Act*, part 2 refers to the amendment to the *Vital Statistics Act*, and part 3 are the regulations that accompany the amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act*.

Just to lay the groundwork, we are the only jurisdiction in Canada that has not modernized its legislation to remove the requirements for surgery before being allowed to change the sex designation on your birth registration. We are also one of the last jurisdictions to amend our *Human Rights Act* to include gender identity and gender expression. To be clear, gender identity means the gender you identify with regardless of biological sex. Gender expression is how you express or present your gender. My colleague, the Minister of Justice, will speak more on the amendments to the *Human Rights Act*.

In terms of the *Vital Statistics Act*, legislative schemes similar to our current legislation have been found unconstitutional or discriminatory in different jurisdictions across the country. With these amendments, we are keeping pace with legal and societal developments in the rest of the country.

The amendments we are proposing set out requirements for application concerning children and adults. In doing so, we are trying to reduce barriers so that all Yukoners have access to the process, whether they live in Whitehorse or in any of the outlying communities. The consultation on the amendments to the *Human Rights Act* and the *Vital Statistics Act* engagement received 329 responses and 325 to the online survey, one e-mail comment and three written responses. We have been having this conversation for awhile, and officials have been receiving written correspondence from various people over the past few years asking for changes to the *Vital Statistics Act*.

The survey we conducted posed 11 questions that could be answered by filling out a paper form or completing it online. Additionally, a letter with the same questions attached was sent to targeted stakeholders. I want to read a couple of comments from our survey that reinforce how important we believe these amendments are.

“This is a very important step in ensuring people’s right to safety and dignity that people do not remain invisible or feel afraid to express their full selves. When people feel safe to express who they are fully, our community thrives. This is long-overdue. Thank you for making it possible for LGBTQ individuals to feel safe in Yukon.”

Mr. Speaker, I will now begin to briefly overview some of the key points of the amendments in the *Vital Statistics Act*. According to the *Vital Statistics Act*, gender can only be changed on a birth certificate once that individual has undergone sex-reassignment surgery and has provided separate affidavits from two medical practitioners confirming that the individual’s anatomical sex has changed. All jurisdictions in Canada except Yukon have amended their vital statistics act to allow transgender people to change the gender on their birth certificates without the requirement to have surgery. Federally, people wishing to change their gender on citizenship documents such as passports only need to submit amended provincial or territorial documents, which is an indication that we are behind the times. The amendments that you have before you will remove the requirements for sex-reassignment surgery. Transgender Yukoners have been advocating for this change for years and we are taking this opportunity to respond.

Transgender Yukoners help make up the beautiful fabric of our Yukon communities. They come from all walks of life, from very young to very old. Recently, there was an article in the newspaper about four candidates in the British Columbia provincial election being transgender. Prior to that, in 2015, the first transgender judge was appointed in Manitoba. The amendments will allow Yukoners 16 years of age and older to apply on their own to have their sex designation change on their birth registration.

Custodial parents will have to apply on behalf of children who are under the age of 16. Initially, we looked at using the age of 19 years, but we heard from many respondents that it was simply too old. Our youth make very important decisions long before they are 19 years of age. As much as possible, we try to remove barriers. Applicants 16 years and over will be able to apply by simply signing a declaration stating that they want to make a change. It is not a medical issue and they are not required to have a letter from a medical professional.

Applications on behalf of a young person under the age of 16 will have to have the permission of the custodial parent and an additional person supporting the application from an identified list laid out in the amendments. Children identify with gender at a very young age. In every decision we make, we have to consider their best interests.

I attended a meeting with Minister McPhee and Minister Dendys early in April with All Genders Yukon and other supporters from the LGBTQ community. We have heard from parents of trans children who want to change their birth certificates. My officials at the Vital Statistics office have received calls from parents from Whitehorse and other communities wanting to know when they will be able to change their child’s birth certificate. We have also heard from vulnerable trans youth who do not have the support of their parents. These amendments will provide the process for youth to be able to change their birth certificates even if they do not have the support of their parents.

We have introduced amendments that will allow for a gender-neutral marker, X, to be brought into force within a year. The delay is due to additional policy work that needs to

happen within government to ensure that we are consistent with measures that Canada is bringing in that will allow all Canadians to apply to have their sex designation as an X on their passport if they choose.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be a part of this process that improves the rights of all Yukoners. Of course, there is more work to be done, but this is an excellent start.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite Minister McPhee to speak on the amendments to the *Human Rights Act*.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: This is just a reminder that members are to be identified by their constituency or by their ministry.

Hon. Ms. Frost: My apologies.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister of Justice, please.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to do so at this point — I know that there are others who would like to speak, so I will cede the floor.

Speaker: Sorry, in light of the fact that there are two ministries that are sponsoring this act — but apparently we are going to the opposition — unless the opposition wishes to hear from both ministers first?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Minister of Justice, please.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to rise to speak to this matter today. I promise that I will stop counting, but this is the second law I get to speak to.

It is a fitting one as well, because not only has this been introduced in the first Sitting of this particular government, but early in it and we have moved it to second reading quite quickly so that these important changes can be made.

When the Yukon *Human Rights Act* was passed in 1987, it was one of the first in Canada to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground for discrimination. Unfortunately, we have not kept up with the times. Yukon was an early leader in recognizing the rights of gay and lesbian couples, becoming the first government to extend benefits to same-sex couples through its public sector collective agreements in 1990, followed by the introduction of gender-neutral definitions of “spouse” in some legislation.

On July 14, 2004, Yukon became the fourth jurisdiction in Canada to legalize same-sex marriage following the successful court challenge of Stephen Dunbar and Robert Edge. Justice Peter McIntyre ordered that the Yukon government change its definition of marriage to: “the voluntary union for life of two persons to the exclusion of all others”. This is important background when we turn our minds to the historic steps we are taking today.

The Yukon government has also taken positive steps to recognize and protect LGBTQ2S students and community members in Yukon schools through its education policy, and other steps that have taken place throughout the last number of

months and years to put the record straight, if I can say it that way. The government is very proud to have tabled the legislation that supports a key government priority of ensuring that our legislation, our policies and our practices meet the rules for LGBTQ2S non-discrimination. The proposed amendments to the *Human Rights Act* will bring us in line with the rest of Canada as Yukon joins New Brunswick as the last Canadian jurisdiction to table bills to amend our human rights legislation in order to provide protection from discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression.

The Minister of Health and Social Services has spoken about the *Vital Statistics Act* piece, and I will make reference to the *Human Rights Act* amendments. Section 7 of the *Human Rights Act* will be amended to include gender expression and gender identity as prohibited grounds. Gender identity is our internal and individual experience of gender. It is our sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as, or different from, their birth-assigned sex. Gender expression is how a person publicly presents their gender. This can include behaviour, outward appearance and other things such as dress, hair, makeup, body language, voice — how they present to the world — and that is their choice.

In order to ensure that trans individuals in the Yukon receive these explicit protections and to ensure that government programs and services are equally accessible to all Yukoners, these amendments must be proclaimed. After our short engagement period with targeted stakeholders and the Yukon public, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of Yukoners wish to see these statutory protections added to the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination within the *Human Rights Act*.

You heard from the Minister of Health and Social Services that, in addition to the targeted consultation that resulted in 84 percent of respondents noting their support for this amendment, we've heard from other Yukoners throughout our time in government and through the election campaign of last year. Others have reached out to us outside of the targeted consultation.

You've also heard from that minister that we have reached out to the community and had meetings and been open to hearing from the community and adjusting — if I can say that — the details in this bill. The changes will be in the two new pieces of legislation in response to what we heard.

We heard about the age, we heard about the opportunity for less red tape, we heard about the removal of barriers, and we responded in kind to those very important pieces of information that came to us. Before you and before this House is the bill that reflects the needs and the wishes of the community that we are trying to serve.

While common law does also provide for the protections to trans individuals, it's important — and I stand here as the Minister of Justice to say it's important — that we reinforce those provisions through legislation when we have the opportunity to do so and we do today.

Our statutes should be consistent with and build upon the common law. When the common law evolves to the point where statutory protections should be entrenched, we should take that step to do so.

While there is still work to do across government to ensure all programs and services are equally accessible to all Yukoners, this amendment supports the long-term goal and mitigates the risk of only providing the protections on the basis of sex and sexual orientation that have previously been entrenched. This law provides broader protection for Yukoners.

More explicit protections against discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression will provide the Yukon trans community with peace of mind and the knowledge that the Government of Yukon is serious about protecting human rights for all Yukoners.

It is the hope of this government that in meeting the social standards for the LGBTQ2S non-discrimination, we will reduce red tape, reduce the risk of costly litigation and ensure that the inherent worth of all Yukoners is well-understood, regardless of gender identity or gender expression.

I would like to take the opportunity in closing to recognize that we have with us today, among many other visitors: Jessica Lott Thompson, the director of the Yukon Human Rights Commission; Rebecca Jones, a summer law student here helping at the Yukon Human Rights Commission, and she's from the Faculty of Law at McGill University; and Chase Blodgett, who is with All Genders Yukon.

I am very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to speak to this bill today and to urge the honourable members to support this long-overdue progress in our laws.

Speaker: Prior to the Member for Lake Laberge speaking, I have had a request from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King to introduce visitors and if anybody else would like to introduce visitors, now would be a good time.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. White: I thank my colleagues in the House right now. We have visitors here who have sat here multiple times, although, I am happy to say, today it will have a different effect. The minister has already introduced Chase Blodgett, who is one of the strongest men I have ever met, a trans activist who has actually brought us here — at times it probably felt like we were kicking and screaming. This is great — and his partner Rian Turner. We have Deborah Turner-Davis, who is the communications director for the Yukon Employees' Union, and she has been key in bringing conversations around human rights activities in the territory. We have the president, Steve Geick, and we have other members here who have been invited. It is really powerful to see you here and we thank you so much for witnessing today's debate.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: In the gallery also is my sister Harmony Istchenko. I believe I introduced my mom and dad earlier, but it is nice to see my sister here today too.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any other introductions of visitors? Member for Lake Laberge, thank you for your patience.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, in beginning my comments today at second reading, I want to first of all note that my comments are from my personal perspective. I would like to begin by noting that I support the protection of human rights of all Yukon citizens, including people who self-identify as trans or gender non-conforming.

I believe that the Yukon government and all governments should respect the rights, dignity and values of all people. I believe that steps should be taken to continue to improve how the Yukon government meets the needs of all citizens, including persons who self-identify as trans or gender non-conforming.

I also have friends and constituents who have strong opinions on this issue and who strongly disagree with each other's perspective on this issue. That, Mr. Speaker, includes friends listening and watching today, both in the gallery and at home. I note that there are people here — and I am not going to introduce anyone by name. I am not sure who would prefer to be recognized and who would rather silently watch, but I would note that, with us here today, we have people who represent members of the trans and LGBTQ community here in the territory, as well as people who are concerned about the content of this bill, including three of our local pastors who have congregation members with concerns about the content.

I believe that the amendments that are contained in this bill — the proposed amendments to the *Human Rights Act* contained in part 1 of Bill No. 5 — reflect the current common law as it pertains to the rights of citizens to be protected from discrimination on the basis of gender or gender identity and is simply clearly stating that in law. For that reason, I do support that amendment to the *Human Rights Act*.

However, I would also note that, as a result of concerns I have heard from Yukoners, I also believe the *Human Rights Act* needs to be reviewed and amended in future to provide additional clarity so that ordinary people who are reading it have a clear understanding of what it means and what should happen when there is a real or perceived conflict with the rights of Yukon citizens, as well as to ensure that there is a fair balance with potentially conflicting rights.

By way of example, one of the concerns I have heard from several Yukon churches who run summer camps is the potential conflict between what they believe is their duty to chaperone and what they believe might be an interpretation of this clause of the law.

Mr. Speaker, while noting that members of this House may or may not share the views of those church leaders, it's important to note that if legislation and legislators do not clarify what is expected, it will be left to the Yukon Human Rights Commission to decide and to arbitrate disputes. I will

not spend time this afternoon advocating on either side of that specific issue, but will simply state my personal view that it should be better defined in the *Human Rights Act* in the near future following respectful and meaningful public consultation with all Yukoners who want their views on this matter to be heard.

I'll now move on to speaking about the *Vital Statistics Act* changes. Mr. Speaker, it's important to note for the record and for any Yukoners listening that most of the text of this bill are changes proposed to the *Vital Statistics Act*. Unlike the provisions in Bill No. 5, protecting people from discrimination on the basis of gender or gender identity, the government's proposed changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* are not based on an area where the human rights law in Canada is currently clear. Changes to legislation in several provinces pertaining to birth certificates and drivers' licences to accommodate people who self-identify as transgender, intersex, gender non-conforming, or gender-fluid have not been approached in a consistent manner across the country and the human rights law in this area has not been clearly defined. At the briefing on this legislation roughly three weeks ago, we asked the government to release its analysis and comparison of legislation of this type in other Canadian jurisdictions. They still have not done so. I know in fact that comparison work has been done because Department of Justice staff provided me with that when I was the minister in the summer of last year and I am sure that it has been updated since that time. But the Liberal government has still not shared that updated information with MLAs and the public, despite the request, nor have they given us a copy of the "what we heard" document.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has chosen a model for allowing changes to a Yukon birth certificate that would be a major change in the current legislation. It also moves away from a model where a birth certificate is intended to reflect anatomical sex to one where someone can change their gender on their birth certificate because they want the change. The contents of this section of Bill No. 5 have been criticized by All Genders Yukon, local churches and individual Yukoners.

All Genders Yukon told us in an e-mail sent Sunday evening that they want amendments to the bill. For the record, I also want to clearly note AGY's position that if the Liberal government rejected those amendments, they would rather see the bill pass in its current form than not at all. There are others, however, who have concerns and questions regarding these proposed sweeping changes to the *Vital Statistics Act*. What is troubling to me is that this Liberal government — the very party that campaigned on an election slogan of "Be heard" — only allowed 11 days for public consultation on proposed changes to the *Vital Statistics Act*.

Even worse, in my opinion, the Liberal government launched that 11-day public consultation period during March break, which in my opinion, is a perfect time to hold a short public consultation period if you want people to miss it.

For the record, it is important to note that the Official Opposition wrote the Minister of Health and Social Services

and the Minister of Justice, jointly, during that tiny window of public consultation and respectfully requested that they extend that consultation period to be at least 30 days long. I would like to table a copy of that letter dated March 22, addressed to both of those ministers, regarding the consultation period for those amendments.

The Liberal government rejected that perfectly reasonable request for an extension of the timelines for public consultation. I would note that this is a government that has been in office for half a year, yet they only saw fit to consult Yukoners on this matter for 11 days. One of the things I have heard from Yukoners is that they are upset the Liberal government chose to break its promise to listen to Yukoners and the promise that Yukoners would be heard.

One of my constituents wrote to the Premier, to the Minister of Justice and to the Minister of Health and Social Services the day before the end of the Liberal's 11-day consultation period. He asked a number of questions, including two that most people — even those who have a different viewpoint from his — would have to agree are reasonable questions. The first question is: "Why have you given only 11 days for public input into this proposed legislation?" The second is: "Would I have an opportunity to meet with a representative of your government and discuss my concerns?" He also noted his concerns with the proposed changes when he respectfully requested that opportunity to be heard. Did the Premier reply to his e-mail? No. Did the Minister of Health and Social Services reply to his e-mail? No. Did the Minister of Justice reply to his e-mail? No. Three strikes for the Liberal government in respectfully responding to a Yukon citizen who had contacted them directly. Later my constituent sent an e-mail asking about other submissions and other comments received during the public consultation period.

Government used to typically publicly release "what we heard" reports rather than simply referencing them in the House in the interest of public accountability and public disclosure after it did public consultation on changes such as this. In those "what we heard" documents, personal information, which is supposed to be protected under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, is typically removed and redacted, but everyone could see the comments that were received. In this case, my constituent was told to submit an ATIPP request if he wanted information about other submissions. He informs me that he filed that request on April 13, that this past Friday was the legislated deadline for government to respond, and that, as of this morning, he confirmed that he still had not received a response to that ATIPP request within the legislated timelines.

While I will outline some specific concerns with the proposed changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* that I have heard from Yukoners who want to be heard, my personal primary concern with the proposed changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* are that government is trying to make sweeping changes that are not clearly defined in current human rights law across the country. It is doing so with a bill that has been criticized by Yukoners on all sides of this issue. The contents of the section

of Bill No. 5 have been criticized by All Genders Yukon, local churches and individual Yukoners.

Let me state this in closing my remarks: I respect all Yukoners. I am committed to respecting the rights of all Yukoners. I strongly object to the Liberal government's decision to only consult with the public for 11 days on these proposed changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* and their decision to reject the Official Opposition's request to extend that public consultation to at least 30 days.

During Committee of the Whole, I will be calling on the government to split this bill so that the House can pass the changes to the *Human Rights Act* without delay, while also calling on the government to take the proposed changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* out for a full, meaningful public consultation and to bring back a bill in the fall reflecting that public input.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Health and Social Services for your support in this House for amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* and the *Human Rights Act*. I will allow the Minister of Health and Social Services to address the issues that the member opposite has put forward. I'm here to speak in support of this bill today.

It is truly an honour for me to speak to this bill — yes, our second bill. I'm keeping track too, as is the Minister of Justice. Human rights are not abstract. They are basic rights and freedoms defined and protected by law that belong to each person. As rights are based on values such as dignity, respect, fairness and equality, the evolution of society values can at times outpace legal definition and protection. That is why we are committed to ensuring that Government of Yukon's laws, policies and practices meet both the legal rules and social standards for the LGBTQ2S non-discrimination. That is why I am so proud to support this bill's amendments to the Yukon *Human Rights Act* and *Vital Statistics Act*.

I want to take a minute to acknowledge as the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate that we owe a debt of gratitude to a long line of strong, courageous and determined people, both here in Yukon as well as across Canada and the world who have put their hard work, life stories and sometimes even their lives on the line to advance gender equality and LGBTQ2S rights and freedoms.

In particular, I would like to thank All Genders Yukon, Queer Yukon, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Yukon, local gay/straight alliances and their allies for their voices, their work and their incredible contributions to our communities. It is largely due to their work and the work of organizations like them that we are able to have this conversation today and to take this step toward building a stronger, more inclusive territory for all Yukoners together.

I am honoured to be working together with my colleagues in this House, LGBTQ2S community groups and Yukoners and their allies to realize our government's commitment to inclusiveness, equality and a respect for diversity in Yukon. I commit to continuing this work together in the coming years.

By including gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination in the *Human Rights Act*, we are ensuring all trans, two-spirit and non-binary Yukoners know their basic rights and freedoms are explicitly protected by removing the requirement for sex-reassignment surgery before a person can change the gender marker on their birth registration.

By introducing a gender-inclusive marker on these birth certificates, we are now helping ensure trans, two-spirit, non-binary Yukoners have fair and equitable access to all government programs and services.

Building safer communities and more inclusive programs and services are priorities close to my heart, both as Minister for the Women's Directorate and as a member of this community. As such, I proudly support this bill and the safety and inclusion it supports by clearly valuing and protecting all individual experiences of gender.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the members opposite and the government in particular for bringing forward this bill to amend the *Vital Statistics Act* and the human rights legislation.

Where to start? Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to set a little context here. What we just witnessed in this Legislative Assembly is a repeat of what we experienced a couple of weeks ago, where we heard in a recent debate that was urging this Legislative Assembly to come together to support the reversal of a single-minded action by the previous Yukon Party government to try to undermine the social contract that we, as Yukoners, had engaged with in terms of the final agreements that set the tone for how we would work together. That was in the context of the Yukon environmental and socio-economic assessment legislation, which the previous Premier sought to — and did — successfully lobby to have the federal government amend it to effectively undermine that relationship.

So, in good faith, a motion was put forward here to support the new Ottawa government's commitment to fulfill its obligation to live up to what was in those agreements that we all are party to. What we heard from members of the Official Opposition, the Yukon Party, during that debate was effectively an end run to try to go back to what it was when they were in government. The fact of the matter is that they are not in government any more. The Yukon people voted for a change.

What we're hearing today is similar to what we heard when the former Member for Copperbelt South Lois Moorcroft introduced this motion in April 2015 — introduced a motion that urged the Government of Yukon to advance equal rights for transsexual, transgender and gender-variant people by: (1) introducing amendments to explicitly include gender identity and gender expression under section 7 of the *Human Rights Act* as a prohibited ground for discrimination; (2) supporting full equality and respect for trans people accessing Yukon government jobs, programs and services; and (3) using public education to fight intolerance, discrimination and violence against trans people.

During that debate in May of that last year, we heard from the then-Minister of Justice that they sort of think it's okay because they interpret the human rights legislation to sort of cover it and don't think it's necessary. Someday they'll open the legislation and at that future date may deal with it — would consider it. Mr. Speaker, he said that in May 2015, despite the fact that in 2008, the Yukon Human Rights Commission made recommendations in their document, *Improving the Yukon Human Rights Act*. They made a number of recommendations to the Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Human Rights in 2008.

In the debate last spring, the then-Minister of Justice chose to make sort of a selective interpretation of what was said by the chair of the Yukon Human Rights Commission. I thought I would just take a moment if you don't mind, Mr. Chair, to restate — and I'm quoting here from what the chair of the Yukon Human Rights Commission said on this matter.

"The Yukon Human Rights Commission has been asking for protection against discrimination on the basis of gender identity under the *Human Rights Act* since at least 2008. The commission is of the view that, while we can and do accept complaints that raise gender identity or expression issues under other prohibited grounds of discrimination, as set out under s. 7 of the *Human Rights Act*, it is important to make this protection explicit.

"It is also important to understand that there is a difference between 'gender identity or gender expression' and 'sexual orientation' or 'sex', which are specifically protected under the Human Rights Act. The experiences of individuals who identify as transgender are unique. A lack of change rooms at public facilities is but one example of a barrier transgender individuals may experience in participating in activities in our community.

He went on to say, "The Ontario Human Rights Commission points out that, 'People who are transgender, or who otherwise don't conform to gender stereotypes, come from all walks of life. They are represented in every social class, occupation, race, culture, religion and sexual orientation, and live in and contribute to communities... around the world.' This includes Yukon communities.

"However, 'trans' people are one of the most disadvantaged groups in society. They regularly experience discrimination, harassment, hatred and even violence. People who are in the process of 'transitioning' are particularly vulnerable. Many of the issues they experience go to the core of human dignity and should be explicitly protected in our Act.

"The *Human Rights Act* stresses the importance of recognizing that every individual is free and equal in dignity and rights and that all members of the human family have the right to be free from discrimination. Human rights legislation exists to promote equality and acceptance and was created to protect everyone, including vulnerable members of our society, from harassment and discrimination."

He said, "Jurisdictions across Canada, including our neighbours in the Northwest Territories, provide for explicit

protection against discrimination on the basis of gender identity under their human rights legislation. The Yukon Human Rights Commission continues to urge the Yukon government to join other jurisdictions across Canada in affording this explicit legal protection to our citizens. Such explicit protection will promote acceptance and send a clear message that in Yukon everyone has the right to be treated with equality, dignity and respect".

I do believe that full statement from the chair of the Human Rights Commission at the time indicates that the minister of the day's position that we can do it sometime in the future, or that they would consider doing that, reminds me of the statement by Martin Luther King, Jr. who sort of paraphrased: justice delayed is justice denied. Human rights delayed are human rights denied.

Over the course of the last six years, the Yukon NDP has attempted to have this legislation changed. There are also other pieces of legislation that do require consequential amendments that have been pushed off the burner by the previous government. We're hopeful that this government will also look at implementing these changes to the *Human Rights Act* and the *Vital Statistics Act*, and that we will need to look at the *Family Property and Support Act*, the *Land Titles Act*, and something as arcane as the *Married Women's Property Act* that exists and the *Recording of Evidence Act*.

There has been a lot really good work done by many good people in this territory to try to be compliant with the existing legislation and expectations of society, including the Department of Education, which has done some very, very good work in this area. I don't think we should allow ourselves to be deflected by the attitude that we don't need to live up to our obligations with respect to human rights.

I believe that the government has made the right move in making these amendments and we will be supporting them.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to begin by saying that all of us here are elected to represent all of our constituents. I believe that the Member for Lake Laberge spoke on behalf of his constituents on both sides of this issue. He did not try to make this a debate about political stripes. I think that it is very unfortunate that the Leader of the Third Party feels the need to criticize anyone who feels differently about a particular subject than she does.

This is a very important subject and I want to be very clear. I believe it is safe to say that all MLAs support the protection of the human rights of all Yukoners and all Canadians. It is because of that, as my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge said that we will be supporting this bill at second reading and we do want to see this bill go into Committee, where we can debate it properly. I believe that this bill is very worthy of debate. It needs to be debated. We definitely have concerns, in particular with the consultation, as the Member for Lake Laberge said, but I just have to say that it is very unfortunate that when we talk about working together and being more collaborative in this Assembly — that you can say that and then stand up and say what she did.

I won't go on, as I will leave it until we get into Committee on this.

Deputy Speaker's statement

Deputy Speaker: In the future, we will avoid references to "she." It is the "Leader of the Third Party".

Ms. White: I will just add my voice to the fact that right now I feel this isn't a political issue. This is an issue about human rights, and trans rights are human rights. What can get lost in this conversation is — we can say, well, we're uncomfortable with the conversation, we're uncomfortable with the topic, and therefore it's easier to push it away and say we won't deal with it right now. But I can attest from the stories that have been entrusted to me that, if we don't deal with this, we put people at risk and that is not acceptable anyway, anyhow.

In my mind, this is not a political issue. This is not about the consultation time. This should have happened sooner. It should have the full support of the House, and this is an issue about human rights. Trans rights are human rights, and the fact that we have not included them to this point is something that should wound us all because that is unacceptable. I had a whole bunch of a things I was going to say, but that is how I wanted to start it.

The landscape of the Yukon has changed. The fabric of communities has changed and it has been good to see. The problem is that we have one part of the population that has been forced into dark corners because laws haven't kept up with those changes. We have incredible members of our community who face adversity that we in this House will never know, and we're pretty lucky that we don't know that. We are. We're pretty lucky that we don't live those daily experiences. I wouldn't wish any of those negative experiences on anyone.

I know right now that our health care system is failing trans individuals. I know that if you have to go to the doctor and you have to justify and go through psychological tests, see psychiatrists, and you have to go over and over and over it again, justifying who you are — and it can be denied because of someone's personal feelings, and then you have to try again — I can say the system is failing.

I can say that not making sure that we're addressing the issues of trans children, that we're not supporting them prior to puberty, that we're allowing government to get involved in a negative way and we're forcing kids to go through puberty in the wrong gender — if you could even imagine what that was like or what that is like, understanding that puberty is not much fun for anybody — but imagine if you were a girl and you go through puberty as a boy, or if you were a boy and you're going through puberty as a girl — and we are putting people through that because we haven't changed the legislation.

Not only have we not changed the legislation to this point, but we haven't insisted that our medical community support people through this. That is something else that we have to talk about at some point. Because when we change

these laws, that will be the first step and we won't put people through those risk points.

We need to talk about government construction. We need to talk about buildings. We need to talk about the fact that you and I, and everyone in this Chamber, are able to go to washrooms safely, and I have friends who plan their days on whether or not they are going to be in facilities where they will feel safe while using a washroom because right now they are gendered — you have the men's washroom, you have the women's washroom. How do you tell someone that, "Well, that's not a big deal to us"?

At what point in time are we going to just start making single stalls with shared sinks? We had a convention recently and one of the toilets in the men's washroom kind of exploded so that was closed, and guess what we did? We opened up the other facility and everyone could use the stalls. It was crazy. It was crazy. I was washing my hands and I was having conversations with my male friends and, you know what? The world did not stop. You know what happened? We could all go to the bathroom, and it was pretty safe — it was totally safe. There was nothing to worry about.

When we talk about this issue and we talk about these two pieces of legislation — absolutely, this is a no-brainer. When we brought this forward in 2015, and we had a gallery full of people — and man, their hearts were out there. They wanted so badly for us to be able to get through it. What happened was it got put off. I thank the Liberal government. I thank them so much for bringing this forward because this is not something that can get put off. We can talk about election promises and we talk about your priorities. We can talk about things that can get put off and that we can wait on. This is not one of them. The fact that we are here in the first Spring Sitting of the 34th Legislative Assembly and we are finally doing what is right and we are catching up to the rest of Canada — I feel like I am on the side of the right and no part of me does not feel like this is something we should be doing. I thank you for that and I thank you for making that a priority.

Last summer during Pride week, a really incredible thing happened. I often think that the City of Whitehorse sometimes has us beat. They do. I'm going to get the terminology wrong, and I apologize for that, but they do a gender class. This is the thing, if you choose a pronoun and it's not "she" or "he" and it happens to be "they" — it takes a couple of tries to get used to it, but the world doesn't stop. It doesn't stop.

You can call me Kate — sorry, you can call me Member for Takhini-Kopper King — but the point is that you choose your identity and you choose your pronoun. Why is that so hard for society to accept? Sometimes it is awkward because we are talking about plural forms, but again, should my discomfort affect how someone else feels? Probably not. As someone who has full-sleeve tattoos, there are times when people are really uncomfortable around me, but it's not my issue. It's not my issue, it's their issue, and this is no different.

Last summer, the City of Whitehorse had the flag raising at the top of Two Mile Hill and Range Road. It was beautiful — you have the flags and the sky in the background and the metal horse in the front. For the first time in Yukon history,

not only did we raise the pride flag, but we raised the transgender flag. It was really important and there were a lot of people there. Tomorrow is the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. I realize this is a bit off the cuff and this might not work, but we have three flags in the front of this building. I am pretty sure I know someone in the gallery right now who could lend us a trans flag. If we can't hang that flag tomorrow outside this building, then my challenge to the Yukon government is to make sure we hang it a year from tomorrow. This is us broadcasting that every single citizen in the Yukon is important. For too long our trans citizens have been pushed to the outside. In my mind, it is time for us to open our arms and welcome everybody in. One way that we can do that is to hang the beautiful blue and pink flag — I think it might have yellow in the middle; oh, it has white in the middle — because that is a way for us to broadcast that times are changing. You know, sometimes when those times change, it is hard. I appreciate that there are people who have different feelings about this issue, but I also know that they are not the ones who are facing persecution, prosecution and violence. For me there is only one answer, and that's that we vote in favour.

I thank the ministers for bringing this forward. I thank the Premier for following up with what we started in 2015, knowing that it's important. I thank our community advocates. I thank the community that hasn't given up on us. They knew we could do the right thing if they kept pushing. So we're here, and we have this opportunity. It's about time that we made human rights a priority for all citizens, and trans rights are human rights.

Amending the *Vital Statistics Act* means that someone can self-identify without us looking at what's in their pants, because let's be honest — that's not our business. But what is our business is respect, what is our business is equality, and what is our business is making sure that people feel like they're human, and that's what this is about.

I look forward to the opportunity when we can vote on this.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I wasn't going to stand today to speak but I just want to share a few words. I want to reach out and thank the Yukon Party for their words today and thank the NDP as well. This is what we do here. We bring the concerns of the constituents to this Legislative Assembly and we involve ourselves in frank discussions — much appreciation to the Member for Lake Laberge for representing his constituents and also to the two leaders and the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

In my first year of university, I was in a class that was supposed to be a sociology class, but Dr. Clare Fawcett decided, no, this is not going to be a sociology class. This is going to be a feminist class and we're going to teach everyone in here about feminism.

The class was normally a bird class. It was one of those elective classes that a lot of football players or a lot of basketball players would take to get an easy credit, and the looks around the room went into fear of this new conversation

that we were going to have. Dr. Fawcett said, "You can leave if you really wanted to have a conversation about..." — I forget what the topic was. It was a very specific sociology class, and Dr. Fawcett said, "Feel free to leave, but I want to teach you a couple of different things. One thing is: it's human nature to fear the unknown and we're going to talk the whole year about your fears." The second piece was — and she pointed out that half of the class was white men, and she said, "I'm not going to make any guesses here, but I'm assuming 'straight' as well, and you really don't realize what you have because you were born in the right body."

Dr. Fawcett went through all of the things that made the folks in that class realize that the current and maybe the antiquated — we can debate if the legislation is antiquated or not — legislation and current rules of society are fantastic for you, and that's it.

I tell you, that was one of the best classes that I have ever taken. It turned my young mind at that time toward this concept of — I want to make sure that I surround myself in communities that understand and that look past the likeness of people and embraces that we're all different, but equal, and that was Dr. Fawcett's big thing — that we're not the same. We're absolutely not the same. Nobody is the same in this room or in the world, but we're all equal. That started this grateful concept, in my mind, of looking past appearance — looking past different.

I grew up in a town that does that. I have moved to a town that does that. I have to tell you that my life has been so much better because of the communities that I have lived in and the people's attitudes that have changed in Canada — and they have changed in Canada. You'll look no further than The Pit in Dawson for a good example of a community that absolutely does not care — to borrow some words from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King — what's in your pants. It really doesn't matter. In that amazing — I don't even know what we want to call The Pit at this point — den of iniquity, but I tell you — it is every walk of life. It is. It is not one distinct part of our community; the whole community is in that building. I would never change the community that I live in and what I seek out because of that.

I understand the concerns of folks. There are people who are in this gallery who don't think we have gone far enough. There are people in this gallery and in Yukon who think we have gone too far. I agree with a lot of people in this room that this is a human rights issue and that is what it's about. It's about making sure that we identify human rights for all. If this legislation is going to trigger, for some, maybe a complaint on human rights, then we will respectfully go down that road and we will identify that as we move forward. On this side of the House, we think we are well overdue for this step toward human rights and equality for all.

I thank everybody for their words today, and I'll pass it up to my colleagues to get this to a vote.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am going to, at this time, quote my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King. This is a no-brainer. A trans right is a human right. It's about equality of all people.

Historically, we go back to 2009, but it goes back a lot further in time. Trans people have been in our midst and in our cultures for a lot of years. We have two-spirited individuals who are put at the highest value in our spiritual communities, and that is an important piece of our history — the history of the individuals in our Yukon and in Canada. Transgender people in the Yukon have advocated for change and Yukon legislation to recognize gender, other than male or female. The usual two-sex definition of gender in government does not fit with the programs and services of this government. So yes, we are discriminating and I recognize that. We all recognize that on this side of the House.

We recognize that we have a lot of work to do. Coming into office, one of the first things that came across my desk was the proposed amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* and the *Human Rights Act*. Is this something that this government is proposing to move forward? Most definitely. We see that the World Health Organization and the United Nations have publicly stated that sex and gender are important determinants of health. That goes back in time. The Yukon Human Rights Commission, as stated by the respectful member opposite, put forward a request in 2009. Almost 10 years later, we are still debating this issue around gender identity and gender equality in the Yukon. In my view, that is totally appalling and it's not acceptable.

We look at common-law decisions that have been made across this country — in Alberta and in other provinces — where decisions have been made around the equality and rights of transgender, nonbinary individuals. It's essential that we catch up to the times, as my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King described. It's true: we need to catch up to the rest of the country. We are a proactive government. We see that with our self-government agreement. We see where we are with policy legislation and with implementation of our agreements. We look at opportunities to advance this great country of ours, this great society that we live in. It's about equality. It's about looking at opportunities to make this place a better place for all individuals of Yukon — not just a select few, but everyone. It's not a religious debate. It clearly isn't a religious debate. It's about the rights of individuals.

With regard to consultation, we've been in consultation since 2009. Back and forth, back and forth — input. Well, if we go back out for another year, are we going to still be going through this process? Consultation — I'm actually kind of shocked, to be honest with you. I'm shocked that we're having this debate about going out for further consultation when we've had very explicit common-law decisions across this country of ours that speak to rights of individual, human rights. It's time for us as a government to start looking at our policies, programs and services so that we provide necessary, essential services to all citizens of Yukon.

I'm happy to hear that the Leader of the Official Opposition is in full support of the proposal, with the one

clause that he would like to go out for further consultation. I'm thinking that everything is perfectly fine and we can move forward with the proposal that is before us — the amendments.

The words "protect rights of individuals" — you want to protect the rights of individuals; however, you have some concerns. The member of the Official Opposition stated that they would like to consider further consultation. Personal opinions — I was maybe going to go down that path, but I'm not going to. We heard the Official Opposition speak to their point — their support — so I'm pleased with that. I think that the consultation — we've gone out for consultation and we're excited about the feedback that we've received. There is significant support that was received from those who had participated, who had an opportunity and who were interested in participating. We have 84 percent in favour of the changes of those who elected to respond.

The legislation we have is currently outdated and we have to bring it up so that it aligns itself with other jurisdictions, so that our *Vital Statistics Act* is non-discriminatory.

Yukon is the last jurisdiction in the country — and I want to emphasize that: it's the last jurisdiction in the country to modernize their *Vital Statistics Act* and one of the last to include gender identity and gender expression as a prohibited ground for discrimination in the *Human Rights Act*. Yes, we campaigned for this. We campaigned that we were going to look at this as implementing the necessary changes so that we are not discriminating against the citizens of Yukon so that everyone has an opportunity to access the essential programs and services that we have been debating in this House. Who has access to the essential medical services and supports that we offer in the Yukon? Everyone should have access. There should be no discrimination based on gender identity.

Now, we as individuals come from different backgrounds, different races, different belief systems, different Christian-based values and principles — culturally based values, for some of us. That's important to each one of us as individuals; however, that should not in any way affect what we do as a government when we have conflicting laws that will put us in conflict with the criminal process. If we continue to discriminate against individuals in our society, that will put us at odds and put us in a process of direct conflict with existing laws. That's not what we want. We want to ensure that we amend the act to ensure that there is equality for all — every member of our society.

Right now, as the Minister of Justice highlighted, there are children in our society who are marginalized, who don't have a voice, who don't have an identity and who are challenged and are struggling. This allows that opportunity for them and their parents to engage. I was educated by some really great people who have been advocating for a long time for this change. They educated me on some of the challenges and the barriers that perhaps I wasn't familiar with previously and now I am. I thank the participants at our meeting in April. It was a whole eye-opener for me. I felt great about leaving that meeting knowing that we were doing what was right, and we are going to do what is right, and that is to look at ensuring

that we provide services to transgender, non-binary — the whole community — two-spirit individuals, as we define them in my indigenous culture — two-spirit individuals.

I am going to conclude here, and I am going to ask the members of this House to please put your support behind the amendments because it is the right thing to do. It is the right thing to do for all Yukon. It's the right thing to do for a government to respect every citizen of the Yukon. Respect all those who are members of our society. Discrimination should no longer be in our vocabulary. Discrimination went out a long time ago. When we settled our land claim agreements, it was an opportunity to look at transparency. It was an opportunity to look at ensuring that we provided opportunities and equality for everyone — equality for all citizens of Yukon. Thank you.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. White: 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. 5 agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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 (Mr. Hutton): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*.

Is it the wish of members to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: We will take a 15-minute break.

Recess

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

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*.

Mr. Istchenko: I just want to acknowledge — usually it is the officials from departments or the official from the department — thank you for being here today.

I just want to get something on the record about being the critic for certain departments. There are some things that I will be pushing the Premier for — budget-related — over the next few years and I'm encouraged by some of the things I've read. I had a debate — not a debate actually. A constituent asked me what a mandate letter was, and I said, "Well, that's when your boss tells you what to do." I had to do a little bit of explaining and so I read through one of the mandate letters. When I read through the Minister of Environment's mandate letter, the first thing that popped into my head was: Aren't we getting a carbon tax? I'm like, I think pretty much, we are. I think we've defined that. Why doesn't it say, "To help Yukoners out with this new tax, we're going to make it easier for him." So I said, "You know what? I'll ask the Premier that." It's not probably that we don't need to debate the carbon tax or debate that, but I just got thinking about it and I thought maybe in the mandate letter for the Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation — we know it is coming, I think. It's probably going to take a lot of time out of their hands to do the implementation or however this goes, so I will just leave that comment at that.

What I want to talk about today a little bit — and for the Premier — is — there is a lonely budget item called the Alsek moose recovery program. That's something that was created — I pushed to have it created with the department when I became the minister and I was happy to see that, in the Minister of Environment's mandate letter, it says, "Yukoners see a healthy environment with sustainable wildlife populations and opportunities to enjoy the wilderness as fundamental to the social and economic well-being of communities."

I was born and raised in the Yukon and I can remember in 1983 when moose — we hunted from the time I was a kid. With my father, we always hunted with the same group of guys — First Nation and non-First Nation. Land claims hadn't been settled. We went out. We cancelled the tag. Everybody had moose meat in their freezer.

In 1983 — actually the year before 1983, they allowed a cow moose harvest. It didn't do very well, and that was at the time that the European Union and Europeans were all over the fur trade — so fur prices tanked. So we lost that ability to manage our animals a little bit through trapping. I guess my point is that it was in 1983 that the permit-hunt system came in. I'm not going to quote; I'm going to look it up — I'll explain it when I get into debate maybe a little bit more with the minister applicable.

It was always thought and said that once populations come back up, you'll be back to hunting. So it gets to my broader point that we in the government and the departments — and there have been many years of different governments running the Department of Environment — are managing hunters; we are not managing our wildlife populations. I spent the better part of my career after working for the government in the outdoor adventure tour industry and wound up being asked by someone to sit on the Alsek Renewable Resources Council. The thing that was addressed to me was — I don't think the government listens to us like they should. I sat on that and I was the chair of the committee for a long time. There was frustration with, you know — we have the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. I was really encouraged to hear the minister stand up — one of the questions I asked her was about the resource councils and she said she respects them, works with councils and boards and all the rest of this stuff.

Chapter 16 states that the primary instrument in resource management is what the councils and boards are for. That little segment of budget that you put forward — the project that is going on in Kluane is a collaboration with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Alsek Renewable Resources Council and local trappers. It's a program that was put together. It solved the issue of underutilized traplines. The minister will understand that a little bit more. She has been all over. We had a lovely lady who was the coordinator the first year and she talked to all of the elders and the trapline concession holders. They were all fine. They knew we were working to make the population of moose better. That was the general idea there. It was a great program. Local trappers were involved. The Department of Environment, local COs and those guys were right engaged with it. The resource council provided the snares and the opportunity. It's a great program. One of the reasons it was so successful is that Champagne and Aishihik First Nations committed to sharing numbers with the Department of Environment of their moose harvest numbers. It's about building the moose populations back up.

My focus in the future with the Minister of Environment, in Question Period and as I go forward, is I will be asking things like there's a small budget for that. When I was the minister, I asked: What revenue do we bring in from hunting, fishing, the outfitters — and the outfitters are part of this too. I

was going to mention them up front. We bring in about \$350,000 a year in revenue from hunting and fishing licences — around there; it changes a little bit. The outfitters paid for their permits down the line. I'm just going on what I worked with over the years and what I heard from the Yukon Outfitters Association, the trappers, the Yukon Fish and Game Association. You'll see the highlight in the paper — usually it's somebody fighting over an animal. TOYA has an issue with it; someone has an issue; there are all of these organizations that have issues, but if we focus back on managing our animals to a sustainable population for all of us — our hunters haven't really changed that much. Our population hasn't tripled in 30 years. It grows — you can look at stats.

I think working with the boards, working with the outfitters, the Yukon Fish and Game Association and all of those organizations, focusing more on — and this goes for animals and fish too — maybe look at having a fund and stating on the licences — we let those groups take that over and manage it. They do it in other jurisdictions. BC is looking at different ways. Let them manage enhancement projects, habitat projects, feed for the animals and stuff like that.

I think with environment — and I know there are a lot of constituents I talked to when I was at the first show and people throughout the Yukon. The general consensus is that we need to start managing our animals, and we get that through listening to our elders and listening — I have been to the elders senate. The lady has passed away and she was one of the youngest elders there. She said, "Why am I not allowed to talk about bears?" I said, "I am here. You can talk about bears." We have to have that frank conversation. Hopefully there is no one here named Frank, because then that would be out of order. I have to have a pun once in awhile. When it comes to the budget with the Premier, I guess I would just like to ask that question. I know the Premier probably isn't up to speed on this, but I just think that being able to move in that direction I think is going to satisfy Yukoners.

Political stripes aside on that, everybody likes — they call it the 100-mile diet. There are many ways it has been said, but I think if we can put management back more and focused on that as opposed to that. It takes money to do that, but I think that would be a wonderful thing. That is all I will have to ask the Premier today. I just want to hear his thoughts on that a little bit.

Hon. Mr. Silver: We will let it go that we used first names here — Frank — in the Legislative Assembly. The member opposite makes two good points. One is on the mandate letters and the other one is on hunting.

I will go back to the mandate letter — good question. It is one of those things where one of the first conversations that we had with Executive Council Office was how important it is, from a communications perspective, when ECO is communicating with the public servants and then watching the political wing making their communications — how important it is that these conversations can go on in tandem if we are making sure that the decisions go back to the mandate letter. If it's in the mandate letters and if you can always have the

departments, the political folks and everybody saying that this is in my mandate letter and this is in the department's mandate letter — that gives the department a more whole-of-government approach to figuring out the issues and the problems of a government. If we stray from those mandate letters, that causes undue complications in communications between the Executive Council's job to communicate and to talk about policy, and then also our job to communicate as well if all of a sudden things are not on those mandate letters.

We are putting a lot of emphasis on these mandate letters, and I think that when we take a look at the mandate letters going into a business model — a business case is what we are doing as well this year — I think this helps with that certainty piece and it helps with the public as they get to know these things. I am so appreciative that your constituent is having this conversation. Clearly, he or she is paying attention. That means a lot. To answer your constituent's question, I will quote from my mandate letter. On the second page of my mandate letter, it says: "As Minister of Finance: use tax measures to help create Yukon jobs; return funds collected through a federal carbon pricing mechanism to Yukon individuals and businesses through a rebate system..."

So it isn't in my mandate letter, and the reason why it's not in the mandate letter of the Department of Environment — it would be different if it was our tax, if it was our pricing. It might have come out of one of the departments, but it's not. It's a federal tax that we, as the Department of Finance, are going to be working with. That's why it would show up in the Department of Finance, as opposed to in the Department of Environment, to answer the first question.

The second issue — it wasn't more of a question. It was more of a "I will hold you to this" type of thing over the next budgets. I applaud the member opposite for that endeavour because we all know the Minister of Environment is an avid hunter. If you had been to her cabin, you would have been scared, with all the rifles on the walls.

The information that she has from northern Yukon — it's information that I don't have, and it's based on a traditional way of life, whether it is hunting, trapping, caribou, and wildlife management. We have to rely on the people who know this industry and I will extend that to you as well, as the former minister responsible, but more importantly with your role in your community with the Rangers. Your knowledge of what goes on in your community in regard to hunting, trapping and these issues — I am going to say, in principle alone, from what I'm hearing today in the Legislative Assembly, there is nothing that you said that I wouldn't disagree with. This is how we have to —

Chair's statement

Chair: Please refrain from using "you" and "yours".

Hon. Mr. Silver: I apologize wholeheartedly, Mr. Chair.

It's a matter of using the expertise in all of the different communities. I will reach out to the member opposite and our department will as well, as far as future years' management.

There might not be changes in the population numbers, but there are changes happening. We're seeing it in the Klondike. We're definitely seeing a lot more people showing up in the goldfields than ever before for moose hunting. I think what we're seeing are a lot of pressures from folks who are not necessarily Yukoners and who are coming up as well. I know there has been a change there, and that is something I would definitely want to get the member opposite's opinion on as well.

Things are changing and pressures are happening in different areas. We know that there is litigation, and there are issues with the unsigned First Nation governments and rights there that we're working through and trying our best to identify and to address. None of this can happen in a silo, but we absolutely have to reach out to the communities, to the people who have been hunting and fishing in our great backyards all of their lives — especially those individuals like the member opposite, who relies on information from the elders in his community and we have to respect that information.

I will make my best effort to make sure that the evidence that we use when we're going down that road — looking at budgeting and programs. It makes sense to look at what the communities have to offer. First hunt and first fish are great examples in Dawson and other communities — where Education can put money toward them. We could have more money from different departments — having a whole-of-government approach. Let's take a look, like you said — from managing our wildlife and then, as we take a look at the mandate of managing our wildlife, all of these things feed into it. As the evidence mounts, then we make more decisions based on that evidence.

I have to say that the first fish — in my community anyway — has saved a lot of lives. It really has. That whole getting out on the land and getting some pride in your relatives who are now teaching the class is such an important part of the education system, and it's based upon who we are here as Yukoners. There are many opportunities moving forward. I know that the member opposite will definitely be a big resource when it comes to these issues moving forward.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the Premier for his comments. The only thing to add is that the education is key. We've seen a huge increase in the trapping. When you go to the fur show, you see the youth category there now. The thing that came up there was they had to change how they give their award out because of the way the *Wildlife Act* is with kids — those under the age 16 aren't allowed to trap. There is going to be some legislative stuff. I'm sure the minister is probably privy to that already.

The other thing is the pressures that you're seeing in Dawson — a lot of the times the reason we see pressure is because when one area of the Yukon gets put on permit and there are only so many permits out where people used to go, they look for other opportunities and areas. That would just be the only thing I would add to that.

Mr. Chair, I have no more questions.

Ms. McLeod: I wanted to speak a little bit today about something we hear continually in the House, and that is evidence-based decision-making. What I've heard several times is — actually, I heard it twice today even — decisions that seem to come out of government where there has been no evidence-gathering or where government says, "Well, we're going to look at the evidence, but yes, we're going to do it." It kind of lessens any meaningful definition, I guess, of evidence-based decisions.

There are a couple of things I want to talk about as far as evidence. One has to do with something that is not in the budget. That is an increase on tax on alcohol. We know that in the last federal budget, the federal government raised taxes on tobacco and alcohol. In this Liberal government budget, we see a rise in taxes on tobacco and nothing on alcohol. I'm a little bit curious about that. I'm not advocating for a tax increase on alcohol; however, we don't have to look very far to know that most of our budget is based on the damaging effects of alcohol. Alcohol is affecting families, the workplace, certainly children — and it's a generational kind of effect. I just want to know what the rationale is — where the evidence is — that it would be a bad thing to raise taxes on alcohol.

Earlier this year, I sent a letter to the Minister of Highways and Public Works, raising an issue that was of concern for the people of Watson Lake, and that is the installation of street lighting on the Campbell Highway between the Town of Watson Lake and Two and One-Half Mile. This is a concern that was raised by a number of community members. This installation is supported by the RCMP, supported by mayor and council, supported by the citizens but the minister and his department said we didn't need it. The people didn't need it. I'm wondering where the evidence is there.

There was no discussion about — gosh, that's expensive. We can't afford it. There was no discussion that there has been any looking into any kind of evidence to base that decision on. I'm a little confused as to what this government means by "evidence-based decisions". I guess that's my major concern when I look through this budget. I see a lot of decisions being made. I don't know where the evidence is. I don't know what evidence was looked at, and perhaps government doesn't feel that it is something that the average Yukoner needs to know. I don't know. I honestly can say that I have no idea how the evidence comes about.

I guess that's all — my only comments on this budget in general debate. I'm certainly going to have some questions regarding evidence when we get into departments. It seems to be an overriding factor for everything that the government says, so it's a huge concern for me.

Earlier this year, I sent a letter to the Minister of Health and Social Services and asked for funding for the Watson Lake food bank. I don't know what evidence was looked at. I just got the answer of "no". I'm sure that I'm not the only one who is wondering in the Yukon what the evidence is for the decisions that government is making on where it spends its money.

Hon. Mr. Silver: With the evidence-based decision-making process — I'll start there. The member opposite said maybe we should just go away from that if we can't find the evidence. I would totally disagree with that statement. I believe what Yukoners want is more evidence-based decision-making in governance because, when you involve evidence, you can point toward a process. If you didn't get your lights in Watson Lake or if you didn't get your something else in some other community, it's harder to deny the system if that's given.

I will let the ministers specifically talk about things like street lighting or liquor, but I will talk in general about the concept. We got into government. We have short time frame to develop a budget, and in that we put forth a couple of different bills. We're being criticized by the opposition and it's totally their job to do so. I appreciate their research on these issues — on consultation on these particular items.

I would say that, on the two bills that we put forward, the evidence that we gathered was going door to door in the election campaign with a pledge to make these things happen. That's part of it.

There is more consultation as well. As we talked about, there was a consultation process for both National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday that was done in the summer and there was also a consultation done for the changes to the *Vital Statistics Act*.

Can we do better? I would say that as a government, we can always do better to get better evidence when we make our decisions. We will probably disagree on certain things — that's for sure — as to decisions that are made and whether or not the opposition believes the evidence or the consultation was enough, or legitimate or whatever the critique will be. We will take it on a case-by-case basis. To say that we shouldn't do that — the evidence-based — I think we should and I think we could always do a better job of getting that evidence as we move forward.

As we get through this legislative session and we move into the summer, that gives us an opportunity next time. Each time we get through this process, I believe, with the changes that we have in the Finance department, with the whole government approach, with the commitment to evidence-based decision-making, I believe that every year we are going to do a better and better job of making sure this government makes decisions based on evidence. Then we will let the electors decide at that time if we have done what we set out to do. That's the great thing about the democratic process: in the end, Yukoners will vote.

When it comes to liquor specifically — to the member opposite's question — we do have a liquor tax and liquor markups. It's an unusual system, to say it in the most polite way. I wonder if the Leader of the Official Opposition would agree or disagree. We are doing a review on it. The minister responsible would love to comment on that. We are still working on systems to generate evidence — for example, our investment in the Department of Finance that I talked about — and that is our evidence-based decision-making every year getting better, in my opinion.

When it comes to street lights, I will ask my Minister of Highways and Public Works to get into those more specific answers.

Ms. McLeod: I would appreciate having those discussions when those departments come up, for sure. I did not say that we didn't need evidence-based decision-making. I don't like to be pinned with something I didn't say. Consultation is not always evidence. In fact, there is evidence that consultation is not always done. I can go to my community and I can ask everybody I see on the street if they were asked or saw any kind of consultation about a certain particular item and they can say, "Gosh, no; I never even heard there was a consultation going on."

Government can say they're consulting. I don't know who government is consulting with if I can't find one single person who has been consulted. I can appreciate that maybe you have a target audience you would want to consult with — you don't want to consult with Yukon in general — but I can tell you that consultation is not very effective to date.

I don't agree — obviously — with the Premier that the election was a consultation, so to speak. It was just what it is — it was an election.

Congratulations, you won; however, the devil is always in the details. People who take these broad stances on something like evidence-based decision-making — it's going to mean different things to different people, nine times out of 10. I'm looking for some kind of commonality that the average Yukoner can understand. We have evidence-based decision-making where we actually have evidence. I think people can understand that. When we have evidence-based decision-making where there is no evidence or no studies and nothing has been looked at, then that's something else. I don't know if there are too many people who could understand that, but maybe there are some who do.

I don't actually have a question at this point. I look forward to going into departments and drilling down into the details. What I will say is that I know the government thinks that this new budgeting format is helpful, and it may be to departments and it may be to the government, but to the average person who might look at a budget document, where we used to see projects listed out, we're not seeing that any more and that's not very helpful. When I'm looking for a project, I can't find it in the budget. The government telling me it's there is not very comforting if I don't see it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and I'm going to wrap up.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I just want to make a comment on — the member opposite said we're targeting just specific Yukoners — that's absolutely not true.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Mr. Kent, on a point of order.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Chair, you have ruled in the past that using the words "not true" implies a falsehood, so I would just ask you to have the Premier retract that.

Chair's ruling

Chair: Mr. Silver, please refrain from using those words.

Hon. Mr. Silver: My apologies. I will refrain from using that statement. I will say the member opposite's remarks are inaccurate. They are, because we're not targeting any specific group of Yukoners. If the member opposite would like to give us some input as far as the individual groups and agencies in her community the member opposite would like us to consult with moving forward, we would happily do that.

Again, we're just starting to show evidence for our decisions, so we're building systems. I'm sure the member opposite would want to see improvements. We did say the other day in the Legislative Assembly that the up-front part of the binder doesn't have as much detail — yes, we took it out and instead we put other things in, we took things out like forecasts and really important information we put in, like economic outlooks — really important things to be putting into these documents.

If at the end of the year we feel those things should go back in, then we'll take a look. We have already said in the Legislative Assembly and I've committed already to the Yukon Party that we will look at that. If we believe that Yukoners want to see this list of all the things, all these items up front — to me — this is my personal opinion — it almost looks like it's our money, whereas this is the taxpayers' money. What we want to do is get into the line-by-line debate and discuss how we're paying taxpayers' money. Members opposite disagree.

We can take a look at that and as a team we'll decide whether or not that this is something that we want to change moving forward. Absolutely, we'll look into that. I'll give this off to the ministers to answer your specific questions on both street lights and liquor.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite from Watson Lake for the question this afternoon in general debate. She is raising the issues that have been flagged by her constituents and I applaud that. On the issue of street lights from Watson Lake to Two and One-Half Mile subdivision on the Robert Campbell Highway, the member opposite did send me an e-mail on January 6 of this year. I responded to her on January 9 in an e-mail and said that I would get back to her with information. On January 30, I sent a letter to her explaining how we would proceed on the street light issue. I had asked my department to dig up the information they could on the issue of street lights along that stretch of highway. They informed me they had done the research. They had looked at the issue for the members opposite and had decided that the decision had been made and there was not enough need for street lights on that stretch of the highway. But that wasn't enough for me or this government. We decided to look into it further. I have asked them to look into it to see what the need was.

They started gathering evidence this winter at my behest. They have started to do traffic counts and pedestrian counts for that stretch of road during the winter when street lights are

most advantageous. I don't think the member opposite would like to run street lights in the summertime. I have asked them to look at that information and they're doing those counts. They haven't given me that information yet. I thank you for the reminder. I will certainly get back to my department and find out what the pedestrian counts show. As soon as I have that information, I would be more than happy to share that evidence with the member opposite.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just to follow up, but I think that the Premier, in his remarks, covered it off. We are doing a review of pricing. It has begun now. I look forward to working with all members of the Legislature around that. I think seeing what falls out of that pricing review will lead us to decisions about the subsequent budgets, but we didn't plan to do it within this budget — just to acknowledge we were out there working.

Also I want to be a little bit careful. It might happen through taxation, but it also might happen through markup pricing so that wouldn't necessarily hit the budget in the same way that it does because it's a corporation.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 201?

Seeing none, we will now proceed. The matter before the Committee is Vote 12, Department of Finance. The estimates for Vote 12 begin at page 11-3 of the main estimates document.

Department of Finance

Chair: Is there any general debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do look forward to debate on the tabled appropriation. I would like to provide the Committee with a few introductory remarks on the Department of Finance as well as the budget for 2017-18.

In the past, I believe remarks in this department have been technical and more formulaic, but I would like to take a moment to highlight the sometimes unrecognized and underappreciated value of this government department. While it comprises just 83 full-time equivalent positions after the inclusion of the Business and Economic Research branch and the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, it is responsible for overseeing a large number of transactions and decisions that ultimately impact all Yukoners.

I would like to begin by applauding the department staff, who continually work with other jurisdictions, the Government of Canada and self-governing First Nations on issues relating to transfers and to negotiations. It is partially thanks to these individuals that we saw new funding for health care from the federal government in this year's federal budget. It has also led to significant funding under the territorial health investment fund in the federal budget as well. This money is used to offer the programs and services that Yukoners need and expect from the government. They deserve that recognition and I applaud their efforts.

The Department of Finance staff is also the staff that provides the critical financial analysis needed by Management

Board to make decisions that affect all Yukoners. While they regularly work to improve Yukon's bigger financial picture, staff in this department also help Yukoners on a daily basis. They are the individuals who deliver timely, efficient, reliable and ongoing services, including bill payments, cash receipts and payroll administration. They do all of this day in and day out to ensure that residents are able to conduct financial transactions with the government without issue. For many, they are the faceless public servants working behind the scenes, but without them, many government services would come to a standstill. For example, you might not know that a majority of the surveys conducted by government departments are compiled with the expertise provided by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics.

While recognizing departmental staff, I would be remiss if I did not highlight the terrific work done by the Management Board Secretariat as well, Mr. Chair. Their work in bringing Management Board up to speed has been indispensable, as has been their ability to ensure the delivery of this very budget.

I would also like to speak now to the detailed estimates for this department. Let it be said that I, as well as the rest of our caucus, truly appreciate the work completed by department staff each and every day. For this reason, I am confident in the Department of Finance's ability to ensure value for money as we seek approval for total appropriations of \$12.9 million in the 2017-18 budget. Of this total, \$12.2 million is for operation and maintenance, while \$648,000 is allocated for capital expenditures.

With respect to operation and maintenance, approval for \$9.75 million is sought for salaries — or basically 80 percent of the total O&M. You will notice an increase of approximately \$2.56 million over the 2016-17 main estimates. This represents the transfer of the Yukon Bureau of Statistics and Business and Economic Research to the department and the money required for the reorganization and the business modernization efforts inside this department.

While the Department of Finance has made significant strides toward improving and modernizing its business practices in the past years, some changes in structure are required for the department to effectively carry out its mandate to provide government with strategic evidence-based recommendations and advice.

Currently, the department excels at conducting transactional debit and investment and accounting functions. However, it does lack the ability to provide timely, accurate and robust fiscal forecasting to bring internal consistency to government's expenditures while preparing the budget. By adding 10 critical positions, the Department of Finance will be able to increase its capacity to develop accurate, Yukon-specific forecasting. It will also place fiscal policy at the forefront of budget development and influence advice to Management Board, leading to decisions based on a consistent set of assumptions across departments that will better support Yukoners.

The addition of a new division, which will be known as the Economics, Fiscal Policy and Statistics division, will

operate in a highly collaborative manner with departments to ensure that all budget planning incorporates the latest information and provides for an internally consistent financial plan. These changes will help the department evolve from a department of budgeting to a true Department of Finance. This business modernization will boost strategic management and leadership capacities within the organization and will allow the department to better fulfill its role as an organizational leader. Our government is making a commitment to evidence-based decision-making, and this commitment we intend to keep.

For the first time in recent memory, documents now include economic and population outlooks, thereby improving the sophistication of the government's budgeting process. I would also like to highlight the \$250,000 in this section that will go toward establishing the Financial Advisory Panel. While I spoke to this in great detail during the government budget speech and in general debate, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that funds spent on establishing this time-limited panel will ensure better value for money for the government as a whole. It will also ensure that Yukon finances are sound now and into the future while meeting the fundamental needs of Yukoners.

Because we want to hear from all Yukoners on their financial priorities, I have directed the panel to engage with residents, First Nation governments, municipalities, businesses and organizations on how we make the Government of Yukon financially sustainable now and into the future. This panel will submit a report containing options for financial tools associated with all major government spending decisions. These options will form the Government of Yukon's financial decisions and policies for the next five years and will lead to decisions that will better reflect spending priorities of Yukoners.

The remaining two percent associated with O&M consists of an ongoing transfer payment related to the public utilities income tax transfer. This payment provides a rebate to Yukon ratepayers through a grant to the Yukon Energy Corporation to cover deemed income taxes collected from local electricity providers.

While it is clear that there are sufficient opportunities to identify and to reduce inefficiencies and duplication, a coordinated client-focused approach is needed. This is why our government is demonstrating this commitment by making key investments in the Department of Finance, including increasing fiscal analysis as well as establishing a program evaluation function.

With respect to capital expenditures, this department is seeking approval for \$648,000 for 2017-18. Of this amount, \$250,000 is allocated for upgrades to the government's accounting system; \$200,000 will be used for the planning and design associated with the new budgeting system; \$140,000 is associated with furniture, equipment and moving costs associated with the departmental business modernization; and \$58,000 is set aside for computers, workstations, printers and a coveted envelope stuffer.

On the revenue side, we will see growth again this year as the federal government continues to make important significant investments to the Yukon. We recognize that this investment from Canada continues to allow Yukoners to realize many of their key priorities and goals. In 2017-18, this amount is expected to be \$972 million, which is an increase of \$25 million.

This 2.7-percent increase from the previous year can be largely attributed to an increase in population related to the rest of Canada. As I said earlier, these transfers are critical with respect to offering the numerous services required to make lives better for all Yukoners. This money helps support a diverse and growing Yukon economy, contributes to healthy, sustainable communities, improves the wellness of our people, and allows for continued improvements in government-to-government relationships.

The Government of Yukon as well as the Department of Finance continues to work hard to ensure that our health agreements provide Yukoners with funding and services that address all health care needs. Yukon's new agreement on the latest health accord provides additional new funding for mental health and for home care as well as an annual percentage increase to the Canadian health transfer funds.

As members are very much aware, Yukon benefits from Canada's transfer in three subareas: the Canada health transfer, which for this year it is set at \$38 million; the Canada social transfer, which is once again set at \$14 million; and the territorial funding formula total, in which we see an increase from \$895 million in 2016-17 to \$919 million in 2017-18. This represents a 2.7-percent increase in this area as well.

Finally we're looking at tax revenue. You will note stable increases of three percent over the last year, with some notable changes. The department's 2017-18 budget estimates reflect \$101 million in tax revenue for Yukon. This figure takes into account adjustments to the corporate tax rate by reducing it from three to two percent for small corporations and from 15 to 12 percent under the general rate.

It is the government's priority to use tax measures to help create jobs for Yukoners. This change supports our commitment of offering competitive taxation rates that will allow Yukoners to invest in marketing, training and innovation in order to create more good jobs for Yukoners. This change will also encourage economic activity in the territory by creating a favourable corporate tax rate for those looking to do business in the Yukon.

But, as I said in the budget speech, we will act on evidence. We will study the implications of future decisions to determine how to take the next steps. We will take the steps needed, but we will first look where we are stepping so that we will get it right.

The government has also made a decision to increase taxes associated with cigarettes and other tobacco products. This government continues to work to support Yukoners in their tobacco cessation efforts. Raising the tax rate on cigarettes and loose tobacco will support the government's effort to support long-term well-being and the quality of life

for Yukoners. This change will also close the gap caused by a decade of inaction when it comes to keeping up with inflation.

In 2017-18, these two changes work out to a near net-zero change with respect to overall taxation revenue. Revenue from other sources like banking and investments as well as received interest payments of an additional \$3.3 million will account for an additional \$3.3 million in revenue. This concludes the numbers for the Department of Finance.

While the main estimates are a great snapshot of the many activities that the Department of Finance undertakes in order to support a growing economy and to provide good jobs for Yukoners, it does not capture my appreciation for what they do. In that vein, I would like to end my remarks by thanking the staff of the Department of Finance for their dedication and professional contributions to this government and to the territory. They truly are committed to providing honest, ethical management of public money and valuing integrity, trustworthiness, responsiveness and reliability in their work, and adhering to professional and financial standards. They provide sound financial and fiscal planning advice and analysis and also provide financial leadership while aiming for innovation and straightforward and transparent outcomes.

I am very fortunate to be joined here today by the deputy minister of Finance, Katherine White. Kate, along with her senior management team and the fine folks who work within the department are largely responsible for much of this department's success. Kate will assist me with answering the questions from the opposition today.

Mr. Chair, I would like to thank you and I would like to thank the members in advance for their questions on these appropriations, and I look forward to fruitful discussions.

Chair: Would the members like to take 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 Vote 12, Department of Finance. Is there any further general debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance?

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Chair, first of all, beginning with debate on the Department of Finance, I would like to welcome the official, the deputy minister, here and thank all of the staff at the Department of Finance for their work, not only in preparing the budget for this department but, in fact, their work in preparing the entire budget. I just want to again express appreciation on behalf of myself and members of the Yukon Party caucus for the work done by staff of the Department of Finance, dating back especially over the 14 years we were in government, for their assistance day in and day out. I also want to make clear to staff that, while they have and may hear me criticize decisions by the Minister of Finance and Cabinet, our criticism is directed at those

ultimately making the decisions, not at staff of the department. I would like to thank staff, as well, and note that, while we do have some concerns with the budgeting format, we recognize that those decisions are made at a Cabinet level and they're not ultimately the responsibility of department staff.

I would like to again thank everyone — especially the staff of Finance, but also finance staff within individual departments — for their able assistance over the past 14 years when the Yukon Party was in office. Without their assistance, both in the Department of Finance and in individual departments, we would not have been able to achieve the responsible fiscal management and leave the Yukon with a very healthy surplus situation, as we did — not to mention that, during that time period, we achieved a great many operational priorities and achievements across departments.

I won't name names, not knowing the comfort level of former staff of having their names brought up in the House. I would just like to acknowledge some former staff at the Department of Finance for their work and assistance to not only myself but to the entire Management Board during those 14 years. That includes three former deputy ministers, two ADMs, a director of budgets, Management Board analysts, and as well as all of the current staff. Without naming names, I would like to acknowledge as well one who was the very first Finance director who had to assist me in my department during my first portfolio of Health and Social Services, and is still to this day providing capable service to the government in her current role. Thank you to all of them.

In moving on to some of my specific questions to the Minister of Finance, I will note that I am not actually ready to ask that many questions in the Department of Finance since the minister and I had a fairly lengthy debate during general debate on the budget. I would like to ask the Premier a couple of questions related to some of the planned changes here in the Department of Finance. The first question I would ask is: Of any new positions which have been transferred from other departments or are being added to the Department of Finance, are any of those positions intended to deal with either administering a carbon tax once it comes in or administering rebates? If the answer is no, can the government estimate what additional resources are required to achieve the Yukon's role in whatever that new tax model looks like?

Secondly, relating to the change that we've been advised of that the typical reporting of financial variances collected by the Department of Finance — we understand that there are increased strategic plan reporting requirements, which again I would note there may be some merit to, but one of the first concerns that sprang to my mind is about how much additional paperwork requirements would be entailed by what we understand would be a requirement for the strategic plan report, along with the tabling of the department budget submissions when the call letter is issued, as well as the period 5, 8 and 12 variance reports. Again, that specific question if the Premier, as part of their approach to evidence-based decision-making, has done a full analysis and costing of the estimated additional hours within the Department of Finance and across government departments, including deputy

minister, ADM and director time that will be required to deal with the new paperwork requirements because of this increased strategic plan reporting within any given fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Silver: With respect to the carbon-pricing mechanism from the federal government, I would say that one of the new positions that would be dealing inside of that would be the new tax and fiscal policy analysis position. I wouldn't say that this is their only thing. This would definitely go into their department, as they have a whole raft of other responsibilities, but that would be an example of somebody who would be dealing with carbon pricing, once we know what the federal government's direction is on that.

As far as strategic planning goes, it has always been done in Corporate Services from each of the departments and that will not change. It's the same as before, but again, I think further debate in ECO would probably be a better place for that, as far as the policy piece, if the member opposite wants to draw down into government policies in that regard. Strategic planning, again, is always in Corporate Services within each of the departments. I guess what would be new is that this process is now aligning with the budgetary process as well.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that answer from the Premier.

I would note — since it seems that the assumption today has been that this will be largely handled within Corporate Services within each department — that I would just add the cautionary note and leave it today as friendly advice for the Premier and officials to consider that although I know and agree in theory the strategic planning is primarily done within Corporate Services within each department, functionally in every department that I have been minister for that does involve Corporate Services working with individual managers and ultimately a dialogue in seeking approval from ADMs for individual departments, with the deputy minister and often the minister, before that plan is signed off on.

My concern is that reporting on that plan may involve unanticipated amounts of staff time being spent on reporting that may end up — I recognize that it is well-intentioned, but my genuine concern is whether there is more paperwork and staff time requirements than anticipated, and whether this will add unintentional additional time costs to the government system that's taking some of these key people away from meeting with Yukoners, reviewing individual projects, going out to communities and so on and so forth.

I'll just leave that as a consideration for the Premier and officials and just suggest that, if they haven't fully costed that out, taken a look at that and asked departments — especially some of the larger ones — what they think the impact will be, they consider that and consider whether they'll continue with the requirement of new reporting on strategic plans with the variance reports, or whether they might simplify that or ask, for example, if departments could simply advise them of any significant changes versus a lengthy report at that time. I'm not asking for even a response on that; I'm just leaving that as a suggestion. The concern about staff time was one of the first ones that occurred to me, especially senior staff time.

Moving on to another area — to just reiterate the request we made before in general debate on the budget that we look forward to seeing the terms of reference of the Financial Advisory Panel quickly. Though I am not going to belabour the point, as we have already discussed it, I think it was a mistake to not include any current or past government staff on that panel to help broaden the capacity of that group. I think I have made those points before so I'm just going to reiterate them and leave it there.

I would ask the Premier to provide an update on is the territorial funding formula negotiations, and whether those negotiations on the renewal agreement have started — and, if not, when they are likely to — and whether they have any indication at this point that there is going to be a significant change in the agreement structure. The reason I mention this is that the territorial funding formula, from agreement to agreement, largely depending on the federal government of the day and their relationship with the territorial governments — there have been times where the next agreement has not had significant change in it. We have seen within the evolution of the TFF agreement, going back to the 1980s and 1990s, that at one point not only was the agreement significantly smaller, but prior to government successfully negotiating a change to the structure, one of the ongoing concerns of governments of every stripe, back in the 1980s and 1990s, was about what was then called the perversity factor, wherein under the structure at that point in time, for every dollar of own-source revenue that was received, there was a corresponding reduction in federal revenue. At one point, if memory serves, that went as high as \$1.29 in lost federal revenue for every dollar of territorial own-source revenue, collected from everything from liquor tax, land revenues and so on and so forth.

While that is history in terms of TFF agreements, the point I'm making is that if the will of the federal government were to change significantly, there can be a big impact on the TFF. In past territorial funding formulas, there have sometimes been adjustments on more of an annual basis. In the past agreement, the original calculation was the starting year and it used a highly complex formula starting with the growth's expenditure base factoring all provinces and territories across the country and then adjusted based on a number of factors, including population change and expenditures and revenues across the country, with the formula influenced in fact by a number of complicated factors.

The basic elements of it were starting from the gross expenditure base across the country then the population-adjusted growth escalator would, in every year, make adjustments for that fiscal year starting with the original calendar year of the gross expenditure base as calculated across the country.

With that rather long and complicated — for anyone not familiar with it — structure explained, my question as to whether we're looking at if the TFF negotiations have begun or are underway or are about to begin — whether the Premier and officials have clarity on whether there is going to be any notable change in that structure; whether it's going to continue

to have a starting year factoring in the gross expenditure base and then using the PAGE calculator every year; whether there is a different structure this time; and whether the federal government is proposing any significant changes.

I'll just leave it there and I look forward to any information the Premier as Minister of Finance can provide.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I know the member opposite was more waxing than asking questions for the first two pieces, but again I just want to reiterate as far as our reorganization that we're not anticipating this causing more paperwork or more staff time, so that's where we are with that.

Also, the member opposite mentioned some advice as far as the panel goes. As far as the panel's working relationship with the department — I absolutely agree, they will be working hand in hand. They will be having the expertise of the Department of Finance and other departments as they go through their process through the summer. We're looking forward to those conversations and again to getting the terms of reference out to the members opposite.

For those of you listening — just as far as the backup with the territorial funding formula for financing — it's an annual transfer from the federal government to each of the territorial governments and its purpose is to enable those territories and governments to provide the range of programs and services that are comparable to the rest of Canada. The amount the Yukon receives is based in large part on changes in provincial government spending from previous years. In 2015, Statistics Canada did the recalculation that the member opposite — his question, I believe, is kind of a warning based upon what was witnessed when they were in government and it was a recalculation of historical provincial spending, spending growth rates and revising those numbers downward.

To do the full story, this did result in Yukon receiving \$23 million less than was forecasted for the fiscal year 2016-17. The Government of Canada then subsequently changed the calculation formula in 2016-17 and future years. As a result of that change, \$17 million was added back to Yukon's amounts for the fiscal year, and we will receive higher amounts in subsequent years as we have noticed this year.

The change also meant that the territorial governments will have more certainty and stability in the amounts that are forecasted to be received since the recalculation will have a much less significant impact on the territorial formula financing escalation rate. The conversation that I have had with the federal minister on this topic is about certainty. Certainty for the economy comes from a certainty from the federal transfer. The federal minister agrees with that statement. As far as conversations, we are working among our officials, but conversations have not yet started — to answer the member's question about the TFF — but we are eagerly awaiting those conversations. They are pending — very quickly. In conversations with Minister Morneau on the TFF, I have reiterated that our position is that the principles of the TFF are very important and that we are in agreement on that statement as far as the escalation rate, as far as consistency, as far as the ability to forecast how much money is going to be

coming in future years. Again, that was reiterated and agreed upon by the federal minister.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the Premier's explanation on that and note that the Premier was referring to a specific calculation change done by the federal government that was, from our view, a unilateral change. I am not going to debate the politics of it so much as just the specifics of it. I don't think the minister and I are necessarily even disagreeing on this point.

I just want to reiterate the importance of the devil being in the details on the territorial funding formula and that if there is the ability, whether through a StatsCan recalculation or federal choice or both, for adjustment within the TFF, there is risk in terms of certainty for budgeting. If a change was made, for example, so that, rather than taking the country-wide picture of the gross expenditure base from year one of the next agreement and then factoring it in based on the population-adjusted growth escalator, which basically — the key point is that if the agreement is structured properly, we should have certainty that at least the funding formula isn't going down in a fiscal year. The devil is really in the fine print here.

My point to the Premier is that I would sincerely urge him and the officials to pay very close attention to the details of the formula as negotiations begin — to start early by reaching out to the premiers of NWT and Nunavut, if he hasn't already done so, to try to come up with a common approach on key elements and noting that the federal government does have the big stick in that negotiation. If there isn't a united pan-northern approach, there is a risk that they can effectively dictate the terms of the new agreement. While ultimately, of course, they could choose not to listen to the three territories, the Yukon, NWT and Nunavut are much stronger working together than working separately.

I won't spend a lot more time on this. I understand the status of negotiation. I am just encouraging the Premier to reach out early to his counterparts in other jurisdictions, to pay very close attention and ask officials about any proposed changes to the agreement, from a hopefully united pan-northern approach — propose some minor changes that would prevent that type of fluctuation downwards in current agreements based on federal recalculations, and to do their level best to negotiate that.

Those are my points on that area. I would just ask the Premier — moving on to another file. We've heard about a number of the new federal infrastructure funds that the new federal government has put in place. Can the minister confirm — with those funds, are there any that have been booked at this point within the future fiscal years as receivables, or are those still project-specific in those cases for some of those new infrastructure funds? Option three is: Are you for waiting for additional clarity from the federal government on some of the new funds — of what the Yukon will be eligible for and whether we receive a predictable allocation or whether it's project-specific and potentially not yet booked in future fiscal years?

Hon. Mr. Silver: No, they will get booked. They are project-specific, to answer the member opposite's question. If the member would like to talk to the Minister of Community Services in his debate time in Committee of the Whole, he can give you more of an update and breakdown. In general, they will get booked. This is on a project-specific basis, to answer his question, from the options he provided.

Mr. Cathers: That does answer my question — the Premier's indication that they will get booked. My question was not whether they would be off balance sheet accounting but whether those amounts have currently been booked or have yet to be booked. What I believe the Premier is saying is that some of those new amounts will be booked once projects are approved.

Let's see; what was my next question here? The Council of the Federation and the premiers, in negotiating federal health funding — the premiers had agreed on an amount they were requesting per year. Our understanding is that the actual negotiations on that health care funding ended up with a lower annual escalator. I'm sure he doesn't have it on him, but would the Premier be willing to provide a comparison chart, showing what the premiers had requested as the initial negotiating position and what was actually negotiated by the federal government, and comparing that, year to year, request versus actual agreement?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. I can speak to this, as opposed to going to the Minister of Health and Social Services. As the member opposite knows, these conversations were being had in the finance ministers' conversations in tandem with the health ministers. There's a little bit of a history there as to how it found its way to the finance table, but we'll save that for another day.

When we went into negotiation, Mr. Chair, we took a look at the difference between what the provinces and territories wanted — 5.2 percent of the escalator — and what the federal government was willing to give — the 3.5. The negotiations started with these rates. If you take a look at the difference that would mean to the Yukon, it's about \$1 million. If you take a look at provinces, it's billions of dollars. So you can imagine the debate, as I'm chairing this conference with all premiers, as far as the provinces really wanting to have a united front to take a look at considerations for Quebec and these bigger jurisdictions where, in the balance in those numbers, it's billions of dollars' difference in funding, whereas our focus was THIF funding, the investment in THIF, the health investment fund.

That's a lot more money than the \$1 million in the differential between these numbers. Again, I'm using averages here for the sake of conversation. It's pretty close to \$1 million in the difference between those two rates.

I believe the process worked really well, insofar as we found that there was no negotiation room from Ottawa. They kept on saying that this is the rate and would go off into conversations from the provinces' perspective — especially Quebec — saying you can't determine how we spend our

money and this is not enough for what the *Canada Health Act* says.

The conversations were arduous. They were long and they were involved. We took the approach of solidarity, which kind of parallels the member opposite's question when it comes to a united north. I totally agree with that comment and we have used that in the pan-Canadian framework. We've also used that when we went to the finance ministers meeting and with the health ministers and we expanded it Canada-wide. We stood strong and we stood strong for the announcement and then from there, negotiations started as far as other pockets of money and those other pockets of money — for us, it was really important to get THIF back on the table. It was set to expire and there was no desire from the federal government to continue that funding, but we did get it reinstated.

Getting that money reinstated — \$24 million over four years — is a more substantial amount of money for Yukon. When you take a look at quality of care, when you take a look at how Yukoners deserve the same quality of care as the rest of Canada, that money allows us to determine how we spend federal money on those things that make the quality of care equal here, living in the north. That was an important thing for us and I think with our opinion of going in with provinces and territories and explaining at that table — it was the difference in amounts for us and we said that. We said, this is not necessarily — the difference between those is important to us, but more important is this target funding.

I think the Department of Health and Social Services did a fantastic job of working with their federal counterparts, of working with the provinces and territories and again, Intergovernmental Relations in ECO and the Department of Finance — they provided me with the information background to go in there and have a quality conversation and the confidence of my convictions.

Mr. Cathers: I thank the Premier for the response. I'm going to ask a fairly specific question because it's one that relates to how a corporation is booked in the Public Accounts. For reference of the Premier and officials, I'm referring to page 41 of the Consolidated Financial Statements in the Public Accounts 2015-16. As noted on page 41, the Yukon Development Corporation's opening balance of accumulated surplus and net financial assets were adjusted because of the requirement that, in accordance with international financial reporting standards and the requirements of both the Public Sector Accounting Board and the Auditor General, there was a requirement for government business enterprises to transition to international financial reporting standards, commonly called IFRS, as issued by the International Accounting Standards Board. That transition for its year-end, which occurred on December 31, 2015 — it has a different year-end from the Government of Yukon — those financial standards were prepared in accordance with IFRS and IFRS 1, which is the first-time adoption of international financial reporting standards. IFRS provides a specific requirement for an entity's initial adoption of the international financial reporting standards.

In doing that, as a requirement of changing to meet those new standards — “In preparing its opening IFRS statement of financial position, YDC adjusted amounts reported previously in its financial statements in accordance with Part V of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada Handbook (‘Previous GAAP’)” — and GAAP, by the way — it doesn’t list it on this page of the Public Accounts that I was mostly quoting from — GAAP was generally accepted accounting principles.

Skipping over a few lines it refers to the fact that, “As a result of YDC’s transition to IFRS, certain opening balances in the Government’s consolidated financial statements were affected. The opening balance of accumulated surplus in net financial assets decreased by \$5,033,000 primarily due to IFRS transition adjustments in the area of post-employment benefits.”

For reference of Hansard, most of what I just read in is a quote from page 41 of the 2015-16 Public Accounts.

The question for the minister is whether — since there were initial adoption standards required for the reporting of IFRS, have there been any adjustments since the 2015-16 Public Accounts in how any of the Yukon Development Corporation assets, surplus or liabilities are booked? If not, are there any that are anticipated in the upcoming fiscal year and, if so, is the minister able to tell me what the value of those adjustments would be, now that YDC is fully under the international financial reporting standards regime?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is a very technical question, but the member opposite is correct that the IASB issued IFRS 14, the regulatory deferral accounts, which does allow for entities, subject to their regulation rates, to continue to apply its previous GAAP accounting processes and policies for regulatory deferrals on account balances when it first adopts to the IFRS. In that transition process — to answer the member’s specific question, we haven’t done any yet, as far as anticipated. What we could do — again, this is largely made for the consolidations. This is consolidated budgeting we’re talking about. I don’t want to talk on behalf of the Yukon Development Corporation’s accounting processes and how they’re adhering to these changes but we can make available for the member opposite Tina Frisch, the comptroller, for any specific questions on this issue that the member opposite has when it comes to anticipated or projected or changes moving forward, in terms of the corporation and Public Accounts.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the response from the Premier. I know it was a very technical question and I would be happy to take him up on that offer for a briefing from officials on that. For anyone listening, it might sound like a fairly specific question, because it does have an effect of \$5 million here and there, and pretty soon you’re talking real money. It was one I wanted to ask the minister.

My next big question would be — as members will be familiar with, on page 51 of the Public Accounts, under the borrowing statements, the end of the fiscal year for 2015-16, the Government of Yukon had available \$198,442,000 in variable borrowing capacity.

Has the government, since taking office, taken on any new borrowings or long-term debt, or is that number still accurate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: No, no new borrowing, so that number is currently accurate.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the response from the minister. The Leader of the Official Opposition passed me a reference to an Ottawa report on Yukon’s health care deal. I know a deal signed is a deal signed, so we are gazing in a rear-view mirror to an extent. I would just note that the study, as reported in the *Yukon News* in February of this year and published by the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, finds that the health care spending in Ontario should increase by 4.5 to five percent per year after 2018, and references the fact that the deal signed by provinces and territories in recent weeks offers only a guaranteed annual increase of three percent to Canadian health transfer payments.

That data, which was published by the institute’s chief economist, Randall Bartlett, noted that the Yukon’s health expenditures increased by an average of 7.4 percent in each year between 2010 and 2016. Stepping aside from the article for a moment, I would just note that this includes factors such as aging population as well as, in some cases, numbers that would show up in there, increases to areas such as the funding of the 811 health line, the bursary programs for doctors, nurses and other health professionals, as well as the family physician incentive program. All of those would factor into our health care spending. There are some new programs that — hopefully the member would share the view — are valuable and constitute increased spending as the result of government’s decision, not necessarily forced growth.

I would reference that article from February 10, 2017 and note that we’re still concerned about the amount of money that is provided by the federal government in the health care accord to provinces and concerned by the amount of funding that’s provided to the Yukon government under the territorial health investment fund, particularly that rate of growth. Without belabouring the point, as I know I have raised it — and both the minister and Minister of Health and Social Services have responded — and I raised it previously in debate — we are concerned about the government’s current funding agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and don’t believe that one percent per year is sufficient.

I’m not going to belabour any of those points at this point in time, but I would note to the Premier that we are not just raising these points for political reasons; we are raising them out of genuine concern. Please take that into account and continue to evaluate both the adequacy of the Yukon government’s funding of the Hospital Corporation and, along with other provinces and territories, recognize that the federal government — the agreements are not quite keeping up with our rate of forced growth in those areas. That is something that, to the extent that provinces and territories can, looking for increased funding out of other agreements or other pots or through the territorial funding formula negotiation that would assist us — this is a very important consideration that should be kept on the front burner for the Premier each and every day

when he is thinking about what can be done in working with the federal government and working with jurisdictions across the country.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will take that under advisement. I don't think I heard a specific question other than a whole bunch of advice from the member opposite.

What he is quoting from — that is where the bargaining started from as far as the provinces and territories. The 5.2 percent that we came up as a number took into consideration the data that the member opposite is speaking to.

Again, I will just reiterate what I said before. To us, the difference between 5.2 and 3.5 is roughly about \$1 million. THIF is \$25.6 million over four years. I think we did a good job of making sure that we re-established that funding that was set to sunset. Again, over four years, for that to sunset would have been a big deal for Yukon because the quality of service with medevacs and medical travel — that is where some of that money goes. It allows Yukon to have more control over how we actually spend that money. That was really important to Yukoners and it was really important to this government.

Mr. Cathers: I thank the Premier for the answers. I have no further questions at this time in general debate on the Department of Finance and would pass the floor to the Leader of the NDP.

Ms. Hanson: I do thank the member from the Official Opposition as we approach 5:20 p.m.

I want to echo the thanks to the officials from the Department of Finance for the briefing on the changes — in particular, on the changes to the Department of Finance and how that will improve, I hope, the kind of budget forecasting.

I couldn't help but reflect, as I was listening to the many pieces of advice that were being cast across the way, that perhaps one of the reasons why there is some hesitation in the Official Opposition to the notion of integrating strategic and financial planning is that, over the last 14 years, we saw the result of a lack of that integrated way. I recall the many debates in the Legislative Assembly where my former colleague, the MLA from Riverdale South, would use a phrase that is actually a paraphrase of one of those management fellows, Peter Drucker. She would always say that, "You can't manage what you can't measure." Basically what Drucker was saying is that you can't know whether or not you are successful unless you define the success and you measure it.

We're encouraged by the notion that the Department of Finance, in its role as a core central agency, together — from what I've heard and I certainly look for confirmation from the Minister of Finance — with ECO will in fact be playing that central agency role, working with line departments and agencies to ensure that there is consistency of both an integration in our strategic planning of the financial implications of what is being planned — because I can tell you right now that when I look at strategic plans and even when I look down to ops plans, I don't see very much about what is measurable. I don't see what the expected outcomes are, and I don't see when and who is accountable for

achieving that. Those are all things that are integral to ministers being able to stand in this Legislative Assembly and say, "We did it" or "We didn't, and this is what we're going to do to fix it."

We are encouraged by those proposals that were set out. We would like to also commend the notion of integrating the economic forecasting into the Department of Finance. I think that what we are seeing — and I'm hopeful that this will prove itself out — is that maturity of governance with respect to understanding the implications of decisions that are taken — are not one-offs and they do have an overall impact on how government can or cannot function.

During the presentation, or the overview that was provided by officials, there was — the minister spoke a little bit about the expert Financial Advisory Panel. It is my understanding that at the beginning of May, there was going to be a briefing for those new panel members and that they would be finalizing the terms of reference. I have two stars beside a note that there would be an opportunity for opposition in May — so we're in May — to be briefed by or about the actual workings of this expert Financial Advisory Panel, who would then be going on in the beginning of June to start their public engagement. So can the minister confirm that there will be an opportunity for opposition engagement with this advisory panel?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As far as the Financial Advisory Panel goes, I'll be meeting with the panel this Thursday. After that, we're still on schedule for a briefing, as we said to the members opposite, in May. We will determine at that time when specifically, so we'll have more information for the member opposite as of our meeting in a couple of days.

I do want to thank the member opposite for her comments on the reorganization. I do want to say when it comes to the previous government, there was an initiative. It's worth giving credit where credit is due when it comes to the innovative budgeting initiative from the previous government. I do believe that was an attempt to do some things internally as far as fiscal accountability. It's our opinion as well that if the department didn't have the resources, both human resources and systems to implement that concept, it would be really hard to track whether or not the objectives would actually happen or if the savings actually were there.

I completely agree with the member opposite as far as defining success. In my previous career, it was about assessment. It was about three different styles of assessment. You assess where you are, you assess as you go and you assess at the end of a term. For me, that's an important piece. We call it assessment as, of and for. To me, the reorganization of the Finance department is doing that. It's assessing where we are and where we want to be. That's the Financial Advisory Panel, but it's also the reorganization with the new departments and bringing the Bureau of Statistics into the department as well.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for his comments. The expert Financial Advisory Panel will be presenting options for achieving — it's a pretty broad statement — fiscal sustainability. It's my understanding that the intent is to

inform the 2018-19 budget. At the same time, the department is going to be spending 200 this year and another 300 next year in a new budgeting system. Is it the intent to have that new budgeting system completed by the next fiscal year?

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

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Hanson that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, 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 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled May 16, 2017:

34-2-14

Response to Mr. Kent re: list of clean water and wastewater fund projects (Streicker)

The following document was filed May 16, 2017:

34-2-4

Consultation period for proposed amendments to *Vital Statistics Act* and *Human Rights Act*, letter re (dated March 22, 2017) from Patti McLeod, Member for Watson Lake to Hon. Pauline Frost, Minister of Health and Social Services, and Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Justice (Cathers)