



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Monday, March 11, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2019 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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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, March 11, 2019 — 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 made to the Order Paper.

Motion No. 405, notice of which was given by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King on March 7, 2019, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it is similar to Motion No. 294, which the House adopted as amended on October 31, 2018.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: For the tribute today on the anniversary of the wholly elected Yukon Territorial Council, I would like to ask all my colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly to help me in welcoming to the Legislative Assembly Carolynn Phelps and John Phelps — brother and sister. Their great-grandfather Willard was one of the first councillors.

Applause

Speaker: I would like to introduce Max Harvey, the Chief Electoral Officer with Elections Yukon, who is also here for the tribute to the 110th anniversary of the election of the first wholly elected Yukon Territorial Council.

Applause

Mr. Kent: I would like to introduce a constituent of mine, Ms. Jen Bugg, and a friend of mine, Brooke McKenzie, have joined us here today as well.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of 110th anniversary of the first wholly elected Yukon Territorial Council

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise today on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to the 110th anniversary of the first wholly elected Yukon Territorial Council, which was formed on June 28, 1909.

For those of us who might need a refresher on Yukon history, I am referring to the anniversary of the first time that

Yukon citizens were able to elect all of the people who represented them in the territory.

The 10 men — and, yes, they were all men — on the Yukon Territorial Council were not a government in anything like the sense of what we have here today — a devolved Yukon government — but their role was to act as an advisory body to the Commissioner of Yukon. The Council was formed in 1898, which was the year that the *Yukon Territory Act* was passed by Parliament, creating the territory that we now call home.

At first, each of the Council members was appointed. Then, over the years, there was a mix of appointed and elected members until 1909, when each of those members was elected. The elected Council was a significant milestone in the history of Yukon governance, culminating in the *Yukon Act* of 2002 that devolved responsibility for lands and resources to the territory.

I will give you the names of the 10 members of the Council, and I am sure that they will sound familiar to you — some, if not all of them: Rodrick Ashbaugh, George Black, Charles Bossuyt, Maxime Landreville, Robert Lowe, Willard Phelps, Frank McAlpine, Angus McLeod, James W. Murphy and Andrew Smith.

I mentioned that the year 1909 was the first time that Yukon citizens were able to elect all of the people who represented them in the territory. It is vital to point out that aboriginal people and women were not able to vote at this time. Aboriginal people in Yukon did not have the right to vote until 1961, which is also when they were at last allowed to be elected as council members. According to my math, that is a mere 58 years ago. Many Yukoners in their prime today would have grown up with the knowledge that they were not permitted to vote. Women gained the vote in Canada in 1921, but that did not include aboriginal or Asian women. That took a few more decades.

Let us be mindful that democracy as we know it today has not been with us for very long, and even today we still have a great deal to do to create a fair society where equality and reconciliation are a reality. I encourage you to look back at the history of governance in Yukon and celebrate not only the steady maturing of the territorial government that I stand here representing today, but also the trail-blazing achievements of Yukon First Nations, who are leaders in self-governance across Canada and around the world.

Applause

In recognition of 50th anniversary of Polar Games

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 50th anniversary of the Polar Games. This annual sports event has been a celebrated tradition since 1969. Originally, the Polar Games was the only event of its kind in the north and drew elite high school athletes from Alaska, northern British Columbia and the Yukon. Over time, as other sporting events came into play, the Polar Games became a non-competitive event that uses sport to introduce elementary school students to a sense of community.

This year, the Polar Games were held in Whitehorse from January 31 to February 1, 2019. Three hundred and seventy-five grade 6 students from 10 Yukon communities participated in the 50th Polar Games.

The annual two-day event emphasizes participation, learning, trying new activities and making new friends. There is no need for scorekeeping or for medals; it is just about having fun. Of course, the Polar Games dance remains an anticipated highlight.

In the Polar Games, students are teamed together with students from other schools — a great opportunity to make new friends from across the territory — with colourful t-shirts autographed by teammates and new friends, which are treasured for years to come. Every student picks up to six of the many sports that are available and are encouraged to try something they've never tried before — soccer, basketball, swimming, curling, broomball and archery are favourites at the games.

Different sports are added each year depending on volunteers and funding. Last year, students played bocce and badminton and tried speed skating. This year, speed skating returned, plus students were introduced to skittle ball, lacrosse and hip hop dancing.

I would like to recognize the dedication and the commitment of Dave Stockdale — one of the founders of the original Polar Games — for his many years of leadership and inspiration in this event. The Yukon Schools Athletic Association now organizes this event. Thanks to them for giving Yukon athletes quality sports opportunities at the Polar Games and throughout the year.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge in particular the contributions made by Marc Senecal, Peter Grundmanis, Ron Billingsley, Jeff Cressman and Vickie Dawe. Without them, the Polar Games 50 years on would not happen.

For years the Whitehorse Curling Club has volunteered its support and facility, and the Canada Games Centre staff provides their tireless assistance every year. Thank you to both those organizations for their support and patience during two very hectic days of grade 6 students running through their facilities. Without those organizations, Mr. Speaker, the Polar Games would simply not be possible. Finally, I want to thank the coaches, teachers, parents and volunteers for all they do to make the Polar Games an event to look forward to year after year.

The Polar Games offer a unique approach to building community. Grade 6 is an integral age for student development, when they are learning to spread their wings and try new things. Polar Games provides a safe, fun place for such experiences. May this valuable tradition continue for another 50 years.

Thank you, mahsi' cho, gūnilschish.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Yukon Polar Games.

I am sure many of us in the Legislature and in the gallery today remember the excitement of the Polar Games, which began as a high school competition. The games have evolved over the years to become a fun-based activity for grade 6 students from across the Yukon. The evolution of the Polar Games has seen the competition go from a quest for medals and awards to an experience-based, try-a-new-sport event that is forging new friendships and allows students to play and compete in a fun environment.

Students from Alaska, northern BC and NWT have attended the games over the years, but changes to the structure of the games now limits it to participation to Yukon students only. Over the years, the games went from high school to junior high and were later limited to grades 5 and 6. In 2013, participation criteria were changed once again, and since then it has been an event solely for grade 6 students.

As was mentioned, sports have varied over the years as well, including bowling, curling, handball, soccer, basketball, broomball, speed skating and much more. I remember it was always fun to come to the big city and see and meet other community participants — I am dating myself here. We were billeted with local families, and they ensured that we got around the big city of Whitehorse with two movie theatres. The Yukon and the Capitol filled quickly with all of us out-of-town kids. Of course, the Saturday night dance was always a highlight for all of us.

We are so pleased that this tradition of fun and healthy competition has been and continues to be a staple of sporting activity in the territory. Congratulations to everyone involved with the games over the last 50 years. Special thanks to the brainchild of Carole Keddy, who was the physical education teacher from F.H. Collins, and also to Dave Stockdale, who was integral in carrying on the games over all these decades. We look forward to continuing to support Yukon's unique Polar Games.

Applause

Ms. White: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Polar Games. This two-day event has been a rite of passage for Yukon kids for half a century. Dave Stockdale should be given the credit for its inception and was still in charge when I was able to attend more than 30 years ago.

As the Polar Games continued to grow, leadership and planning was taken over by the Yukon Schools Athletic Association. Hundreds of Yukon students now descend on the Canada Games Centre for two days of sporting activities, and most importantly, as we have heard mentioned, the dance. For many, it's their first-ever school dance and it's a highlight for most of them.

This morning I was told the story of two friends who were travelling through Vietnam. They were staying far off the beaten path at a small hostel on the banks of the Son Kong River. The only place to connect to Wi-Fi was in the lounge room. They sat down next to a young person who was skyping home. When that young woman asked to speak to her younger brother, my friend couldn't help but overhear the mention of

the Polar Games, and he thought to himself: “Oh cool, somewhere else has a Polar Games.” Then when she asked about the dance, he thought: “Whoa, wait a minute.” Sure enough, when asked, she too was from the Yukon, and her little brother had just attended his first school dance ever — the Polar Games dance.

So Mr. Speaker, we all know that events like this one don’t happen in a vacuum, so a big thank you to all the teachers and the volunteers who make this event so successful each and every year. The games have grown and adapted over the decades, but one thing remains the same — it’s awesome.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Cathers: I have today for tabling a letter dated March 8, 2019, to Hidden Valley Elementary School Council from the Assistant Deputy Minister of Schools and Student Services in the Department of Education.

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. 33: Yukon Government Carbon Price Rebate Implementation Act — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 33, entitled *Yukon Government Carbon Price Rebate Implementation Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 33, entitled *Yukon Government Carbon Price Rebate Implementation Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 33 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further 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 continue to invest in a broad range of housing initiatives.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure adequate funding for the future maintenance of the north Alaska Highway to ensure the highway is kept to the same standard as all other Yukon highways.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately apply an interim withdrawal on staking in the Beaver River watershed in compliance with section 1(g) of the ATAC road agreement between the Government of Yukon and the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier and his Cabinet to recognize the value of services provided by non-governmental organizations funded by the Department of Health and Social Services by immediately ending the funding freeze and providing them with appropriate increased resources through multi-year funding agreements.

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

THAT this House urges the Liberal government to recognize that non-governmental organizations funded by the Department of Health and Social Services provide important services to Yukoners and immediately end its freeze on funding for those NGOs by entering into agreements that appropriately address their current needs.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Dawson City Airport

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Today I am taking an opportunity to update Yukoners on the very real progress that our government is making to modernize and improve the Dawson City Airport. Earlier today, we announced that the airport runway will be closed for paving from Sunday, May 19 until midnight on Sunday, May 26 of this year. These dates and times are tentative and will be dependent on weather. During the closures, no airplanes will be arriving or departing, but helicopters will continue to operate from the Dawson City Airport. I want to urge travellers to contact airlines directly for further information and flight availability.

The paving of the Dawson runway is a commitment we made during the 2016 election, and it is one we are proud to have kept. A Yukon company, Skookum Asphalt Ltd., was awarded the paving contract. The cost is approximately \$6.3 million and is included in this year’s budget. We are also undertaking work on the airport apron and taxiways this year. All told, we are investing approximately \$12 million this year to work to improve the Dawson City Airport. The objective of this airport improvement is to meet the current and future needs of various local and regional stakeholders and airport users.

At this time of year last year, I informed this House of our plans to begin construction on a new maintenance facility at the airport last summer. I can report that work is underway, and the facility is slated for completion in the summer of 2019

— in just a few short months. The new maintenance facility will allow airport staff to work in a dry, heated facility year-round and ensure that airport equipment is safely stored during cold and inclement weather. The new airport maintenance facility has been incorporated into the planning for paving the Dawson City runway. Having a heated maintenance facility at the airport is required to fulfill heightened maintenance standards and needs of a paved runway in the Klondike.

Enhancing our aviation industry is important to growing Yukon's economy, particularly our tourism sector. We will ensure that the airport will meet the needs of the community and its stakeholders and acts as a regional economic and jobs generator for the future. Building a maintenance facility at the Dawson City Airport will protect equipment and help the people who keep flights moving in and out of the airport 365 days a year, even when it's 50 below.

A look at the budget documents released last week shows investments across the board at community aerodromes this year and into the future. I will have more to say about those investments in the coming days. Thank you for the opportunity to update members and all Yukoners on this important initiative.

Mr. Hassard: I would like to thank the minister for this information that he's provided today. I do have some additional questions for the minister that I hope he'll be able to answer when he's back up on his feet again.

I would note that on April 11, 2018, the minister gave another ministerial statement on the topic of the Dawson airport, and at that time he said the government was spending \$7.7 million in 2018 on construction of the maintenance facility for the project at Dawson airport. In today's ministerial statement, the minister says the government is spending approximately \$12 million this year on the airport. So that brings the total up to about \$19.7 million. The minister previously told this House that the budget for the project was closer to \$16 million over three years, so it sounds like the project is going considerably overbudget. Perhaps in his response, the minister can tell us if those costs are going up because of price increases that will come as a result of the carbon tax scheme.

Also, can the minister confirm if this will be a final and total cost for the expenditures on the Dawson airport, or is he anticipating that there will be more money to be spent as well?

Last year, in the response to the ministerial statement, I asked him if all necessary approvals had been received from Transport Canada and Nav Canada with respect to the airport improvements. At that time he wasn't able to answer, but I'm hoping a year has been enough time for him to get those answers for us.

The minister also previously told this House that the operation and maintenance costs at the Dawson airport are expected to go up by around \$700,000 per year due to these changes.

Again, can the minister confirm if that increase is still the same, or has it gone up as well? Further, I'm curious if that's reflected in the budget anywhere.

Regarding the service interruptions at the Dawson airport, I'm wondering how the government will be handling those — and probably most importantly — what is the plan for medevacs that may have to use the Dawson airport at this time of closure?

Finally, going back to another question that I had last year, we know that the Liberals completed a system review of all airports and aerodromes, so we're wondering now what efforts will be put into other communities. For example, the Mayo airport is in need of improvements to deal with increased traffic from the mining activity in the area. Will the minister be making major improvements to all airports or just airports in the Premier's riding?

Ms. Hanson: In response to the ministerial statement, today we have what appears to be a continuation of the trend by this government to stand in this House to re-announce activities or projects already announced. Today is the second annual ministerial statement by the Minister of Highways and Public Works on the paving of the Dawson City Airport.

The timing is curious. First the minister has announced the commencements of expenditures for this project in advance of the approval of this 2019-20 budget item — curious indeed, given the Premier's budget address just last week, wherein he said — and I quote: "We have embraced decisions not for the sake of political expediency..." and "We have examined, discussed and tested our ideas."

My question is: With whom has this government done this examination and testing of ideas about the financial implications of paving the Dawson City Airport? We have raised many questions about this proposed project, not because we object to improvements to our airport infrastructure — of course we do not — but we believe that making this decision when the Premier and Finance minister has repeatedly advised Yukoners that we are in a scarce resource situation, based on a political campaign promise that he made, flies in the face of the facts.

As my colleague from the Official Opposition pointed out when we had a response to the ministerial statement of April 11, 2018 — I asked the minister whether or not he was familiar with the 10-year capital plan and planning report for Dawson City Airport, 2013-23, and the minister assured us in this House that he had read it. He assured us that he understood the implications — the fact that this report says that the airport's runway and approaches will continue to be designated non-instrument, day-use VFR into the foreseeable future.

There were other issues identified in that 10-year plan, and I have asked repeatedly for many details about that, because there are implications of spending money to pave a facility — a runway — that will not change the material facts, nor will it increase the accessibility. The topography of Dawson City Airport has not changed. Transport Canada has made it clear for over 30-some years that you have issues with

topography with the current location. As the previously referenced plan put it — and I'm quoting here from my response last year to the last ministerial statement on this very same issue: "... with respect to scheduled commercial air service...", the report said, "... asphalt paving of..." — Yukon's Dawson City Airport — "... runway may not have a beneficial impact on future aircraft selection since other Yukon airports situated along multi-stop routing may still not be paved. For example, assuming that the Yukon territorial service offered by Air North continues to be a Whitehorse-Dawson-Inuvik-Old Crow-Dawson-Whitehorse routing, then the Old Crow runway would also need to be paved in order to permit a wider range of aircraft options..." This is from the 2013-23 report.

I had said at the time — and I now even more so look forward to clear statements and clear analysis from the minister on the next steps set out in his statements.

Mr. Speaker, in the absence of any willingness of this Minister of Highways and Public Works to share the new evidence, studies and correspondence from Transport Canada, we are forced to conclude that this announcement today is one of crass politics and not evidence-based decision-making or good governance.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the members opposite for their questions this afternoon. I thank the Official Opposition for their support of this project. I think it is support. I am saddened that the New Democratic caucus doesn't seem to support our plans for the Dawson City runway, but rest assured, it is an important project for this government. Improving our airport infrastructure is critical if we are going to have good economic development throughout this territory. These are very important economic drivers for our Yukon government, for our territory and, of course, for our businesses as well.

There are a number of questions. I will attempt to answer as many of them as I can. I will certainly get back to the members opposite with more information on things that I haven't answered this afternoon in the short time I have available.

The question about medevacs and how we are going to continue to service the community of Dawson while the airport is shut down for that short period of time — about a week. For medevacs during the Dawson City paving, my colleague at Community Services is going to be adding resources to ensure coverage during the shutdown of the airport. That includes additional paramedics and helicopter or ground transport to Mayo if necessary. We are also adding additional wildfire support even though it is very early in the season. We are planning for this shutdown to happen, and we are putting new resources in place to make sure that the citizens of Dawson have the support they need while this critical piece of infrastructure is being improved.

As well, the member opposite was asking about O&M. The O&M cost of the Dawson City facility is going to be \$1.2 million a year. That is an increase of \$700,000. Those numbers have not changed. This year — the member opposite

is right — we are spending \$12 million improving the Dawson City runway. That's part of the project. If the member opposite would like to take a look at our five-year capital plan, he will see where we're going in the future because those plans are laid out in our five-year capital plan. It's a new item that the member opposite clearly is not that familiar with, but we are planning these projects out over the long term, and he can see where things are going by simply looking at that document.

I think that answers most of the questions. The Leader of the Third Party has reiterated her concerns for this project.

Of course, geography is geography, but we are working with our federal partners and with the local airline community, including Air North, to ensure that the scheduled service for Dawson is possible. We're looking for an exception for the runway. I have been talking with my federal counterpart in Ottawa — Minister Garneau — and I have continued to talk with the airline, and we have a plan to go forward to ensure that we have an exception that will allow scheduled service to the Dawson City runway for Air North.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes my update on the Dawson City Airport paving project, and I thank the House for their time this afternoon.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: School capacity

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Minister of Education has had letters sitting on her desk going back to December of 2017 raising the issue of overcrowding in schools. Last October, the minister claimed she had never had those issues brought to her attention, but it didn't take long for that to be debunked. We know also that when asked about overcrowding, the minister said that it's not necessarily a terrible problem to have, which probably explains why she has been so slow to act on this issue.

The Official Opposition has obtained a letter from the Department of Education addressed to Hidden Valley Elementary School Council. It was sent on Friday, March 8 of this year. In response to concerns of overcrowding at Hidden Valley Elementary and their request for a portable, the department said that the solution that the government has come up with is to adjust attendance areas. Essentially, instead of keeping kids closer to their homes, they're going to shuffle them around town.

Can the minister confirm if this is in fact the case?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question and the opportunity to address this issue here in the House today.

I have not been asked about the letter that was sent on Friday — a couple of days ago — by any of the members opposite, but I will certainly look at it and am happy to discuss it with them.

I can indicate for Yukoners that it is critically important they know that Hidden Valley Elementary School has historically had some small classes and only one class per grade. It is now seeing some enrolment growth, as we have

talked about in this House many times about different schools in the territory. We monitor all schools to help administrators in school communities plan for changing enrolment trends and needs for the short, medium and long term in our schools. One way in which that is being addressed — simply one way in which it's being addressed — is for us and the department to look at planning into the future by reviewing attendance areas. Of course it should be an ongoing activity. It has not been done in the recent past, and reviewing the attendance areas for elementary schools in Whitehorse is a critical part of that work.

Mr. Hassard: The minister's lack of attention to this file has created real worry and angst for families. The overcrowding at Hidden Valley has already resulted in the school having to remove their popular Learning Together program, and they have also had to get rid of their First Nation language, art and music room to find more classroom space.

According to this letter addressed to the school council, the minister's solution to this issue is to tell families who live in Hidden Valley, "Too bad, so sad; we are going to shuffle your kids off to the other side of the city."

We have also heard that the minister has not met with this school council for over two years. Before she goes through with the plan to adjust the attendance area for Hidden Valley Elementary, will she at least agree to hold a public meeting with the school council?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, I appreciate the opportunity to address the way in which we are working with all school councils. The enrolment increases here in the City of Whitehorse have been slowly creeping up. There has been no planning to deal with that. There has been no review of the school catchment areas or the ways in which they might be adjusted, working with families and having children attend school in their place of choice. I can indicate that I am not sure I agree with the facts presented in the preamble of the question, but that's neither here nor there. I have recently written to the Hidden Valley School Council, as with all school councils, reaching out to them where there are concerns about enrolment pressures and of course agreeing to meet with them and work together with them going forward.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, the letter that the Official Opposition has obtained also suggests that the minister is adjusting the attendance areas of Holy Family Elementary, Jack Hulland Elementary and Takhini Elementary schools. Can the minister confirm whether she has met with any of those school councils to discuss this before she made the decision? Further, can the minister confirm whether she will be adjusting the catchment areas of any other schools, such as Golden Horn Elementary, for example?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I do again disagree with the facts, but nonetheless, as I said, Hidden Valley Elementary School has historically had small classes. The enrolment pressure there is seeing some growth. It still has, by my recollection, one class per grade, but we are monitoring that school, working with the school administrators and working with school communities, including the school councils, to look at the changing

enrolment trends and the need for short-, medium- and long-term solutions.

As I said earlier, one of those solutions is looking at a review of the attendance areas in the north end of Whitehorse. That does include work with the Hidden Valley, Takhini, Jack Hulland and Holy Family school communities and working with the Whistle Bend school association as well.

Mr. Speaker, we will solve this problem when we all work together — when the finger-pointing is not the key goal here, but, in fact, working with school families, working with school communities to build schools and to plan schools in the City of Whitehorse to address our families' needs.

Question re: School replacement

Mr. Kent: I have some questions for the Minister of Education regarding capital planning in her department. As you know, the Liberals have bragged that their five-year capital concept is going to provide certainty. It is going to allow Yukoners to know what they are doing over the next five years — great in theory, Mr. Speaker, but not so good in practice. For example, last year's five-year capital concept listed Holy Family Elementary School. We asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works why Holy Family was in there, and he said it was because they were building a new one. Now, this year, Holy Family Elementary has disappeared entirely from the five-year plan — so much for certainty.

Can the minister please explain why this decision was made? Why is this project no longer being considered for replacement?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question and again the opportunity to talk about planning for schools in the City of Whitehorse in particular and in particular our elementary schools.

The Government of Yukon has created a five-year capital plan that includes school projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and available for use for many years to come. The plan is based on current information. Should the needs change, this plan is as flexible as it needs to be and may be adjusted, for example, if safety issues or other issues were to arise or be identified.

The capital plan provides more than \$30 million in capital funding this year toward building, maintaining and modernizing schools in Whitehorse and the Yukon Territory.

Mr. Kent: So essentially the document that the Premier and his colleagues tabled last year — the initial capital five-year concept — wasn't worth the paper that it was written on. The Liberals bragged that the five-year capital concept would provide certainty, but when the document keeps changing, it actually creates uncertainty and confusion.

In last year's five-year capital concept, Christ the King Elementary School was identified for three years of work starting in 2020-21; however, in the documents tabled on Thursday of last week, that work is no longer identified. It looks like the only thing we can be certain of is that you can't trust the Liberals' capital concepts.

Can the minister tell us why this project is no longer being considered for replacement?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Of course, this five-year capital plan needs to be flexible with respect to adjusting to the needs of the community. It is one of the reasons I am so very proud of the fact that the Department of Education is working closely with all school councils and with all school administrations to tackle this problem as one, with a one-government approach to deal with the fact that enrolment has been growing over the past number of years and will likely continue to grow; but no planning has been done. We are tackling that together with school communities and with school councils.

We're balancing the fiscal responsibility with the needs of the school communities, and the five-year capital plan that has been presented is based on current information.

We have a number of ways, Mr. Speaker, of addressing the needs of school buildings in the short term, medium term and long term, which include renovations, repairs, optimizing classroom space and building schools. The project going forward will include assessment of each and every one of those schools, but the five-year capital plan, as I've said, must be flexible and must be able to address school-community needs.

Mr. Kent: It will be interesting, Mr. Speaker, when we gather here next year at this time to see what projects disappear from the current five-year capital plan that the Premier tabled last week to provide certainty to Yukoners and Yukon contractors.

In last year's five-year capital concept, there was a scalable, generic school design identified. We no longer see this project in the Liberals' plan. We in the Official Opposition raised concerns with it at the time, but the minister was very bullish on it, stating that it would be used for future school replacements, that it would be completed this year and that she was expecting it to save the government approximately \$7 million over the next years in school design costs.

So has the minister now abandoned this project as well, or will the new Whistle Bend school be the design template for all future schools?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I again might disagree with the facts that are included in that, but nonetheless, it is an important opportunity for this government to deal with a school design that is in fact scalable.

There is nothing that has been abandoned with respect to that project. The scalable school design is something that's currently being worked on — the concept being that schools do not necessarily need a unique design in each and every case and that a core design with the ability to scale it for certain circumstances would be a valuable tool that the Department of Education would have and that school communities could review, and input could be given at various stages throughout that opportunity to have that scalable design.

I am noting that the sound is a bit strange, so I don't want to shout.

Certainly, the opportunity is ongoing. That project is ongoing. It has not been abandoned. I thank the member opposite for the question.

Question re: Beaver River land use planning

Ms. Hanson: A resource extraction company intending to develop a property in the Beaver River watershed has proposed a 65-kilometre road that passes through parts of that watershed.

After completion of the YESAB assessment on the road, the Government of Yukon and the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun agreed to the construction of the road on condition that a land use plan be completed.

Mr. Speaker, it's unclear whether the planning process associated with this road construction falls under the chapter 11 planning process set out in the UFA and the First Nation final agreements. When asked, the minister has, at different times, said that this agreement was either "an implementation of specific chapters of the UFA" while on other occasions saying that only "some elements of chapter 10 and chapter 11" have been implemented.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell this House whether or not the Beaver River watershed plan falls under the chapter 11 land use planning process?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Yukon is actively working to address concerns associated with the ATAC road in collaboration with First Nations.

The Government of Yukon and the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun agreed to a new approach on planning for the Beaver River portion of the Stewart River watershed and to working with ATAC Resources Ltd. to develop a road access management plan. The Beaver River land use planning committee started its work in the summer of 2018 and aims to complete the planning process by March 2020.

The Beaver River land use planning committee is currently completing work plans, undertaking background research and preparing an engagement strategy. Next steps include GIS mapping and the identification of values, interests and issues. The land use plan and the road's access management plan must be finalized before road construction is authorized. I will continue on in questions 2 and 3 on this topic from the Leader of the Third Party.

Ms. Hanson: The NDP supports collaboration between the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nation governments when it comes to land use planning. We are simply seeking clarity as to why, in this case, chapter 11 was deemed to be an inadequate process for completing land use planning in the Beaver River area. When the final agreements were negotiated, the land use planning process was clearly described. The objective of land use planning is to ensure that the management and use of land, water and resources is done in an integrated and coordinated manner so as to ensure sustainable development. Certain components of chapter 11 are reflected in the Beaver River watershed agreement, yet others are clearly missing.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is: Why was the chapter 11 process set out in the final agreement not

considered a sufficient mechanism for conducting the land use planning required in the decision document for this application?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I thank the Leader of the Third Party for the question. The Government of Yukon is committed to advancing reconciliation with First Nations and bringing sustainable development and tangible benefits to Yukon communities.

The Government of Yukon works with First Nation communities in other planning exercises outside of chapter 11, including local area planning, zoning regulations, special management area planning and forest resources management planning.

A number of land use planning processes are being undertaken at present, including the Peel watershed land use planning, the restart of the Dawson land use planning commission and improvements to the land use planning process with First Nations.

I don't believe that the chapter 11 process is a process that doesn't have the strength to do this type of work, but what we have found ourselves in is — almost every Yukon First Nation simultaneously has spoken to me asking for land use planning. In order to balance priorities, we will conclude the Peel as per the Supreme Court decision. We have restarted Dawson, and we have local area planning happening in Laberge, outside of Whitehorse and a number of areas. We want to respect the planning process, but we don't want to leave it for 10 or 20 years to get done.

Ms. Hanson: Concerns have been raised about the precedent set by creating land use plans, as the minister has outlined, outside the chapter 11 process. The final agreement set out clear guidelines for how all regional land use plans should be developed, yet this government has decided that those guidelines apparently are not worth following.

For years, Yukon's land use planning process was held up by the previous government as the Peel decision made its way through the courts. We're concerned that this ad hoc process being implemented by this government has the potential to once again upset the land use planning process and jeopardize the certainty that final agreements were intended to bring.

Does this government intend to continue ad hoc, spot land use planning outside of chapter 11 when it comes to road building or resource development in the future? Where does it stop? When do we get land use plans back on track?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would just have to add to the comments from the Leader of the Third Party saying that our government has undertaken an ad hoc process outside of chapter 11.

Following the September 2018 Yukon Forum, Yukon and First Nation governments affirmed their commitment to improving regional land use planning by supporting work on four priority objectives: to set regional planning commissions up for success and support several land use planning processes concurrently, both inside and outside of chapter 11.

Just to reiterate, this is the entire Yukon Forum. I think the Leader of the Third Party has to do a bit more research on actually who is behind supporting these processes.

I want to thank the Yukon Land Use Planning Council, because the work the chair, Ms. Callaghan — our quarterly meetings — I actually just sent a letter over on Friday reiterating this. The undertaking of a comprehensive review of Yukon and First Nation government laws and regulations related to regional land use planning, and lead the 2019-20 review of funding adequacy for regional land use planning under chapter 11.

The most progressive work that has been done on land planning in the history of Yukon is what's happening, and I think the Leader of the Third Party has to do a bit more work and come back with questions that are a bit more accurate on the facts.

Question re: Kaushee's Place funding

Ms. White: Last week, I highlighted Kaushee's plight and their need for a funding increase and for certainty around their funding agreements. The minister responded that the department had been talking to and meeting with Kaushee's and all was well, but that is just not the case. According to the executive director, it wasn't until last week that they had a call from an ADM informing them that the NGO review was complete, and as a result, funding for Kaushee's would remain the same, with a possible cost-of-living increase.

Can the minister tell us how much the women's transition home will be receiving this year, and is it the same amount shown in the newly tabled budget, or is it something different?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I do want to affirm is that we have met with Kaushee's. We have met with Kaushee's for a number of months. We met with them last year numerous times to secure long-term funding arrangements. In fact, we had a three-year agreement on the table with Kaushee's Place. They elected not to go with the long-term funding agreement but to go for three months at a time until we can solidify a long-term arrangement that better aligns with their changing priorities, which I understood we were going to be working on with them. We committed to doing that and we said we would work on bringing forward some of the key priorities to better align with the funding arrangement that they currently have.

What I can say is that we are currently providing a safe place for women fleeing violence. We will continue to do that. We are passionate about the work that we do. We also want to acknowledge that there are many members of our community who are dedicated to ensuring that the services are provided. I want to commend Kaushee's and the Women's Transition Home Society and all of the women's organizations. We will continue to ensure that we provide the services that are needed and work in good faith to address the concerns that have been brought to our attention and certainly secure long-term funding, but the priority lies with Kaushee's to come to the table in good faith.

Ms. White: The board of the women's transition home published a letter to the editor last week explaining the circumstances they find themselves in. They are in deficit and have depleted their reserves. They are currently negotiating a contract with their dedicated staff who, I might add, earn approximately 40 percent less than those working at the

Whitehorse Emergency Shelter that the department has recently taken over. It has not been easy retaining staff when government is offering so much more for similar positions and calling and offering them those jobs. The board of the women's transition home has asked that their funding agreement be returned to the previous arrangement of three-year agreements, reducing the stress and cost of negotiating a collective agreement every year.

Why would this government not provide this essential service with a three-year funding agreement that gives the board, management and staff the certainty they need to be able to offer this refuge to vulnerable women and children?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I will reiterate that we do support vulnerable women in the Yukon. We look for services and provide service program supports. We look at income supports, child care programs, supportive housing and housing outreach. We provide many opportunities for rural Yukon communities and enhance services. We are working with Yukon Women's Transition Home Society. We have increased their budget by \$30,000 for this year. What I can say is that historically the Women's Transition Home Society has had surpluses. They were requested to use the surpluses to carry them over from year to year until we can work out a long-term arrangement. They have been given the opportunity. We presented them with a three-year agreement, which they declined. They wanted to work through some new mandates. That is what we committed to, and we will continue to do that in good faith. In fact, we have further meetings set up with the Women's Transition Home Society.

We will continue to address the concerns and the additional request to cover the expenses. The department has provided them with that increase, and in the coming days and weeks we will address the concerns that they brought forward and attempt to rectify those concerns, ensuring always that women are supported. We are always looking forward to identifying what the needs are.

Ms. White: Management at Kaushee's and Betty's Haven was asked last Thursday afternoon to participate in an independent evaluation to look at questions such as: Who are the clients that they serve? How many are repeat clients? Why are they coming there? Are they really fleeing violence? They also want to look at the staffing model to see if there are efficiencies that can be found there.

The government has indicated that they want to ensure Kaushee's stays within their scope of service and ensure women receive what they need. All of this, Mr. Speaker, while management are trying, yet again, to negotiate fair wages with staff, pay their bills and continue to keep the doors open. Kaushee's is running a deficit. It takes 27 staff to operate Kaushee's and Betty's Haven 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In 2017-18, they provided service to 346 women, 163 children and responded to over 4,000 requests for supports and service. This is a board that continues to be in good standing and plans for the future.

Mr. Speaker, we understand the need to review services, but this government hasn't answered Kaushee's critical question: Where is the funding increase to cover their costs?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We are conducting a comprehensive health review. As part of that review, we are looking at the NGO efficiencies. We are looking to provide support to Kaushee's Place as we evolve, as they evolve and as the new services evolve.

What I do understand is that they are provided with an additional two percent, which is in excess of \$1.5 million for 2019-20. We are working closely with the transition society to ensure that we have a better understanding of the pressures and demands they face, as well as making sure that the services we provide across government are meeting the needs and not overlapping unnecessarily. That is essential and that is necessary in order to look at efficiencies around the NGO groups that we provide funding for, of which there are 33 in excess of \$15 million.

I would like to note that we identified an opportunity to work with Kaushee's a year ago and two years ago. They put on the table that they wanted to look at short-term funding to work with Health and Social Services to address their growing demand. That came from Kaushee's Place and the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society. We are committed to continuing that dialogue, and in fact, I have a meeting set up in the coming days to have that conversation.

Question re: Government support for non-governmental organizations

Ms. Van Bibber: As we know, the Liberal government is giving the Premier a pay increase in this budget. The Liberals have also increased the budget for their political offices by \$255,000 since the election. At the same time that they are finding more ways to spend taxpayers' money on themselves, they are telling the territory's NGOs, "tough luck". They have frozen the budgets of many of them at the 2017-18 levels. They are also only offering them one-year funding agreements, making them waste more time and money on administration, as they are constantly having to fill out paperwork. Meanwhile, their costs are going up from inflation and the Liberal carbon tax.

It is starting to look like the Liberals are trying to make the NGOs fail so they can have an excuse to cut their funding and grow government. Will the minister agree to end the spending freeze on health NGOs?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I do take issue with the preamble to this question and the way that the Yukon Party has been very fast and loose with the numbers here. You know, we had a press release out here about Liberals growing the government by 659 new FTEs, and this number is completely false. If you take a look at the actual number, they've overinflated it by about 200 FTEs, so be very careful when you get your statistics from the Yukon Party.

Again, Mr. Speaker, Yukoners deserve accurate information from all of their elected officials. MLAs are their communities' voices in the Legislative Assembly and when they use their time in the House to spread incorrect information instead of advocating for their constituencies, it's very disappointing to Yukoners.

So currently, Yukon —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: There's a principle in this House that one may not do indirectly what one may not do directly. To that end, I believe that the Premier just contravened Standing Order 19(g). He apparently appeared to be accusing the Member for Porter Creek North of uttering a falsehood. Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to have him retract that and apologize for the statement.

Speaker: Sorry — are you talking about a falsehood, or are you talking about false motives?

Mr. Cathers: Pardon me, I referenced the wrong one — I meant 19(h).

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I will review Hansard and come back to the House as required. I didn't hear it, but I will review Hansard.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will continue that there has been a constant from the opposition in this House, and that constant is a stream of incorrect information directed towards the Yukon public.

The members opposite speak about pay raises. The Leader of the Official Opposition saw his pay raised last year and this year as well. The budget for his office went up last year, and it will go up this year as well. Both previous governments and the government have exceeded the budget for ministerial travel, yet we hear them — they are bringing it up outside — and we are bringing it into the Legislative Assembly for a complete debate.

We have increased it more to a realistic number and we have included those numbers in our budget to be transparent. I have to deal with the preamble for the question. I will continue with the help of —

Speaker: Order.

Ms. Van Bibber: The Liberals' health review is clearly an exercise in finding cuts. As part of the health review, the Liberals have frozen the funding for health NGOs and made them switch to one-year funding arrangements, which will increase administration costs. To add to that, the Liberals are increasing the minimum wage and forcing a carbon tax on these NGOs. Let's not forget about inflation. All this is a recipe for disaster for Yukon's NGOs. If costs are going up and funding is frozen, eventually it will be difficult for NGOs to continue to deliver their services. It's clear this is the Liberal government's plan: Set up an NGO for failure so that, when that happens, the Liberals' health review will be able to justify cutting funds to the NGO altogether.

Will the minister commit to at least adjusting NGO funding so that it increases with the cost of inflation and the cost of the carbon tax?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The member opposite clearly is not informed, and she is making some suggestions that are not

factual. I want to correct the facts. We have not cut any funding. We have looked at securing the contracts for this year. In fact, the majority of the agreements that we have with the NGO groups are beyond one year — they are three years — and include a two-percent increase. The suggestion that inflation and costs associated are not considered — they are certainly considered.

We are looking at a comprehensive review that will continue this year, and we will look to the needs to best match the services with the needs. We will continue to work with our NGO community. We sincerely appreciate all of the efforts that they put in to providing services to Yukoners. They are willing to work with the government, look at the comprehensive review, follow the recommendations of the Financial Advisory Panel and look at considering program services long term. That's what we're committed to. That's what we like to work with the NGOs on. There is no funding freeze. We are continuing to pursue the agreements that we have in place and to look for collaborative approaches with our partners.

Ms. Van Bibber: Last week, when asked about NGO funding, the Minister of Health and Social Services said she wanted to work with NGOs to — and I quote: "... address growth in their organizations and growth of services that perhaps expand beyond the scope of the original agreement that was signed off in good faith..."

It sounds like the minister was suggesting that she believes NGOs are either misspending their money on things not in their agreements or not acting in good faith. Can the minister tell us what she meant when she said that she wanted to address growth in NGOs that goes beyond the scope of agreements that were signed off in good faith?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I think that the question reaches into the comprehensive review and the purpose of the comprehensive health review. We are committed to engaging with our First Nation governments, our public non-governmental organizations and our stakeholders to look at appropriate reviews that capture both the potential for improvements but also look at efficiencies.

What I'm hearing from some of the NGOs like the women's transition society is that they need more resources, as they have grown beyond their scope of practice and they would like more support. We would like to work with them and build the business plan to better align with their request for financial resources and to match that with program service delivery. As we know, we have organizations where the cost of administration has gone up significantly with fewer resources going into programs and services. I would like to ensure that the programs side of the NGO funding aligns with the service needs of all Yukoners and that, in particular cases, the immediate cost-savings and cutting of programs are not what we're looking for. We're looking to work with our partners to better align and look at long-term funding, which means that we're prepared to enter into three-year funding agreements, and that funding agreement needs to align with their request for enhanced services.

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. 210: *First Appropriation Act 2019-20* — Second Reading — adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 210, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver — adjourned debate, Mr. Hassard.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak in response to Bill No. 210, *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

I would like to just begin by thanking the wonderful constituents of the beautiful riding of Pelly-Nisutlin for their continued support.

As well, before I get into the substantive dollar figures contained within the budget, I want to address an issue of concern that I do believe speaks to the core values of not just government but democracy.

Over the weekend, Yukon's Attorney General shared on her official Facebook page a commentary dismissing the seriousness of allegations against the Trudeau government, suggesting that they attempted to politically interfere in the prosecution of a company charged with fraud, bribery and corruption. The post that the Yukon's Attorney General shared suggests that these allegations aren't really a big deal because Trudeau isn't a Conservative, and it suggests that, even if they are a big deal, we should look the other way because she doesn't want to help Conservatives.

I have found that such a post by the Yukon's Attorney General is very concerning and inappropriate. If the Attorney General —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Minister of Justice, on a point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I fail to see how the comments currently being made by the Leader of the Official Opposition are in the context of the debate that is currently before the floor of the House, and I would ask you to ask him to please — I am happy to talk about this topic at any other time, but not here in the current budget debate. It's not appropriate and not on topic.

Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: On the point of order, I believe it's a dispute between members. The Leader of the Official Opposition is making reference to the responsibilities of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, which of course also includes resources within the Department of Justice that relate to the Yukon's own prosecution services. So I believe that it is quite relevant to the budget for him to raise the points about

the comments the minister chose to share over the weekend on Facebook.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Members will know that section 19(b)(i) of our Standing Orders state as follows:

"A member shall be called to order by the Speaker, if that member: ... (b) speaks to matters other than (i) the question under discussion..."

I've heard some submissions back and forth that this will somehow fit under general budget debate. Certainly, freedom of speech is the overarching concept. It would seem to me that, during the course of our day, the Official Opposition or the Third Party would have an opportunity to raise this issue at various times and would not be constrained in any meaningful way from raising this issue during the course of our daily business; so in my view, this is getting close to not being a matter that is currently under discussion with respect to general debate.

I will listen closely to where the Leader of the Official Opposition is going with his comments, but generally speaking, at this juncture of the day in this debate with respect to the general budget debate, my gut reaction is that he is straying a little bit off topic. I will listen closely to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I won't be on this topic long; I will be moving along shortly.

Mr. Speaker, if the Attorney General didn't want to wade into the SNC-Lavalin scandal embroiling the federal government, that is fine, and in fact, it is her prerogative. However, she actively chose to share this post, which dismissed those concerns. The Yukon's Attorney General has an obligation to defend the integrity and the independence of the office of the judicial prosecutions. By sharing a post that dismisses these allegations and suggests that people should just look the other way when allegations of political interference in the justice system are made, the Attorney General leaves a very concerning impression for Yukoners.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I will ask the Leader of the Official Opposition now to move on to general budget debate. As I stated previously, I anticipate that if the opposition has ongoing concerns with respect to this matter, they will have every opportunity to raise this concern in the coming days.

Leader of the Official Opposition, on the debate concerning Bill No. 210.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Moving on to remarks that the Premier has made about this year's budget — he has tried to play this up as a no-frills, no-perks budget when, in reality, Yukoners know the Premier is using this budget to give himself a pay raise. Further, he has increased the budget for his political offices by \$255,000 since forming government. At the same time, the Premier is freezing funding

for health NGOs. It sounds like a no-frills, no-perks budget if you are an NGO, but if you are a Liberal, well, let the good times roll. I think that this is a real concern.

We know the Liberal health review is currently reviewing NGO funding, and as part of that, they will probably be looking at NGOs' abilities to deliver services, but by freezing NGO funding, shortening their funding agreements to one year and causing their administrative costs to go up while also forcing a carbon tax on them, it really does look like the Liberals are setting NGOs up for failure. It really makes it look like the Liberals have a predetermined plan here to cut NGO budgets entirely and now they are just trying to justify it.

On the topic of the Campbell Highway, I see \$975,000 in this year's budget. That is interesting since we have heard so much in the previous years from the Minister of Highways and Public Works talking about paving the Campbell Highway between Ross River and Faro. I'm not sure how much highway my constituents are going to get paved for \$975,000 with all of the other work to go along with it. I know that my constituents will be very disappointed that the Minister of Highways and Public Works isn't living up his promise.

Regarding the Bearfeed Creek and Drury Creek bridge replacements that are scheduled for this year, it is interesting that they were not in last year's five-year capital concept. Something that the Liberals have claimed is that they designed this plan or this concept to provide certainty for contractors and to help with planning. I am wondering how it supports planning and certainty if new projects just appear randomly each time this government decides to put forward a new capital concept.

Regarding the Nisutlin Bay bridge and the Teslin River bridge, I also have a few questions in that regard. We saw the Teslin River bridge go out last year. It was tendered, closed and then cancelled a few weeks later. Both of these projects are now listed in the five-year capital concept as going out again this year. With respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge, I am wondering when and where the community meetings on this project will be taking place. In the past, there had been community meetings. There were many concerns from the community with regard to how this project will move forward. I haven't heard of any community meetings in the recent past, so hopefully the Minister of Highways and Public Works will be able to update me on that.

Also, where is the government in terms of agreements with the Teslin Tlingit Council regarding contracts in their traditional territory, particularly with respect to these two projects? I am curious if this is part of the First Nation procurement policy that has yet to be completed, or will there be separate agreements for these two projects?

My final question regarding those bridges would be whether those two projects will be going out to open competitive tender or not.

The Ross River School has also been an issue with me for a while now. The five-year capital concept says that this project will cost \$10 million to \$25 million over the next five

years. Obviously that's quite a range, and I'm not sure how much certainty that's going to provide for contractors or for the community. I am not going to dwell on the numbers so much as look for some details. I am curious what the government envisions with this project. Is it a new school? Will it be designed using the design for the Whistle Bend school? What about the \$1.4 million that the government is spending on the school this year? Do these plans that the government has come up with for the Ross River School live up to the requests from the community? I am curious what public meetings have taken place with regard to the work on the school.

Back to just things in general with regard to the budget, I want to touch on mining for a few minutes. Unfortunately, I think that there has been a string of disappointing news stories involving Yukon mining over the last little while. We have seen major companies leave the territory. We have seen major companies delaying their projects. We have seen the government delay major investments in mineral infrastructure, and we have seen exploration numbers taking a dip. Unfortunately, we haven't seen much in terms of action from this government in trying to facilitate or move projects forward. I know that during the most recent mining Roundup in Vancouver, we had people coming to us from many companies from every corner of industry to tell us the issues that they're having with this government and highlighting areas where the government just doesn't get it. This is a trend that we have been noticing with this government. It's certainly a concerning trend and one that we're not happy about.

I will leave my remarks at that, Mr. Speaker, but I have many more questions and points of clarification that I will be seeking throughout the Sitting.

I would just like to close by reminding the Premier that my door is always open. The Yukon Party would like to work with the government on initiatives that benefit all Yukoners. We hope that this Sitting marks a change for the government, where they want to start working with opposition parties, not just trying to find points of arguments at every turn, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I am pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the 2019-20 budget presented by the Premier on behalf of our government on March 7.

First, I would like to take a few moments for a few personal reflections, Mr. Speaker. It remains such an honour to represent Yukoners in the 34th Yukon Legislative Assembly and particularly to represent the citizens of Mountainview.

I'm deeply grateful for their continued support in my role as their MLA. I would like to thank my family and friends for their continued love and support. There is never enough time to do everything. I certainly haven't figured out how to be in two or three places at once, but I continue to try. Unfortunately, time with family and friends is often the first to be given up — I think by all of us in the Legislative Assembly — when duty calls on behalf of Yukoners. I thank them for their continued understanding and their continued support. My family is my backbone; my friends ground me.

I am proud of the work that this Liberal team has done. They have in many ways become family. We have worked together to redirect our territory, which is reflected in this budget in ways that we are fostering meaningful relationships with our citizens, our communities, our First Nation governments, municipalities, the federal government and many others, Mr. Speaker.

I want to also thank my elders, who continue to give me sound advice and who hold me accountable. I made a deal with several elders when I came into this role. They agreed to tell me when they see me going off the path and to remind me of why I'm here and the level of responsibility that I've taken on and that we've all taken on in this role. They do this in a caring and loving way. They also remind me to stay balanced and grounded mentally, spiritually, physically and emotionally.

I want to thank the staff of the Women's Directorate, Tourism and Culture and Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with them over the past year on many important initiatives. We have made incredible strides in advancing our work on behalf of Yukoners. I will get into some of these highlights shortly.

I have had such a great opportunity to work directly with many staff in the public service, both directly and indirectly. I absolutely hold my hands up to each and every one of you for everything that you do on behalf of Yukoners every day.

Lastly, in my personal reflections, we would not be where we are today in our territory — or I would not be where I am today in advancing these files — without our incredible community partners on the Yukon tourism development strategy — industry, NGOs and other governments. They have been phenomenal to work with. Under the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls file, our local and national First Nation women's organizations, the commissioners and our federal partners have been outstanding in the work that they have done. This has not been easy work for anyone who has been involved in this file.

The Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board — we have such a fantastic board. The labour and employers organizations that have stepped up each and every time we have called on them for their thoughtful assistance in board and committee appointments, to their assistance in providing valuable feedback on legislation, regulations and policies — I look forward to work that will come in the next couple of years. I would like to particularly thank Val Royle and Kurt Dieckmann for their leadership in our departments.

I would like to take the remainder of my time to highlight a few statistics and projects from each of my three portfolios that truly show this government's commitment to a healthy economy and strong, sustainable communities.

I will begin with Tourism and Culture. Tourism means a lot to Yukon's economy — an average of approximately \$269 million annually, in fact. \$4.4 million of our gross domestic product is attributable to tourism, which is the second highest in Canada. Tourism is also Yukon's second largest industry and our largest private sector employer; 13.5

percent of Yukoners are employed by the tourism sector, which is the highest in Canada.

Yes, tourism in Yukon is strong and performing well and has been led by a number of key trends. Much of our growth has been fuelled by air access and growth from the Canadian overseas markets. Thanks to innovative marketing partners and strategies positioning Yukon as a year-round destination, Yukon has also benefited from increased visitation in the winter. Winter visitation is growing faster than summer and represents strong opportunities for future growth.

But we know that tourism means more than the financial bottom line. It provides Yukon with sustainable, diversified growth that balances economic development with environment, community and cultural values. It also provides an opportunity for Yukon First Nations to participate in the economy and share and celebrate their culture, heritage and knowledge.

To take tourism to the next level, we have embarked on a journey to responsibly guide and grow the industry through the next decade. Our goal was to develop a strategy for Yukon, developed by Yukoners, where everyone has a role to play in tourism success.

The development of the Yukon tourism development strategy was guided by a steering committee that represented the tourism industry, Yukon First Nations, municipalities, the arts and culture community and the Government of Yukon. The steering committee oversaw the department's largest ever public engagement process. In early 2018, we held 55 engagement sessions across the territory with communities, industry and governments. These sessions involved Yukon First Nation governments, their development corporations, municipalities, tourism industry stakeholders, the arts and culture community and Yukoners across the territory. We also received 10 submissions and 115 surveys for a total of over 12,000 comments.

The steering committee recommended the final strategy to the Yukon government for consideration in November 2018. The strategy includes three goals that balance the economy, environment and community values, which reflect a truly sustainable approach to tourism development. The first goal is to double revenue to Yukon businesses attributable to tourism from \$262.9 million back in 2016 — the last time we did the Yukon business survey — to \$225 million in 2028. The second goal is to establish a framework within two years that measures the sustainability of tourism development. This has never been done. The third goal is to ensure that at least 80 percent of Yukoners have a positive attitude about tourism, as tourism impacts all of those who live in this amazing territory.

The strategy lays out four interrelated pillars that outline 24 strategic actions to bring the strategy to life and to achieve these goals. The Government of Yukon is proud to endorse the Yukon tourism development strategy and has allocated \$875,000 to the 2019-20 budget to advance the priority areas identified by the steering committee. The strategy provides the vision for tourism to be a vibrant and sustainable component of Yukon's economy and society for the benefit of future

generations. It is our high-level road map to promote the Yukon and to increase visitation while protecting the social and cultural values that Yukoners told us were important to them.

We want to ensure that we protect the landscape and the natural environment that make us so special, but not miss out on the opportunities to grow our industry.

Sustainable tourism development also means supporting reconciliation and provides Yukon First Nations opportunities to participate in the economy. Supporting the development of indigenous tourism can provide opportunities for Yukon First Nations to share and celebrate their stories in a meaningful and authentic way.

The celebration of Yukon's rich First Nation culture and history in the context of modern treaties is something that sets us apart as a destination and is of growing interest in our key target markets. That is why the strategy aims to establish Yukon as a premier destination for indigenous tourism experiences.

To support this goal, the Government of Yukon recently signed an agreement to work collaboratively with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada and the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association. By aligning our efforts and working together to support Yukon First Nations, we can empower citizens to share and live their culture through meaningful work.

We learned through the engagement on tourism strategy that culture is important to Yukoners because it is what differentiates us from the rest of Canada. That is why, in collaboration with the departments of Economic Development and Education, we have begun work on the development of a creative and cultural industries strategy. That will provide a solid economic foundation for the Yukon's cultural activities to flourish.

We will also be undertaking guidance from the Women's Directorate to ensure that the strategy will also give attention to the elements that support and advance diversity and inclusivity to contribute to improved socio-economic outcomes.

Creative and cultural industries are a distinct and important part of Yukon identity and are also direct contributors to our economy. The creative and cultural industries sector encompasses the creation, production, promotion, distribution and commercialization of cultural goods as well as the labour force and institutions required to support it. This is everything from sound recording, visual and applied arts, crafting, audio-visual and interactive media, film and photography, graphic design and architecture, theater and live performance, written and published works, sound and lighting technicians, heritage and libraries.

Cultural activities contribute right now to \$56.1 million of Yukon's GDP in 2016, which amounted to 2.1 percent of the total territorial economy and 857 jobs. Focusing our efforts on the development of this strategy will lead to a solid economic foundation from which cultural activities in the territory can flourish. To ensure the strategy will be effective and relevant for those it is meant to support, the Government of Yukon is

engaging with individuals who work in the sector at a day-long session on May 3. Discussions at the session will help determine the goals and outcomes of the strategy, and there will be further opportunities to contribute to the strategy as future engagement sessions will take place throughout the summer. A draft strategy is anticipated to be shared for feedback and comments this fall.

This government is committed to developing and implementing an inclusive strategy with tangible action plans. We want to support and grow the Yukon creative and cultural industries to improve the social and economic well-being of all Yukoners.

Turning to the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, our focus moving forward will be one of modernization. Yukon's century-old workers' compensation system is part of the territory's economic bedrock. It is a system that balances the rights and interests of workers and employers equally. It fosters the prosperity of Yukon businesses even as it cares for injured workers and returns them to their workplaces as quickly as is healthy and safe. The system is proving its value. Workplace injuries and illness rates in Yukon have been dropping for years. Our workers and employers both continue to get better at establishing and practising injury prevention measures. The culture of safety is deeply rooted in the territory's workplaces.

Historically, this culture has focused on workers' physical well-being. We are working hard to expand that focus. Mental health is a key concern of this government, and we are working hard to establish measures that will go far toward preventing workplace psychological injuries. The Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board has made progress toward introducing regulations that will safeguard mental health in Yukon workplaces. This is a direct product of legislative amendments we made early in our mandate to provide emergency response workers with a PTSD presumption.

What's more, the board is performing a full review of both the *Workers' Compensation Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* so that Yukon employers and workers will enjoy protections that address the evolving reality of 21st century workplaces. This is critical to enabling our government to remain competitive and our workers protected in an ever-evolving global economic climate.

Lastly, we come to the extremely important work of the Women's Directorate. For the year ahead, the department continues to look at all policies, programs and services through a gender-inclusive and diversity lens — supporting the whole of government to carry out our work in a way that is supportive of Yukoners from numerous identities and backgrounds. We know that biases exist and that women and individuals from diverse backgrounds bear the brunt of inequalities in our society, affecting everything from health and safety to career achievements and financial security. Our gender equality indicators website provides data on equality in Yukon in areas such as leadership, arts, child care, education, economic security and many more. I encourage everyone to

visit the site and learn more about the equality gaps and successes in Yukon.

A key priority for this government is continuing to work closely with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Together with local partners, we are working to ensure that information about the inquiry is clearly communicated to Yukoners and that our needs are heard and understood by the commission.

We have provided both written and oral submissions to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls highlighting the need of Yukon families, the importance of self-governance and the necessity of sustainable, ongoing funding. We are looking forward to the release of the final report at the end of April and moving forward as a territory to continuously build on our efforts to address this tragedy and change the story in Yukon and in Canada.

A related initiative is our recent partnership with the Government of Canada to enhance our indigenous women's equality fund and help build capacity within indigenous women's organizations to better meet the needs of their communities. The joint funding for all three indigenous women's organizations is \$426,500 for 2018 and \$600,000 per year from 2019 through to 2021. These women's organizations provide critical advocacy support and leadership that breaks down barriers and empowers Yukon indigenous women and girls.

We are pleased that this partnership will provide these organizations with stable, flexible funding that will help them meet the needs of indigenous women and girls throughout the Yukon. I have been and continue to be in close communication with the Honourable Maryam Monsef, Minister for Women and Gender Equality, on a variety of issues, including discussions about funding for other Yukon women's groups.

I am pleased to announce that last week, we confirmed that the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Les EssentiElles and the Yukon Status of Women Council will also be receiving capacity development funding from the Department of Women and Gender Equality, leveraging their funding from the Yukon government.

These organizations are critical to our social service infrastructure as they provide direct service delivery and education on issues affecting women and gender-diverse people in Yukon. I am pleased that they will be receiving this important capacity development support from our colleagues in the Government of Canada. We will continue to work with local equality-seeking organizations to increase accessibility to other sources of funding and to build opportunities for further collaboration.

We are also continuing to work to ensure that LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners are considered within our efforts to create a more equitable society. We are reviewing legislation, policy and practices to ensure Government of Yukon meets the rules and social standards for LGBTQ2S+ non-discrimination. We are using public engagement activities to help inform this work, including a pre-engagement that took

place in the summer of 2018, as well as 12 focus groups and three community dialogues that took place in January 2019 in which over 110 individuals participated.

We made several legislative changes — amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* and the *Human Rights Act* in the spring of 2017, the *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* in the spring of 2018 and the *Equality of Spouses Statute Law Amendment Act (2018)* in the fall of 2018.

Public engagement opportunities will continue in March of 2019. An online survey will allow individuals to provide anonymous feedback to identify outstanding gaps and priority issues.

While all of the initiatives that I have spoken about support the economic empowerment of women and gender-diverse people in Yukon, I want to take a few moments to focus on how the LGBTQ2S+ initiative has identified improvements needed to workplaces, especially for trans individuals.

We heard that a cultural shift toward more acceptance is needed, which will require a systemic change and leadership from the Yukon government and associated professionals. This institutional leadership from the Government of Yukon could provide an opportunity to positively shift cultural acceptance for communities, families and parents, and other service providers. That means that, within our organizations, support for inclusive programs and policies to support LGBTQ2S+ individuals will be crucial. This type of systemic change will go a long way to ensuring the equal participation of all Yukoners in our society and our economy, which is good for everyone.

With International Women's Day having taken place just last week, I also want to mention the incredible work in the community to support women's economic empowerment and the strong community of women entrepreneurs that we have in the territory. As I mentioned in my tribute last week, there are several organizations supporting women in entrepreneurship and diverse industries, from SMRT Women to NorthLight Innovation hub, Yukon College, Women in Trades and Technology and many more. It takes a community to create a systemic change, and we are fortunate to have amazing local organizations, allies and partners who are committed to seeing women and gender-diverse individuals reach their full potential, be it in the workforce or any other realm of their lives.

These are but a few of the significant undertakings and contributions of the departments that I proudly oversee in a government that I'm proud to be part of, with a fiscal plan for the territory that I'm proud to stand behind.

I thank you for the opportunity to remark on these highlights and look forward to discussing further details with the members opposite either today or during Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Istchenko: It is a privilege today and an opportunity to rise in this House to respond to Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

I first want to start by thanking my constituents, and I'll speak a little bit about my constituents. I definitely want to thank my family for their support over these seven-plus years now in politics. When I talk about my constituents, instead of highlighting the areas they're from, I just want to talk a little bit about the riding since we left this Assembly in the fall and what has happened. You will understand how busy it is and how big the riding is.

Right after we finished the Fall Sitting, we had the Haines Junction Mountain Festival, which was incredible. It was a great turnout.

Right after that, we were directly up the highway to the two best Christmas concerts — bar none — across the Yukon, which happened in Destruction Bay and in Beaver Creek. It's priceless how organized and unorganized they are at the same time.

We had our Atom hockey championship. Minor hockey is very, very busy.

Our local Lions Club had, I believe, our 53rd annual bonspiel.

The Women's Hockey Jamboree — and I had the opportunity last week to get spanked by the NHL old-timers. It was an incredible — all the indigenous old-timers were up. They came out to Haines Junction and we got to play against them. That was definitely a highlight in my stellar career as a hockey player.

Our local Junior Rangers are right now out on a bison hunting camp with the kids from Tuktoyaktuk. They came down. Last summer, our kids got to go to Tuk on a whale hunt. They will be really busy coming up here by the end of the month with some shooting. We just completed Exercise Arctic Bison, which was the Winnipeg Rifles, and a unit from the Arctic Response was in Haines Junction for a couple weeks. The local Rangers were training soldiers on winter warfare and how to ride snowmobiles in the mountains.

The Champagne poker run is happening this Saturday. We also have muskrat camp, which unfortunately always falls during session, and I'm not sure if the Premier would let me go for a week just to go sleep in a wall tent and skin muskrats. That would be awesome. We have a broomball tournament coming up and the second annual Mark Eikland Fishing Derby happening at the end of the month.

We are really busy in the riding of Kluane, and one of the best things about that is that there are many non-profit societies and NGOs that work, volunteer and spend a lot of time. There are teachers and local community members who get out there and help. They deserve a big round of applause and a thank you for that.

Like we see with everything, it is always frustrating — it seems like every day you go to do something, fill out a piece of paperwork for the government, and there is more red tape. I really think we need to focus on that.

I have had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to review the budget a little bit. I read through it right after Kevin Koe did a miraculous shot last night, which was incredible. Good luck, Kevin, in the world championships.

In the budget — I read through it and I very roughly had a look at some stuff. A lot of the stuff that I see in there is previous from the year before or even previous from the last mandate. I am glad to see that Kluane Lake School is moving forward within my riding. When the Highways and Public Works minister spoke today in his ministerial statement about airports — tourism is huge in the riding of Kluane, and the Silver City airport is busy. There are just about two planes a day flying through there, and it needs a little bit of love. I am not sure if there is money in there for it, or I am not sure if the Health and Social Services minister will finally come out this year and actually sit down with our seniors and talk with them. I guess we will get that when we get into the different departments and get to ask each individual minister what they are doing and where everything will be going.

One of the things also coming up in the riding in the spring — I will have the opportunity to talk to the minister a little bit about this — is that there is an economic development strategy. There are some meetings coming up. I believe it was supposed to happen last year, but it happened in Watson Lake and will be happening in Haines Junction this year. There are huge tourism opportunities with the review of the Kluane National Park Management Plan coming up. I did notice on the poster — I think I was invited last year, but I don't see me as a keynote speaker anywhere on that. I am hoping it is just an oversight by the organizers, which I am sure it is. I guess we will get down into the individual departments when they come up, and there will be some questions. We will be looking to see where the budget dollars are assigned and where throughout the riding.

The only other thing before I conclude — I want to express a bit of disappointment that — in the budget, I don't see it — the Liberals have decided not to include any money for Shakwak in the budget.

By just a way of background — so my friends across the way know how we got here — the Shakwak agreement has been in place since 1977 for the reconstruction and maintenance of the Shakwak portion of the Alaska Highway from Haines Junction and Yukon to the Alaska border and extending down the Haines Road. As per the agreement, the US originally agreed to pay the cost of reconstruction while Canada would manage the reconstruction and provide maintenance.

Unfortunately, the previous US administration under President Obama stopped including funding for this project in late 2012. This means that the funding available for reconstruction of this corridor is now exhausted. The previous government had managed it in stages to try to make it last as long as possible. In 2017, Yukon's Official Opposition wrote the federal Minister of Foreign Affairs to ask that she work with the US to have funding reinstated for construction in the corridor, but it appears that these efforts were unsuccessful.

I notice that the Premier — and I'm not sure who else — went to Juneau and had some meetings there. It would have been nice if they had brought leadership from the riding — maybe the mayor, some of the chiefs and the MLA. I have suggested that, I believe, in a motion I put on this floor.

You will also remember that we requested that the Premier ask Canada to include Shakwak funding as an important part of its talks with regard to the new USCMA agreement, which was a request that unfortunately fell on deaf ears.

Despite the inability of the Premier to get this issue addressed, there are still major capital improvement requirements for this part of the Alaska Highway. The lack of secured funding for reconstruction places the future of the Shakwak corridor — Yukon's largest trade route — in jeopardy. We have heard the minister say that he won't be able to keep it up to safe standards and there will now be large sections that will be gravel. We think that this will have negative effects — deathly negative effects — on the remote Yukon communities and Yukoners who live there, let alone all the traffic that goes back and forth to Alaska in the tourism industry. It's a key component to Yukon's economic infrastructure.

Additionally, the highway is a strategic asset to security and sovereignty in Canada and the US. It is essential — and I would say a key responsibility of the government — to provide for safe travel along this highway. Sitting back and dusting off your hands and saying, "Oh well, the Americans wouldn't pay for it" isn't enough — or maybe the minister stating in the media that drivers are just going to have to slow down and live with bumps for the foreseeable future. The Government of Yukon needs to step up and put together alternative funding arrangements. They can't just blame others. I am disappointed to see the lack of funding in there and the lack of commitment for this stretch of road by this Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, it is probably one of the most important things for the riding of Kluane right now. That's why I wanted to highlight it a little bit more. I hope eventually they understand the importance of this to the riding of Kluane. Budgets are about priorities, and unless it's hidden somewhere, I don't see it in the budget. I can only assume it isn't a priority for this government.

In closing, I just again want to thank my constituents. I want to thank my family. I also want to thank all of those government employees, especially the essential services employees who are out there during the winter plowing snow or during the fire season. There are a lot of great employees out there, and they do need to be thanked too.

Mr. Hutton: I am very pleased to rise today to provide my support for our government's budget. We are one year into our five-year capital plan, and I am very happy with the direction things are going. There are many positive things in this year's budget for my riding, and I would like to tell you a bit about that today.

This budget is an excellent reflection of our government's commitment that all communities matter. I also see many aspects of this budget that support our commitment to reconciliation with our Yukon First Nations. Leading in the budget discussions, I had the opportunity to meet with many residents in my riding. I attended meetings with chiefs and

councils and engaged with mayors, municipal councillors and citizens to hear directly from them what they would like to see — in which areas they needed support and what types of infrastructure and facilities would help to enrich their communities.

Yukoners spoke and we listened.

In November, I attended the Carmacks arena's unveiling ceremony. This event was so well-attended, and you could just see the joy and the excitement in the eyes of the families and the children who were there to partake in the celebration. This event allowed citizens to view some of the digital renderings of the new facility.

As some of you may know, in the fall of 2017, parts of the Carmacks Recreation Centre sustained damage. The damage was bad enough that the facility was no longer able to be used. The previous steel-framed rink structure was subjected to detrimental ground freeze-thaw cycles, which had damaged the foundation and steel bracing to the extent that it had now been decommissioned.

The existing curling rink is a partially below-grade wood structure on a concrete foundation and was the original building on-site. This structure has held up reasonably well, but it has reached the end of its life. The mechanical systems were no longer functioning, and the whole facility was suffering from poor air quality. I know that dating back to at least the spring of 2015, Mayor Bodie has been advocating on behalf of the community of Carmacks to see work done on this building.

The community lobbied the former Yukon Party government to see upgrades and repairs for their recreation centre for about two and a half years. It didn't happen. I am happy to say that, under the Liberal government, the needs of the community are being met. The community identified this building as something that was incredibly important to them, and they have expressed a strong interest in seeing this building reach its full potential. They really see it as being a hub of their community and a great resource for their families.

The Village of Carmacks independently retained Stantec Architecture Ltd. to provide consulting services for the conceptual design of a new arena in 2016. This design was completed in consultation with the Village of Carmacks based upon their needs. It was used to facilitate completion of the detailed final design. I am really happy to see that, throughout the progression of this project, our government has worked closely with the community and municipal government to ensure that we're building a facility that truly meets the needs of the community.

This project was deemed a priority project by the Village of Carmacks, and I am really happy to see it coming to fruition. Our government was able to secure funding through the small communities fund for this project, which will cover 75 percent of the project costs. We will cover the remaining 25 percent of costs. The project is valued at approximately \$16 million. The expected completion date of this project is estimated in 2021.

The residual benefits of a project like this are huge for a small community like Carmacks. It enables Carmacks to host

sporting events and bring extra dollars into their community. It provides a venue for citizens to host community gatherings. Most importantly, it promotes healthy living, and provides a wonderful resource for families and citizens of all ages to enjoy.

Other notable items in Carmacks that will get some attention include upgrades to the Carmacks aerodrome lighting, improvements to road lighting in the community and the Carmacks wastewater and lagoon pit.

I'm also really looking forward to seeing the Carmacks grader station replacement get underway.

I would like to shift my focus now to some exciting things that are happening in another one of my communities, Pelly Crossing. I must say that I really am most excited about the things coming down the line for this community that, I think, for many years was feeling forgotten.

I met with chief and council in Pelly Crossing, and it was clear that they felt their community was really hurting. Their resources and their buildings within their community were severely deteriorated. At the time of my visit, their youth centre had just been condemned. Their community pool needed to be replaced and their fire truck didn't work. Their aerodrome couldn't support medevac flights, as their runway and lighting weren't in good working order. The list goes on.

As an unincorporated municipality, I recognize that the people in Pelly Crossing are really in a unique position. Because they're not incorporated, they don't always have access to the same resources and funding that other communities do. I think that Pelly has really experienced a dry spell as far as capital investment from the government for many, many years. So I'm proud to say that Pelly is finally seeing some significant and meaningful investment in their community under our government.

Our government really does believe that all communities matter. Enrichment in our communities has positive residual effects on all Yukoners. I want to see all Yukon communities happy, healthy and thriving.

I would like to start with the upgrades to the Pelly aerodrome. When I met with chief and council, this was a really key project for them. They had a strong desire to see upgrades to the Pelly Crossing aerodrome so that it could be used as an all-weather, all-hours medevac strip.

I listened to many stories where there were medical emergencies within the community and elders had to be taken by ambulance to another airstrip in order to be flown out to receive medical attention. This has been very upsetting to the community. Time is of the essence when there's a medical emergency, and I agree that we need to be doing everything that we can to ensure safe and reasonable access to medical services in the event of an emergency.

One of the key issues at this aerodrome that prevents the medevac planes from using it year-round is a lack of lighting and also a lack of ability and resources to plow and maintain the landing strip. I'm really happy to say that our government plans to address these issues.

Pelly Crossing will see upgrades to their aerodrome to include dust suppression and maintenance and the purchase and installation of runway lighting.

I recognize that there have been challenges in the past in ensuring the runway is effectively maintained in the winter months. This budget will see \$8,000 of O&M to support plowing this runway to ensure that it's accessible during all seasons.

Again, I can't say how happy I am to see these improvements coming to this community.

The infrastructure and development branch has been actively engaged with Selkirk First Nation in advancing their identified infrastructure priorities. One of their top priorities is the Selkirk First Nation early childhood education centre, which has recently been approved by the federal government for funding under the small communities fund. I'm really looking forward to seeing this project come to life and the benefits that it will bring to the community of Pelly Crossing. Surely, Mr. Speaker, nothing is more important than the youth in our communities.

Continuing north in my riding, Stewart Crossing will also be seeing improvements this year with the replacement of the grader station as well as a new living complex for Highways and Public Works.

Another important matter that was raised by a constituent of mine who travels that stretch of highway often — and I pass him often on the highway — was the addition of guardrails. Highways and Public Works has completed assessments throughout the territory on stretches of highway that could benefit from the addition of guardrails as a safety precaution, and there are several areas in my riding which will be seeing those upgrades. This year, there is \$500,000 committed to installing additional guardrails throughout the territory, and I'm always happy to see safety improvements coming to our highways, especially because I use them so often.

Folks in the community spend a lot of time driving our highways, and it's of the utmost importance that we safely and effectively are maintaining our highways. We saw a lot of good work done last year with brush clearings, specifically between Midway and Stewart Crossing. It has drastically improved visibility and safety, and the communities are very happy to see that work completed.

I would like to touch on a topic that's important to not only my constituents but all Yukoners — and that's housing. Last year, the housing initiatives fund was launched. This fund was designed to support innovative housing projects to meet local needs. As the Premier has mentioned, this year's budget contains \$3.6 million for the housing initiatives fund. I'm really happy to see that there are over 100 new affordable units, including some units for Pelly Crossing and Carmacks.

In keeping with this theme, this year's budget also includes \$1.5 million to assist First Nation governments and development corporations in Yukon to build or retrofit existing housing in 2019-20.

I'm really proud to see all of this important work being done to address housing shortages across the territory, as I

know that it has been one of the primary concerns for Yukon residents for many years.

Finally, I would like to touch on my home community of Mayo and some of the exciting work that's happening there. The Mayo aerodrome will see \$300,000 worth of upgrades this year. This is great news for our community. I've heard a lot of feedback from Mayo residents about aging and capacity concerns at this facility. Constituents have told me that the current airport is vastly undersized for current levels of activity. I'm glad to see this item has been prioritized in our budget, and I look forward to this project getting underway.

I would like to take a moment to thank the Minister of Community Services for the time he has taken over the past year to meet with all Yukon communities, stakeholders and residents. I participated in several community meetings within my riding where the minister has participated and has heard first-hand from my constituents what their priorities are for our communities.

A meeting I was happy to jointly participate in recently was in Keno. At that meeting, the Minister of Community Services committed to sending up a team from the department to work with the community to identify options for future land development. I'm looking forward to seeing those discussions get underway and to further engaging with the residents of Keno on this topic.

This level of engagement between our ministers and the communities is really great to see, and it's great to be part of.

Speaking of engagement, I would just like to briefly touch on the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*. Last year, we completed a joint consultation process on the Peel Watershed Planning Commission's 2011 final recommended plan. Over 2,000 responses were received, and a summary report is publicly available. Our government has been collaborating with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the Gwich'in Tribal Council to approve and implement the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*. Consultation is underway to reach consensus on a final plan. This government's work is being guided by the First Nation final agreements, the Gwitchin comprehensive land claim agreement and the Supreme Court of Canada's decision on the matter.

Once the plan is approved, the parties will jointly identify the appropriate designation for each of the conservation areas identified in the region. Yukoners have been very clear on the importance of the Peel watershed, and I am really pleased to see the good work and collaboration to date on this file.

Another very important land use planning committee that we saw get underway last summer was the Beaver River Land Use Planning Committee. This committee started its work last summer and aims to complete the planning process by March 2020. This committee is a result of our government's active engagement with First Nations in addressing concerns associated with the ATAC road. Our government and the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun agreed to a new approach on planning for the Beaver River portion of the Stewart River watershed and to working with ATAC Resources Ltd. to develop a road access management plan. The committee is

currently completing work plans, undertaking background research and preparing an engagement strategy. The next steps include GIS mapping and the identification of values, interests and issues. The land use plan and road access management plan must be finalized before road construction is authorized. This is another great example of our government working to advance reconciliation with Yukon First Nations, ensuring that we are bringing sustainable development and tangible benefits to Yukon communities.

I would like to conclude by thanking my colleagues and all of the departmental staff for the many, many hours that they spent compiling this year's budget. I am happy to see the investment being made in rural Yukon communities and look forward to seeing these projects come to fruition.

In closing, I would like to thank all the constituents in Mayo-Tatchun for their continued support. It is truly an honour and a privilege to represent the communities of Mayo-Tatchun in this House. Thank you and mahsi' cho.

Mr. Kent: It's my pleasure to rise today and speak at second reading of the budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year. Like other members, I too would like to take the opportunity to thank, first and foremost, my family and of course thank the constituents of Copperbelt South. It has been a pleasure representing them here in this Legislative Assembly since 2016. I certainly enjoy hearing from them on a regular basis with any of the issues or concerns that I get to bring forward on their behalf.

When it comes to riding-specific items, I look forward to talking here in the next couple of months — and of course even when we're not sitting — about the school. Of course, the school is extremely important — the Golden Horn Elementary School — which is located in the riding of Copperbelt South. I note that there will be a portable built there this year and hopefully operational by the fall. We look forward to that to address some of the overcrowding issues that we have seen at that school lately.

As well, Mr. Speaker, busing safety is something that has emerged. I would like to recognize the Minister of Community Services — the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — for his work with the group of parents who live in the Marsh Lake area on addressing some of the safety concerns around school busing, particularly since a couple of the more serious incidents occurred on the bus that transports students from Judas Creek and the Marsh Lake area into Golden Horn.

I know there is lots of work that is still required on school busing and school bus safety generally. I did reach out to the Minister of Education between Sittings and asked about progress on the motion that we unanimously passed in this Legislative Assembly dealing with a variety of issues, so that we look to explore that a little bit further with the minister as the session progresses and beyond so that we can ensure that when children are riding the buses they are doing so with the utmost in safety — as a concern for them.

With regard to the Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway, a significant portion of that passes through my

riding, and I have identified a number of issues for the Minister of Highways and Public Works that I will look to follow up on with him as well. I note there are some dollars that were announced for intersection improvements just south of the Two Mile Hill and Hamilton Boulevard intersection with the Alaska Highway. We look forward to getting a sense of what else is in the five-year capital plan. Alaska Highway intersection safety improvements in Whitehorse are identified in each year of this five-year capital plan document, so we will look to get a sense for what 2021 and beyond hold as far as additional intersection safety improvements.

Some of my constituents have identified energy-efficiency initiatives as a concern for them. I look forward to speaking further with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Community Services on that.

Funding for NGOs of course is not just a riding-specific thing — it affects many people throughout the territory — so that is another concern that we have with this budget and some of the recent stories with budget freezes pending reviews, particularly by the Department of Health and Social Services. So many of those NGOs that provide support to Health and Social Services clients do incredible work, and we need to recognize that and find a way to give them some stable funding over a longer term so that they can meet the mandate that they have been provided with.

Of course, living in a country residential and rural residential riding, many of my constituents are concerned with FireSmart. I know there is a Whitehorse FireSmart group that has been put together, and they had a meeting in early January here in Whitehorse. I look forward to getting a better idea from the government on what their plans are around FireSmart and especially firesmarting in and around Whitehorse, because that is a primary concern for my constituents.

When it comes to contracting and procurement, capital plans and those types of initiatives, there are a number of individuals who are contractors that live in my riding, and I hear from them on a regular basis. Again, as we mentioned earlier today in Question Period, when we look at last year's five-year capital plan that was tabled as part of the budget documents when those were introduced, there are projects that are in that plan that are no longer identified in the current plan. I think what we're looking for — if this is indeed to provide some level of certainty for Yukon contractors, Yukoners, school communities and others — then how does that provide that certainty when items are identified for multi-year funding opportunities and then they just disappear without a trace from the government's five-year capital plan? I know that I and others on this side of the House will be exploring that with the Premier and the various ministers as we move forward.

I'm not sure, but perhaps if the Minister of Highways and Public Works speaks in response to the budget here or tomorrow, he can clarify this — and the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and I will have to review the Blues to make sure — but I believe he said that there's a new grader station going into Stewart Crossing. The capital plan identifies one for Carmacks and one for Teslin, but it has housing in Stewart

Crossing but not a grader station. So perhaps the Minister of Highways and Public Works can clarify that for us just to make sure that we're all working with the same information here in the Legislature and that we're all able to identify projects from the same information. I'm sure that, obviously, a new grader station at Stewart Crossing would be very important to the Member of Mayo-Tatchun, but I don't see it identified here under Transportation Maintenance Buildings in the five-year capital plan.

Mr. Speaker, before I move on from the constituency issues, of course, the thing that we continue to hear from constituents and Yukoners is concern with the carbon tax. The Premier did table the act today, and we look forward to taking a look through it and hopefully answer some of the many unanswered questions that people have around this, whether it's individuals in the trucking industry, whether it's individuals who run businesses that are heavy consumers of fuel, or whether it's just individual Yukoners who aren't living on a transit line or aren't living within walking distance to work which is many of the constituents that I represent in Copperbelt South. They don't have the opportunity to make different choices. They often have to drive to work, especially if it's minus 40 degrees. Of course they have to heat their homes; they have to consume fuel. Again, we'll be looking for some answers from the Premier with respect to the carbon tax and how they'll live up to the commitments that their candidates made on the doorsteps in 2016 to return all of the money to each Yukoner.

Mr. Speaker, just quickly moving on to Education and Energy, Mines and Resources — the mining side, mining oil and gas — and the energy side — there a few things that we'll be looking to talk about with the ministers.

Education — that capital planning piece, the overcrowding and the attendance areas and trying to get a sense for what this upcoming school year is going to look like. The Whistle Bend school and the portables — I know there is one portable being built this year, so if there are more, we would certainly like to hear about it and get a sense for where those portables might be deployed in the Whitehorse area. There is an awful lot of concern and angst, as my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned earlier today, from members of various school communities — making sure that they remain in the same attendance area or catchment area for specific schools and other things. We'll be looking forward to exploring that.

On the programming side — just updates on the curriculum as well as First Nation programming. I know the minister put an assistant deputy minister in charge of indigenous programs and First Nation programming, but we will want to see how many dollars are actually flowing to programs with respect to First Nation programming.

On the Energy, Mines and Resources side of things, particularly with respect to mining, we've heard a number of concerns. A number of colleagues and I were at the Mineral Exploration Roundup in Vancouver in late January. As we mentioned in Question Period last week, there is a pending slowdown on the exploration side of things. Announcements

by Barrick and Newmont certainly lead us to understand that to be the case. We will have to get a sense again for what the minister is expecting. Many people on the service and supply side of things rely on those exploration expenditures on a year-to-year basis, so if we can have some accurate numbers, that would certainly be helpful — if the minister is able to provide us with that and a sense of what initiatives he's planning or has in this budget to deal with the consequences of that slowdown in exploration.

The uncertainty around permitting is another concern that we've heard an awful lot about, whether it's development projects that are held up right now in YESAB with outstanding information requests or the collaborative framework that we were promised two years ago with respect to timelines and reassessments for YESAB and the apparent lack of urgency from the Premier with respect to getting that work completed. Access to land — I know that's extremely important for the mining industry, particularly the prospectors. Over 50 percent of the Yukon right now is off limits to any new staking. That's something that we will want to explore with the minister and the Premier — when we can expect some of the staking bans or the temporary staking bans that are in place to come off.

Those are a few of the things that I just wanted to highlight from a riding perspective and critic role perspective. I too would like to thank the public servants in Finance as well as throughout the various government departments that contributed to putting this budget together. I appreciate their effort and their hard work.

We look forward to deliberating this budget and other pieces of legislation over the next couple months.

Mr. Adel: I rise today to respond to the budget presented on March 7 by our Premier and Minister of Finance. I would like to start by also thanking those involved for their hard work in putting together this year's budget: the staff, the management and all of the people who work within our government to make this happen. I would also be remiss not to thank my family for their support, my constituents from Copperbelt North and my colleagues for making this job easier.

It is no small feat to put together a comprehensive budget that outlines five years of capital spending. This budget may have underwhelmed some members from across the floor, but I would suggest that Yukoners will see this budget as steady financial management of the Yukon — less flash, just a better use of the cash.

As the Premier stated in his Budget Address, our government introduced this innovation last year to be transparent with Yukoners about what capital projects are planned for the coming years. This plan for 2019-20 builds from the plan that was introduced last year and features strategic investments across the territory that support a growing economy and improve the delivery of government services in key areas. It also demonstrates our government's commitment to greater openness in giving a longer planning horizon to all those involved in government procurement,

construction and infrastructure projects. This plan continues to benefit Yukoners on many fronts. It provides an opportunity for government to clearly communicate spending plans among Yukoners, municipalities, First Nation governments and the private sector. This also allows all levels of government to effectively work toward fulfilling the highest priority needs of all Yukoners in all communities.

Further, it gives vendors a better opportunity to prepare and plan for seasonal projects. We are in a much better position to ensure that tenders are being put out at an appropriate time. Last year, over \$41 million worth of large, seasonally dependent construction tenders went out before March 31. Last spring, I introduced Motion No. 230, which supported tendering major construction projects that are seasonally dependent no later than in March of each year. Mr. Speaker, the implementation of this initiative has allowed contractors to plan their projects and be ready to take full advantage of our short but intense building season. I am happy to say that our team has continued to listen to Yukoners on this issue. This year we will see \$58 million worth of large, seasonally dependent construction tenders go out before the end of this month. I am pleased to see that this number is steadily increasing. Good planning leads to a stronger economy and local prosperity. We are seeing those results.

Another thing I am happy to see is that we are staggering closing dates of public tenders to make it easier for contractors to bid on more than one tender and to encourage prices to remain stable. Many of these great changes that we are seeing implemented with respect to procurement are a direct result of the excellent engagement that has been taking place with the Procurement Advisory Panel and the Department of Highways and Public Works.

This year, the presentation of the five-year capital plan is focused on six categories. Of those six categories, we are seeing Energy broken out into its own category. I am happy to see that it is its own category. This tells me that we recognize the value and the importance of energy and energy initiatives and the continued success of our territory. Having Energy broken out into its own category allows for the opportunity to show how planned spending is linked to increasing the efficiency of existing buildings and developing new sources of renewable energy that reduce the territory's dependence on fossil fuels. There's \$127 million over the next five years for energy projects. That includes efficiency upgrades to government and First Nation buildings that take advantage of federal funding for green initiatives and expand renewable energy options in the Yukon. In this fiscal year, we will see \$13.9 million of that \$127 million invested in energy. This makes up about five percent of the total capital expenditures for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, investments in energy and efficiency have been accelerated to leverage federal funding to advance projects such as lighting and building envelope upgrades and roof replacements of government buildings and housing. Completing these projects will ensure that we are all successful in reducing our energy consumption, thus lowering our greenhouse gas emissions.

\$3.6 million a year for the next four years will be invested for retrofits to First Nation housing and existing social and staff housing. Mr. Speaker, this is being done using the low carbon economy fund. Federal funds are also being used to help First Nations undertake energy retrofits for their public buildings.

Our government commitment to reducing energy consumption and reliance on fossil fuels is not only limited to the capital budget. The objective is also supported in our operation and maintenance budget through a variety of programs offered through Energy, Mines and Resources — all designed with the ultimate goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Another key component is the Arctic energy fund. The federal Arctic energy fund targets investments in reducing dependence on fossil fuels. I will take a moment just to elaborate on the Arctic energy fund. This fund is part of a bilateral agreement signed between the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon. This fund provides up to \$50 million over 10 years to projects that will reduce the consumption of fossil fuels associated with the generation of electric and heat energy.

Mr. Speaker, this fund is part of a larger federal green infrastructure fund and is designed to reduce northern dependence on fossil fuels for energy generation. The objectives of this program align well with our government's focus on renewable energy throughout the innovative renewable energy initiative, the independent power production policy and the microgeneration program. I am pleased to see the work that has been done to date and the work that continues to occur with respect to our government's commitment to reducing energy consumption and reliance on fossil fuels.

Our government has done some really great work around energy efficiency initiatives. In fact, last year the Government of Yukon received an Energy Star Canada award for its role in promoting energy efficiency, Energy Star appliances and heating systems in the Yukon. An example that I think is a really great success is the retrofit of 69 LED lighting systems. Over a three-year period, the new lighting systems have collectively saved enough money to power approximately 503 non-electrically heated homes for one year and prevented 538 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions from entering the atmosphere.

We see a lot of progression in the area of energy, and I am looking forward to seeing what else is coming for the Yukon.

Another area that is seeing major capital support in this budget is Health and Social Services. Health is something that touches all Yukoners. The services that this department funds and provides are truly invaluable. We are seeing \$80.6 million invested in our continuing care facilities, home care, respite care, palliative care programs and community day programs. A topic that falls into this category that I would like to take a moment to speak to is aging in place. It is an issue that is important to me and something I hear a lot about from my constituents. I spoke to this motion in the Fall Sitting of 2017

with Motion No. 32. This is an issue that affects all Yukoners directly and indirectly, now and in the future.

Yukoners between the ages of 60 and 74 are currently the fastest growing age group. Yukon has seen our population rise to record numbers, over 40,000. This increase continues to put pressure on the number of beds available for the delivery of services, despite the expansion of health facilities and programs. The recent opening of Whistle Bend Place has really helped to alleviate some of the pressure that I think was being felt. I am really happy to see that this state-of-the-art facility is well into their first year of successful operation.

Outside of Whistle Bend Place, however, aging in place requires the continued support of home care and the Yukon Housing Corporation. Home care provides a suite of services that allows Yukoners to stay in their homes longer. When I spoke to this motion in 2017, I expressed our government's commitment to working with the public, stakeholders and partners around what aging in place meant — how we can work to identify the kinds of supports and services that Yukoners need. I am happy to say that over the past year there has been some excellent work done around aging-in-place consultation and engagement with Yukoners.

I have attended many of these sessions and have had the opportunity to sit around the table and speak with Yukoners. I have heard from them what they want, and I have to say that there were some really great conversations happening. It's amazing the things that, as a collective, we can come up with when you put together a diverse group of Yukoners, all with differing views, opinions, needs and experiences. I am really looking forward to seeing what comes from these consultations and how this will move forward.

Next up, we are seeing social supports, including disability services, wellness and substance abuse programs and income support receiving \$58.1 million. We are seeing \$1 million invested into the planning and design of a new secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital. This would replace the current unit, which does not meet patient and staff safety standards. The current secure medical unit does not have the ability to zone patients based on possible aggressive or violent behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, the initial planning for the improved space includes options for eight to 12 inpatient beds and three seclusion/safe rooms. The new secure medical unit is an important first step in the expansion of services at Whitehorse General Hospital. It will improve patient outcomes and introduce aspects of an improved healing environment, improve recognition and respect for First Nations' needs and culture and will provide space for activities and services that are currently being provided off-site. This will reduce the need to move patients and thereby reduce risk.

Another really exciting undertaking that we're seeing is \$3 million invested into modernizing Yukon hospitals' information system. This money will support the Yukon Hospital Corporation's replacement of its current system. Currently, most client records in Health and Social Services are maintained in paper form at the point of care or in electronic systems that are not well-integrated. This is an

exciting opportunity to establish a collaborative, connected health system for all Yukoners through an integrated system for electronic health and wellness records. An integrated electronic health record provides authorized clinicians with a complete, comprehensive, near real-time view of a client's journey through the Yukon health system. However, this doesn't only benefit clinicians. The implementation of Meditech Expanse will include a patient portal that enables clients to easily and securely access their health records online.

I'm really pleased with the investments we're making to enhance Yukoners' health experience. This is a budget that overall I'm very proud of. Though you may not see me in the forefront of news releases, my position in caucus allows me to contribute to the Liberal one-government approach. I have the pleasure of chairing and working on different committees. Over the past year, I've been happy to participate in many public forums to hear directly from Yukoners about what matters to them. Most importantly, I'm able to highlight concerns of citizens to my colleagues in Cabinet. We work and progress as a team for the benefit of all Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to the budget for the first time here this Sitting, I would like to begin by once again thanking my constituents in Lake Laberge for their continued support and the opportunity to continue to serve them and work with them as MLA for Lake Laberge. I would also like to thank all of my caucus colleagues and our staff for their assistance in doing the work that I do and in supporting me here in the Assembly.

I would like to, in speaking to the budget here, of course — first and foremost, it needs to be noted that I am concerned, as the Official Opposition Finance critic, as are my colleagues, with the amount of spending contained in this budget that is simply growing the size of government. We've seen here a growth in government that has been quite notable under the Premier and this Liberal government, and it's in stark contrast to their rhetoric around financial management and restraining the rate of growth. In fact, what we see each and every year is they just keep growing and growing and growing. Contrary to the claim that is usually made that points toward continuing care, in breaking down the numbers, most of the increases in staff are not due to continuing care. The 22 new employees in the Department of Highways and Public Works that the Premier referred to in Question Period last week are certainly not related to continuing care. The 40 new staff to complete the government's takeover of the Salvation Army Centre of Hope is also not related to continuing care.

We've seen there that the government, in fact, saw a significant increase from the federal government in the major transfers to the territory, and without that, the deficit we see in this year's budget would be even worse. The increase that the federal government provided was, in fact, also higher than the government had been anticipating last year, and according to the information we were given by the Department of Finance this morning, it was higher than the \$50-million increase referenced in federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau's letter of

December 2018. We've now been told that the increase overall is \$53.4 million compared to the 2018-19 main estimates.

So \$53.4 million in new money from the federal government — in increased money from the federal government — is certainly good news for the territory's ability to complete a variety of a range of services and requests that it needs to provide, as well as the central services, but unfortunately we've seen the Liberals taking an approach that is squandering most of that increase on hiring new staff across government.

Again, I want to note that while we do recognize that there are some areas where government may need to grow to provide essential services, what we've seen is an across-the-board increase again and again and again across departments and across government under this Premier and the Liberal Cabinet.

The Premier took issue earlier today with the number that we had cited of 659 new full-time equivalent positions, and as seems to be a narrative here for the government if they don't like the facts, they're dismissing them and suggesting that the facts are just fake news. I'm paraphrasing, Mr. Speaker, but there is a dismissal of the facts presented. I want to point out that the number that we provided of 659 new FTEs under this Liberal government is based on the Premier's own statements in this Legislative Assembly last week during Question Period and last fall during debate on the budget.

The Premier said — and I'm going to quote: "I believe he asked what the total was of all FTEs. All FTEs in Yukon government — 4,913 in total."

"If we went back to the 2016-17 budget, which would be the last budget of the Yukon Party — at that time, there were 4,414 FTEs..."

Again, doing the math on the number the Premier gave us last fall and adding the number the Premier provided us in Question Period, it comes to a total of 659 new FTEs under the Liberal watch. I have to point out that if you look at where the starting point was, that's an increase of almost 15 percent in the total number of government employees since the Liberals took office. That increase is not something that the Premier can simply dismiss, and he can't unsay the words that he said in this Assembly even if he wishes we would forget the numbers he told us.

Again, there are choices made in government. One of the choices this government has made, which we have already criticized him for — and we will continue to do — is the choice to freeze funding agreements for NGOs funded by Health and Social Services, including NGOs that provide important, and in some cases vital, services to Yukoners.

It is very concerning when we hear organizations like the Yukon women's transition home citing the gravity of their concern with their current funding arrangement — taking the point where, contrary to what the Minister of Health and Social Services was suggesting earlier today in Question Period, if Kaushee's Place and the Yukon women's transition home board were happy with their relationship with government, they would not be protesting on the front steps of

the Legislative Assembly. The fact that they have gone to that step I am sure follows attempts to work directly with government around the resources, but we have seen their funding frozen.

We have also seen funding for the Child Development Centre frozen, and we know that the Child Development Centre is facing a wait-list and request for increased resources. I was pleased to attend their open house earlier this year. At that time, they provided information to MLAs. I don't think the Minister of Health and Social Services found the time to make it to the open house and certainly from the decisions made here by the government — despite the fact that the Premier did attend that open house — it doesn't seem that they understood the importance of the service this NGO provides. If they did, and if they understood the cost pressures, how could they reach the decision they did to not provide more resources while they're finding money for other spending priorities, including the quarter-million dollar increase to the operational funding for the Cabinet office, the Premier's raise, as well as increasing funding for other NGOs, such as one mentioned in the Premier's budget speech? They apparently could find money for that purpose, but there was nothing, unfortunately, for Kaushee's Place, the Child Development Centre, Many Rivers — and the list goes on — in Health and Social Services.

What it seems to me in that area, and what is very concerning, is the government doesn't seem to understand the services that these NGO partners provide. They don't seem to believe that these NGOs operate efficiently — based on the Minister of Health and Social Services' comments in this House — and they don't seem to recognize that, if government does not provide them with increased resources, those important services that are provided will simply not be available.

In the case of an example such as Kaushee's Place — as alluded to earlier by my colleague from the New Democratic Party, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King — the questions being asked of that organization to justify their funding and to prove the need for their services are patently ridiculous. It is unreasonable to suggest that they provide answers to the requests that were made.

I'm certainly not suggesting for a second that any NGO should simply have a cheque cut to it without due diligence, but the Yukon's NGOs — I've been in the situation of being Minister of Health and Social Services as well as a number of other departments, and I know the level of detail that has been provided in the past by NGOs, and that fact that, if additional information were needed by the department or the minister, there is the ability to tour the facilities, to gain additional information, to look into it and to make that decision around the funding agreement.

At the time, during my tenure as Minister of Health and Social Services, we decided that a long list of them were in need of increased resources, and we provided those resources. It is unfortunate that the current government will not even give them the cost of the rate of inflation while prices go up across the board, including due to the Liberal carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, another area that I am going to move on to which is of great concern to me is the lack of funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We see again that this government, despite repeated criticism of their lack of funding for the Hospital Corporation, started off the term — as you'll recall — with providing the hospital an increase of approximately 1.5 percent in O&M despite the fact that — as we were well aware from being in office previously — the hospital had asked for a four-percent increase. We have seen the government consistently providing the hospital with less than the rate of inflation as an increase for their funding while cost pressures are going up. The Liberal government has been very slow to act on those areas.

We are pleased that they provided the increased resources for cataract surgery. We are pleased that they have acted in the area of chemotherapy. But again, those increases came after my colleagues and I from the Official Opposition criticized them for that area. I know my colleague the Member for Watson Lake and our Health and Social Services critic were up repeatedly throughout the Fall Sitting criticizing the government for the waitlist for cataract surgery before the government finally relented and acted.

If you pull out the new initiatives — including cataract surgery and wait times for ophthalmology — that were added to the hospital's budget, it seems that yet again the government is providing them with less than the rate of inflation as an increase. That is quite simply, Mr. Speaker, an appalling neglect of the health care needs of our citizens.

I am going to move on to a few other areas. I do want to emphasize that it is important for the government to pay more than lip service to NGO partners and, in fact, recognize the value that the volunteers, boards and staff of those organizations provide, recognizing that, in fact, they play a very important part in the structure of Yukon's services that are provided under the umbrella of Health and Social Services or through their funding agreements. It is time for government to actually take the time, do the due diligence, recognize where demonstrated needs exist and fund those demonstrated needs in an appropriate manner.

I want to note as well, Mr. Speaker — just moving on to another area. I want to note that we see, again, a lack of detail in this budget. We are seeing the proud and somewhat odd reference in the budget speech of the Premier referencing the North Star in this budget. We see that, for government that talked about being more transparent, more accountable and more open, their budgets are not more transparent — they are more opaque. The change in reducing the budget highlights from meaningful detail down to graphs and infographics on four pages is again providing very little detail to Yukoners. There used to typically be a practice of some 10 to 12 pages of budget highlights plus a longer list of projects and announcements in the budget speech. We have seen this government, right at the outset, reduce the list of project highlights down to four pages of broader categories and nice pictures. That does not provide the detail that Yukoners want to see.

As the Official Opposition, we have been able to dig into some of the details in departments with briefings, and we do thank department staff for answering our questions honestly and providing the information. But this information is not readily accessible to Yukon citizens who would like to be able to pick up a copy of the budget or look online and actually see the details themselves rather than having to wait for members of the Official Opposition to dig out the information piece by piece from government over time.

An example of what I am referring to is that when I referred to the increase in the major transfers from the federal government of some \$53.4 million compared to the 2018-19 main estimates — we of course have discussed previously in this Assembly the letter from Minister Morneau, which made reference to a \$50-million increase. But this revised number of \$53.4 million — I would challenge the government to point to where the average citizen can easily find this information in the budget. Mr. Speaker, they should be able to find that information easily.

I want to talk about a few riding priorities that are important to my constituents. I would again note that I have brought up these priorities on a number of occasions and again, in looking through the budget at this point in time, it's not clear whether these projects are being acted on this fiscal year or whether the Liberal government has turned a deaf ear to those requests. Again, we should not have to tease this information out of government — request it, ask for it, dig, et cetera. It should be more transparent to the average Yukon citizen who wants to pick up a copy of a budget or check online and find out whether a project that's important to them — that they have asked the government for or asked their MLA for — is included in the government's main estimates.

A few of these areas — and I note that I have brought these up in the past, and in some cases, so have some of my colleagues. We continue to make the request of government to take action to expand cell service. It was through the work of the Yukon Party when in government that cell service was expanded beyond Whitehorse to provide service in communities around the territory, as well as increase service in the Whitehorse periphery. As my colleagues and I have raised on numerous occasions, we continue to make the request that government show leadership in this area and act. I should note that it's because, as members will know, that without government taking some role in this process, it's simply not attractive enough to a cellphone company to expand the service area for the number of citizens who would be served. But through the visionary work that we did in the past, expanding cell service when it was not immediately economical to do so has improved not only convenience but safety for Yukoners in communities across the territory.

Again, in case the government has forgotten, the list of areas where we would like to see cell service expanded includes Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fox Lake, Mendenhall, improved service in the Ibex Valley area where there are gaps, Junction 37, Champagne and Mendenhall.

While we appreciate that government has not rejected that request, in the third year of the Liberal government's mandate,

we simply don't know whether they have any plan to take action on that and can't get an answer beyond platitudes.

Other areas that are important to my constituents are that we would like to see a walkway added to the Takhini River bridge. Engineering work was done on that in the tail end of the Yukon Party's time in office. Again, in year three of the Liberal government, we still haven't gotten a clear answer of whether they will add it or won't add it and, if they will add it, when they will do so. The purpose of the walkway was intended for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and ATVs and was intended to improve service. It is a request that comes from my riding and the people who live in that area. Although they may not have voted for the current government, they are citizens of the territory and they are entitled to have their voices heard and their priorities considered.

Another item on the list of things that are important to my constituents is that people would like to see work done at the Mayo Road corner on the Alaska Highway — to see the work that was planned by the Department of Highways and Public Works actually turned into action.

I do thank Highways and Public Works for the work that they did in looking at extending the turning lane and improving that intersection. That is something that my constituents would like to see. There have been several accidents at that corner, which demonstrates the importance of making improvements there for safety purposes.

I would also note that though I have gotten an answer from the Minister of Highways and Public Works on the request from constituents to change the highway lines and add turning lanes in Hidden Valley, the minister, with the exception of the request for the turning lane at Two Mile Road, turned down the request. That is unfortunate. I do have to bring it up again because it continues to be an issue that I hear from constituents who say that it is not more safe as a result of the change — it is less safe.

Before I conclude my remarks about constituency priorities, I again encourage the government to take action on improving Takhini River Road, including doing the engineering work necessary to proceed with a major upgrade to the roadbed, the ditches and surface. I would be remiss if I did not mention as well — although these would be less expensive items — that constituents have raised with me on a number of occasions the request for improvements to Burma Road and Vista Road — to the gravel surface — where both have had significant issues around potholes and washboard.

I am going to move on to other areas within my critic role and would note that we are hoping to see from the government more action in the area of support for rural emergency medical services, as well as for the volunteer fire departments. We look forward to hearing what steps government is taking in those areas.

I would note, as did one of my colleagues earlier, the work that is being done by the Whitehorse FireSmart group around raising awareness of the risk of forest fire in the Whitehorse area and proposing solutions is something that I am very pleased to see. The evidence shows — reports done by the government show — that the Yukon is at risk.

If there were a major fire event, we would not be able to stop it — in certain conditions, I should note — and that rather than either leaving it there or planning for how to evacuate and mitigate an emergency, there are proactive steps that can be taken to reduce the fuel load, to provide opportunities for the private sector in doing so, and I would encourage government to work on this area, to take it seriously and to act on it with a sense of priority.

I would note as well that I believe this is an area where all levels of the government that are affected should recognize the importance of this, should recognize the opportunity that is provided — if this is acted on in the right way — to provide an opportunity for the private sector, as well as increasing our capacity to make use of biomass to reduce our fossil fuel consumption. This is an area where the time to act is now.

I think that largely concludes my remarks for this stage. I will make others during general debate on the budget, but I do want to note, as have some of my colleagues, that we've seen the Liberal government make a lot of noise patting itself on the back for their so-called five-year capital plan. Looking through the capital plan, in addition to the fact — as my colleague, Member for Copperbelt North, noted — there have been items removed from last year's multi-year capital plan without explanation. We have seen additions and changes in format this year, but when one actually looks through the detail of the capital plan, it's not much of a plan. The items that are listed, more often than not, have such a wide price range on the cost estimate that it renders them effectively meaningless.

I'll give an example: the Challenge cornerstone project, cost estimate \$5 million to \$10 million — from \$5 million to double \$5 million. Old Crow mixed-use tenplex, cost estimate, again, \$5 million to \$10 million; Ross River School, cost estimate \$10 million to \$25 million; secure medical unit — again, that's an area where, as well as the Meditech system upgrade, I'm pleased to see that the government has acted on after we've raised those matters as priorities. The cost estimate for the secure medical unit — again, the rather nebulous \$5 million to \$10 million; Whitehorse air tanker base, \$10 million to \$25 million; Dawson City infrastructure upgrades, \$10 million to \$25 million.

I'm not going to go through the entire list of this, but if I did, we would be here awhile while I read through the list of very nebulous, wide-ranging cost estimates that effectively render the inclusion of those items meaningless from a planning perspective, and they provide no real indication to either Yukon citizens or the contracting community to what the expected cost is going to be.

I know there's a reason for government not including the precise figure, but you need to get better than this or the capital plan is quite simply useless.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It is an absolute honour and privilege to rise to speak to our government's 2019-20 budget. I am here first and foremost to represent the residents of Porter

Creek South. Rest assured, their priorities are considered and balanced in all decisions put in front of me.

Although the riding is small, the values and perspectives are diverse. Upon taking on the work of running for office, I had the opportunity to have multiple discussions — many discussions — door to door with the residents of the riding. One conversation that always resonated with me as I started to do this work was a conversation I had on Grove Street with a gentleman. He explained how his very large family — his sons and daughters — back in the fall of 2016 were living outside of the Yukon Territory. They were living outside of the Yukon Territory because they moved away to find work. They moved away to try to increase the quality of their life.

It's interesting, as I have an opportunity today to speak to this budget and our investments in infrastructure and to grow our economy that, over the weekend, I received an e-mail from one of the leaders in our mining sector. That individual had sent out a picture, and it was a picture of a large Caterpillar rock drill. It was a Caterpillar MD6920, and the young man who was operating it — they were commending the fact that this young man had come back home. What really was comforting to me was that it was the son-in-law of the gentleman from Grove Street. At a school council meeting just a couple of weeks ago, I bumped into him and asked him about it, because really that was my barometer about how we were doing. It was, "Where are your kids?" He said, "My kids are all home now. My grandkids are home and my children are home now." All his children are now back in the Yukon and have found gainful employment.

So we can go through budget line items, but really at the end of the day it's about trying to better the lives of Yukoners, trying to ensure that when Yukoners want to be home — we have a very talented individual who works for a lot of mining companies and has built a new ad — some of you may have seen it — it said, "Yukoners, it's time to come home." It's time to come home because there is now opportunity at home. That wasn't the case just two or three years ago.

The public service, the private sector, the individuals who work in this Legislative Assembly — people are putting their shoulder against the work that has to be done, moving this economy forward and diversifying our economy and giving opportunities for not just our children, but also our grandchildren. I think that is something that the public service and the private sector should be absolutely proud of. It's made a huge difference.

Over the past two and a half years that I have been in my role as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, Minister of Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation, I have been working hard to deliver on the tasks outlined in the mandate letter provided to me by the Premier.

I would like to highlight some of the steps taken in this budget to make further progress in delivering on those items, but I think it would be also important to touch on a few things before I get into it item by item. There have been a lot of different comments made today from members of the opposition. First and foremost, I think there has been the

dialogue about the fact that our budget has been underwhelming and that our budget maybe doesn't have the glitz. I want to thank the Premier, and I have full respect for his approach to how he deals with the finances of this territory. The budget's job is not to entertain anybody. The budget's job — maybe in the years previous it was a bit of entertainment and that's what people were conditioned to seeing. It's not about that. It's about ensuring that the right decisions are made, that we look after the public purse, that we provide stability for the government and for taxpayers and that the tough conversations are had. These are courageous conversations that sometimes are difficult as you go through them, but it's the right thing to do. That's the work that has been ongoing.

I know the Leader of the Official Opposition had said today to the Premier, which I appreciated: "I'm here. My door is open. I'm here to collaborate; I'm here." Just on Friday, what I saw in the paper was: "I'm not going to give away all my ideas. There doesn't seem to be any vision." One minute, it's: "I'm here to help and collaborate." The next moment is: "I'm not going to give away my ideas." It has been a funny first couple of days.

I also had heard members of the opposition — on Friday I got a couple of questions, and there has been this dialogue around the mining sector. From the mining people I talked to over the weekend, the feeling was: "I don't think anybody wants to come in here and cheer against Yukoners."

There has been a situation in one particular case where people did a lot drilling. They defined that the resource that they drilled may not be of the magnitude that this particular group wants to see. They did a great job working with the First Nation in that particular territory. The reclamation job they did was exemplary, and I'm sure somebody else along the way would like it, but just the tone of it was a bit disturbing.

What I would say is the fact is, when it comes to it — I've listened to a couple members of the opposition, but the facts are very stubborn things. When we look at what's happening right now in our mining sector, which is just because of the work of the private sector — it's about the service sector; it's about the work that's being put in by the First Nation governments, the development corporations, Yukon Chamber of Mines, the Yukon Mining Alliance, the Yukon Producers Group — all these people who are working extremely hard to support an industry. I find it interesting, and like I said, the facts are stubborn things.

I think, overall, the people who are in that industry know where it is compared to where it was. This year, when we look at the money that came into the territory, I think there is a lot of tireless work that has been done by my colleagues and the public service to ensure — whether Energy, Mines and Resources, Economic Development or Aboriginal Relations — to build a foundation of stability to ensure that people feel comfortable in investing.

When I am sitting in a room with individuals in this sector or individuals who direct finance and capital in this sector, what I hear across this country or internationally is that

there is stability in place that was not there before. That has led to what we see as an increase in investment.

We are in a position where we have 0.1 percent of the population but 10 percent of the expenditures in the sector. I would think that in a sector that is this big, I would hope that, from time to time, there are people out there challenging the decisions that are being made if they are not happy with them, and they should go to the opposition. The opposition's job is to come in here and challenge. I think out of discord comes good ideas and good solutions, but overall, like I said, facts are stubborn things.

There is reason why this last year has been in the top three years we have ever seen in exploration. At the end of the day, you see an economy that has been driven by investment from the private sector.

If anybody should know, it should be you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you see what is happening in your community with probably the people who have had a chance to come home and work — kids who can now find opportunity and grandchildren who can be with their grandparents. These are the real things that are happening because of this economy. I am sure there will be challenges. I am sure a letter will pop up or there will be a phone call that will be referred to in the spring session and the fall session. I feel very proud of all those people who worked so hard to make that sector work.

What also was interesting is that, as we will go through some things here, out of the whole budget that almost everybody in the opposition has read, there has been no conversation about agriculture. There has been no conversation about tech. There has been no conversation about so many different sectors. It was just, "Hey, we went to Vancouver, and a couple of people took us aside and said there were problems." That is the summary and the fact that one company that has been drilling for years has decided to not drill. Out of all of the exploration programs that are happening in the Yukon, a global decision was made by one company and because of that, we are in some sort of a crisis. So really, we will go with the facts.

When it comes to non-profits, there have been some comments made by a number of individuals. I know the Member for Porter Creek North had some strong questions today. I think it's unfair to have that MLA get up and ask the question. I hope that everybody else sitting with that MLA, before they put those questions in place said, "Hey, by the way, just a year — two years ago — we actually walked in and cut funding for an organization."

What I haven't heard at all is anything about the Yukon Council on DisABILITY. I have heard nothing. In my time, whether working with FASSY or the Youth of Today Society or in all the time that I have spent with NGOs — for all of us, I can look around the room and know how many people over here have. I know the Member for Lake Laberge — I don't know how much time he has spent on boards. I know he has been here for a long period of time. I don't know how much time in hours he has spent, but when I think back — maybe I'm wrong and I should take the advice I was giving today and maybe do my research. I thought the Yukon Council on

DisABILITY didn't exist anymore. I thought it didn't exist because the members across the way made a decision to cut their funding and then it closed.

That's not what I'm hearing my colleague do. My colleague is having good conversations with organizations — tough conversations — and doing a review to see what the services are — not walking in and saying, "We're cutting your funding completely and now you can close your doors."

When we heard about the services that are provided — my work with the Yukon Council on DisABILITY, whether it was when I was working for Yukon College or working for NGOs or working to provide employment services. The people who worked there — one of my former students, I remember at one point, was there, and then I guess co-workers who became my co-workers because of the decisions that were made.

I hope that everybody else who was part of that decision back in 2015 provided that information to the Member for Porter Creek North. I think we'll have more time to talk about that decision. In my memory over the last 10 or 15 years, there could be more, and I will be humbly educated on that if there are other NGOs that also had to dissolve because of government funding, but that's the one that sticks out in my mind. I remember the people who were affected by that.

I just hear some rumbling from the Member for Watson Lake. It gives me a good opportunity — I was happy just two weeks ago to go to Watson Lake and provide funding to the Watson Lake Day Care Society, and that's so they can purchase a new commercial dishwasher for their daycare in order to facilitate their hot meals program, and also, while I was in Watson Lake, to provide funding to the Creative Playgroup Society for approximately \$20,000 to construct a community garden in Watson Lake. I want to thank our staff from the Agriculture branch for the work they have also done to support their work.

Our government recognizes the importance of the mineral resources sector to the Yukon economy and will continue to work with proponents to ensure that the Yukon is a preeminent jurisdiction in a global market. The Yukon is on the map, and we are extremely thrilled to have Victoria Gold well on its way to a first gold pour this fall. It is important that we not become complacent and that we strive to improve our already favourable jurisdiction, whether it's through maintaining strong First Nation relations, further supporting exploration of our geological potential or working to ensure we have a strong environmental assessment process in place without unnecessary duplication.

We must continue to make investments for the future.

The global market is cyclical, and we know that companies are having a difficult time raising funds. It was asked by a member opposite — and I will bring forward the NRCan projections for the upcoming season.

As I have stated, I think that part of the reason that we have to continue to educate investors on the Yukon is because it was already signalled last summer and fall that junior mining companies will have a more difficult time raising money — partly because of the number that I was given by

Osisko Gold Royalties, which is the company that has played a major role in financing the Victoria Gold project, said that almost \$40 billion has left the mining sector and gone into other areas. As we see, it's more difficult to raise money.

I will say that at the PDAC conference, it was heralded — as we pass the mining and metals plan, something that has been extremely innovative, and almost all of the jurisdictions in the country support it. But one thing that was announced is the five-year commitment to flow through. After 18 successive years of a one-year increase, the five-year commitment to flow through does help the industry continue to raise dollars.

Through the Department of Economic Development, we are also renewing our three-year agreement with Yukon Mining Alliance. That is directly connected to the fact that you have to be in a situation, as we see more pressure on the side of raising capital, to be able to go out and support your industry. This will allow member companies to continue to benefit from global investment attraction activities.

On our tech sector, which is something that we felt was very important to focus on — to look at diversification, to grow tech sector innovation jobs — our government also knows that it is not in our best interests to rely solely on a single sector to drive our economy. We are focused on diversification, and the knowledge economy is one of the key areas where we have placed significant emphasis. Last year, we provided funding to assist NorthLight Innovation in opening its doors. The successes are evident when you walk through the doors. The space is at capacity. I know of one company at least that is already growing in size and looking to expand their footprint. Here is another example — where we're hearing of students just graduating from university, so Yukon kids — F.H. Collins Secondary School, Vanier Catholic Secondary School grads — who have gone off. Those opportunities for all high-school kids in the Yukon who have gone off and had support to gain a post-secondary education — many of them in computer science or the like — and now what we're seeing is an opportunity that didn't exist. It didn't exist 24 or 36 months ago in the private sector like this — where they can now come back to the Yukon and build a career in technology. I want to commend the staff at Economic Development. I have had the luck to work with those individuals, and they have done a phenomenal job.

As well, TechYukon continues to be a great voice and leader, and the whole team of (co)space and NorthLight have done a phenomenal job. People worked tirelessly to bring these things to fruition.

In addition, we have seen the success of Proof Data Technology — recently selected from hundreds of companies worldwide — as a recipient of a deal with Techstars in Toronto. As part of that deal, the talented team will receive about \$120,000 in investment from Techstars. They currently have office space in Toronto for three months and access to a global network of mentors, investors and fellow entrepreneurs. These opportunities are exciting for the Yukon, of course, as valuable experience will be brought back and shared with others.

There are a number of critical pieces required here in the Yukon to build a successful tech sector. We now have a place for people to come together. We have an incredible group of people with the drive, talent and desire required, and we are building the critical diverse fibre. Continuing to support the sector with resources is important, just as it is in the mining sector. That is why we will commit close to \$1.92 million to technology and telecommunications programs through the Department of Economic Development.

The Member for Lake Laberge had asked about the potential for expanding telecommunications mobile. I will say that it is something that — from the first day it was brought up by the Member for Kluane, we have looked to try to have a program that would potentially duplicate what was in place previously. It was, I believe, in your riding — the last piece of infrastructure was put in place, which was at Stewart Crossing. It was a partnership at that point — I believe the federal government and Northwestel — and then money had flowed through Economic Development. I could be off a bit on the details, but we were lucky enough even just this Friday morning — the Minister of Highways and Public Works, the Minister of Community Services and I met with Rural Economic Development Minister Jordan and we discussed this. We talked about Grizzly Valley, talked about Champagne and talked about Junction 37. We will follow up with correspondence to her, and then I will provide that correspondence to the Member for Lake Laberge — just knowing that we respect that request and understand how important it is.

We have also had continuous dialogue with Northwestel. The perspective there was that some of the existing infrastructure would be upgraded potentially to provide a broader range. I will have some discussions to follow up with that.

Back to our \$1.92 million to technology and telecommunications — this money will continue to support TechYukon, YuKonstruct, Cold Climate Innovation and technology innovation program initiatives such as the Yukon Innovation Prize. The Yukon Innovation Prize — I will just note that this year, it will focus on clean tech. I am excited to see what submissions will come in for that. It aligns very well with the work that we are trying to do, whether it be Yukon Development Corporation, Yukon Energy Corporation, Energy, Mines and Resources and the work that is being done there through the Energy Solutions Centre — everything firing on all cylinders to try to ensure that we can support some of these new opportunities and new ideas.

It will also support an angel investing initiative by helping start-ups access capital. To date, we have provided funding to community engagement workshops, which brought together angel investors, First Nation development corporations, local business investors and entrepreneurs. There were almost 15 very significant angel investors. Angel investors — high net-worth individuals or organizations, usually individuals who have done very well in the tech sector — normally, they, through an exit strategy, selling off their organization or part of their organization, have acquired

significant wealth. That particular sector has a tradition of those individuals coming back to mentor or invest in other companies.

Through an initiative at Economic Development, with NorthLight and TechYukon — just a couple weeks ago, we had 15 people fly in. They absolutely loved the Yukon. They met with our companies, took a look at how we can also identify the process of maybe having funds in place where our local companies that want to expand — accelerate their growth — can actually leverage that. That was, again, very good work that was done.

I know that Steve Sorochan at Economic Development was a huge driver, and I want to thank him for that work and the work that he's going to continue to do through the money that we're going to have put aside in this budget to continue to help and do that work. I look forward to seeing the development of a strategy for a robust investment environment to grow Yukon's early-stage capital landscape.

As for agriculture, the agriculture sector is another area of focus for our government. Last year, our government signed on to the five-year Canadian Agricultural Partnership agreement, which sees \$1.48 million allocated annually to the sector in the Yukon. Over the fiscal year, 95 projects were approved, totalling over \$730,000. Funds from this agreement have also been used to fund the development of agricultural land. Last year, five lots were released for application, and another five lots are planned to be made available in 2019.

Another initiative currently underway is the update of the existing 2006 Yukon agricultural policy. One goal of the policy update is to look at how we can improve food production and advance the goal of food self-sufficiency for Yukoners. We will also look at how to best support industry as it becomes increasingly commercial.

Implementation work is now underway for the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* with a number of working groups created to advance certain aspects of this agreement. I will say that the Yukon Agricultural Association has been so supportive and helpful. The work that they do has been key. Last year when we attended our federal-provincial-territorial meetings, we had the president of the Yukon Agricultural Association with us as well as the executive director, Sonny Gray, was there and Jennifer Hall. I just want to commend the work that they continue to do.

We're trying to continue to put money in this budget so I can work with my colleague from Tourism and Culture, Minister Dendys. We've collaborated on the "meet your maker" — the Minister of Tourism and I. It has really been a great opportunity — many people from the riding of Lake Laberge and others coming in that are great producers of food and meeting with the hospitality industry.

I'm not going to touch on too much, but I will say that I have had the opportunity to have key advisement and collaboration with both my critics on this file, and we will collectively decide between the three of us how we want to communicate that to the Assembly, to be fair. I'll just say that it has been a great learning experience for me getting advice from the Member for Lake Laberge as well as the Member for

Takhini-Kopper King and just trying to collaborate on some concepts that we think — to put the political energy of this room aside and just work on some things that we think are important for the industry.

The Yukon government is actively participating on all of the working groups around the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*. One of particular interest, as I speak to agriculture, is the working group focused on the development in the food sector in the territories. We have two funding proposals currently submitted to this working group, both focused on driving economic growth and diversification for the sector. The sector is very exciting and is making incredible gains. The people behind it are passionate for the work they do, and I couldn't be happier to work with them in driving the sector.

On the energy sector, a major milestone this past year was the implementation of the independent power policy. This policy allows First Nation governments, communities and entrepreneurs the ability to generate renewable energy and feed new electricity into the electrical grid to help meet local demands. There are a number of projects at various stages of development that will feed the grid.

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation was the first to sign a power purchase agreement for its solar farm in Old Crow and the Kluane First Nation is in the process of negotiating an agreement for their wind-diesel energy project. Our government has been happy to support these proponents and many others through a number of funds.

The innovative renewable energy initiative administered through the Yukon Development Corporation is one such fund, implemented in 2018 by our government. To date, this \$1.5-million annual fund has supported projects in Carcross, Teslin, Burwash Landing, Old Crow, Whitehorse and Dawson City. There are additional projects in the works, and the Yukon Development Corporation is working closely with the proponents on their applications.

New this year through the Yukon Development Corporation — it was touched on earlier — will be the administering of the Arctic energy fund, which is a \$50-million fund spread over 10 years that will help Yukon communities reduce their reliance on diesel. We are in the process of finalizing this and a number of other agreements with the federal government.

Other agreements will see tens of millions of dollars dedicated specifically to energy retrofits for residential, commercial and institutional buildings throughout the territory to improve energy efficiency.

Following on the incredible biomass project out of Teslin, the Yukon government is now working directly with 12 Yukon First Nation governments on various research projects, assessments and feasibility studies on implementing biomass systems in each of their communities.

Our approach — just to touch on it — is to continue to work with both of my colleagues, the Minister of Highways and Public Works and the Minister of Community Services, as we all have pieces in our budget that are going to be used for a collaborative approach to ensure that we look at mitigation

and that we look for our mitigation right to biomass and taking into consideration the advisement that we get from great organizations that are funded in this budget, like the Yukon Wood Products Association, where we can see not only reducing a threat that we all know is very significant, but also taking into consideration how we have a diversified economy and other renewable energy sources.

The increase that we are seeing in the interest of using wood products for heat generation and electricity has been incredible, and through the departments of Energy, Mines and Resources and Highways and Public Works, we are working to implement the 2016 biomass energy strategy. Energy branch staff, with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the team of the Yukon Development Corporation, are true champions to our commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our territory. We are absolutely so thankful for their efforts. These projects and the funds mentioned here today do not even begin to scratch the surface of the work that all of these individuals are undertaking.

I look forward to further discussion on the mining sector and on exploration. I look forward to questions from the Member for Copperbelt South as we review questions around staking. I look forward to discussing how we got there and what some of the steps being taken now are. I look forward to also discussing the sector overall and probably a deeper discussion of where we stand.

I look forward to having a broader dialogue about this. I think the information that's provided — the team in Finance as well as Community Services and Highways and Public Works should be commended. From time to time, I get the chance to work with their teams. The amount of pressure and workload in place, especially with Highways and Public Works as they work through the procurement work as well as to identify these projects and have more conversations — I think it's one thing we're hearing from across the way. One of the lines is that the work that has been done is not worth the paper it's printed on.

That is a strong comment, especially when I know the amount of work that has been put into it by the people at Highways and Public Works. I also think that, although it seems like individuals in opposition are speaking on behalf of the private sector, the private sector — at least the Contractors Association and others who represent the interest of those groups — seem to have a bit of a different perspective on the work. They believe that the more conversations, more understanding — as the Minister of Education said earlier, there are times where you will be in a situation where you will have to make adjustments and decisions. Not having the final numbers in your budget before it goes out to RFP — people who understand the process will know why that is.

We are trying to ensure that people can start to scale up their businesses and look at the outyears and come to understand where those opportunities are or if they should make those investments in particular infrastructure or equipment.

With that, I will state that I look forward to continuing to work with the good people of Porter Creek South. We will

continue to look at those concerns that they may have. We are urging all the people in Porter Creek South to ensure that they take part in the municipal process and to make sure they state their ideas, concerns and vision in the official community plan as that process starts to gather feedback from the citizens of Whitehorse. That is a key piece.

I know we will continue to ensure that we work on the safety of individuals. It has been a long-outstanding issue — the traffic concerns, safety around traffic in that particular area. We see that there are many new, young families — as we see some individuals downsizing, and as their children are now having children, others are starting to move, and young families are moving in. So we will make sure that we continue to stay focused on the infrastructure that leads to quality of life for them. I want to commend the individuals in that community for the family gatherings and events that have happened over the last while. We have had the opportunity to spend some time — whether it be going skating or playing some hockey — at Pine Street park.

I look forward to this session. Once again, it is truly an honour to be able to walk into this Assembly and to represent the people I do get to represent and to work with my colleagues here. When I say my colleagues here, I mean all of my colleagues here. Even though it gets challenging at times, I do appreciate every single person I get to work with in here. I still feel the same way about those, respectfully, as I did the day that I got to walk in here and get to work with everybody, even if we don't always get along.

Ms. Van Bibber: I too am pleased to rise today as MLA for Porter Creek North to address the 2019-20 budget. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the constituents in my riding of Porter Creek North. I am very fortunate to represent a riding that is made up of such a diverse and passionate group of Yukoners. I am always appreciative that they have entrusted me to be their voice in this Legislature. I would also like to take a moment to thank my family and friends for everything they do to support me in my role as MLA. Their continued support and guidance over these last few years and over the course of my varied career have been integral in my work in so many ways.

I would like to remind my constituents once again that I am always available for a conversation. If you have a concern, if you have an idea or need some help or guidance, please don't hesitate to get in touch. I always enjoy getting to know my constituents, and I urge them to reach out.

I have looked through the 2019-20 budget, and a number of things stood out to me as I read through the pages of the funding allocations. I'm pleased to see a few of the concerns that have been brought to my attention by constituents addressed in the budget.

I look forward to debating a number of things included in this year's budget, and I plan to bring thoughtful, informative questions to the ministers responsible on behalf of my constituents on a number of files.

I've worked closely with many residents over the last year who voiced concern over the government's plan to

purchase and renovate an executive residence on Wann Road to become a group home. Concerns have continued to mount over the project by neighbours, although it appears that the question of "when" is finally being released. The home has sat untouched for the better part of a year, and it looks as though there's now a plan in place for renovations to begin. I look forward to hearing more about these plans, as do my constituents.

Yukoners have spoken to me of health care delays, health care issues, medical travel concerns and child care, and I look to see this government work alongside Yukoners to address a number of these concerns.

The pending Health and Social Services review will hopefully seek out the opinions and concerns of Yukoners so that each of these concerns will be viewed under a new lens. The ultimate goal, of course, should be to ensure that services are delivered in an efficient and transparent way.

There are so many situations brought to my attention and that of my colleagues in which Yukoners feel that they have fallen through the cracks. They are looking for solutions, and I will bring some of their concerns forward during Committee of the Whole and, of course, Question Period.

Schools have been brought up a number of times, and the issues — as I too have been attending a few school council meetings. They are looking to see how government plans to deal with continuous issues of overcrowding, vehicle, student and pedestrian safety and crosswalk lighting.

I continue to speak with constituents who are concerned with speeding in our residential areas. I hope that the government continues to work closely with the City of Whitehorse and the RCMP to address these concerns and others as they arise.

Other traffic issues continue to be highlighted. There are highway crossings in Porter Creek that continue to be of concern. The government has committed to look at these areas of concern as a part of their review of the highway section. I'm hoping to reiterate the importance of doing something sooner than later, as pedestrians running across the busy highway of these uncontrolled crossings should be treated as a crucial safety issue.

Housing, of course, continues to be a concern to my constituents, as I know it is to many Yukoners. Especially in the light of current housing price averages, people are concerned about affordable housing. Selling prices rise, and right along with them, rental costs rise. I feel for young people who must have a heck of a time getting into the housing market. Buying is becoming harder, and the cost of renting is astronomical.

Opening lots is commendable, but with lot prices and building costs as they are, the option for purchasing these lots is limited to only a portion of the population. They are simply too cost prohibitive to most.

I also worry about the cost of the carbon tax scheme. The government has claimed it will be returning 100 percent of revenue to Yukoners and businesses, but it's hard to look past the fact that this will have a huge impact on many still, not to mention an increase to the administration load of the

government. Administrating cheques and handling receipts, forms and other remittances from businesses will be costly. It cannot be revenue neutral because there have to be costs somewhere along the line.

I look forward to speaking more in-depth about the government's plan for tourism over the coming years. I'm keen to hear of our successes, and I'm also interested in the minister's plan for addressing aged infrastructure and the opportunities for winter tourism and more. I am proud to see the tourism numbers increase and look forward to questioning how this government plans to invest in our territory with tourism in mind.

I receive some invaluable information from the public and must say that a large part of my information I receive, concerns brought to my attention and comments are usually as I'm pushing a cart down the grocery aisle. I have to talk my way through the store, but it's all good. People find me approachable. I appreciate Yukoners taking the time to stop me and bend my ear about things they believe in or are passionate about or simply need to get something off their chest. I welcome them all to keep in touch, drop me a line and introduce themselves. I would like to send a huge thank you to our support staff here in our Legislative Assembly Office. They are wonderful.

I look forward to continuing my work here in the Legislative Assembly on behalf of my constituents and all Yukoners.

Mr. Gallina: I'm honoured to speak today to Bill No. 210, second reading of the 2019-20 main estimates.

Mr. Speaker, it has been over two years since this Liberal government was sworn into office, and I'm honoured to be on this team representing the good people of Porter Creek Centre here in Yukon's Legislative Assembly.

I know first-hand the work that goes into the preparation of planning the territory's finances, and I wanted to thank my Liberal colleagues and each and every one of Yukon's public servants, for they give tirelessly each year to painstakingly forecast, account for and seek the best value when delivering goods and services with Yukoners' dollars and cents.

I would also like to thank opposition members, some of whom we've heard from today. As government members, we may see opposition criticism as only for the sake of criticism. I share this with the Assembly, but their input also represents Yukoners, and opposition members choose to use the avenues, channels and tone that they feel best appropriate to get action on behalf of their constituents and hold this government to account — in this case, to ensure priorities are set in this year's budget.

The Member for Lake Laberge asked about where citizens and Yukoners could get information regarding the increase in transfer payments from the federal government. I am happy to provide that on yukon.ca; the top link is to the budget. Under the O&M estimates, there is a link called "revenue summary". The top of that page lists the federal transfers and how they compare to last year. Here it is, Mr. Speaker, the increase in \$53 million from the federal

government. Also, I note that when we got the letter from Mr. Morneau, we did make it public information. As stated previously, the budget currently before this House totals \$1.5 billion. It has an operation and maintenance budget of \$1.2 billion and a capital budget of \$288 million. It also includes a fiscal and economic forecast and a five-year capital plan.

Mr. Speaker, this territory is where it is today because of vision and steadfast determination to deliver that vision. We see with this budget more concrete steps to strategically deliver programs that people value, invests in Yukon's future and sets a sustainable path forward. As I look through the economic forecast, I am drawn to many strong indicators that are undeniable in their presence. Yukon's population is growing faster than any other Canadian jurisdiction, with a population exceeding 40,000 in 2018 for the first time on record. People are making the territory their home because of labour certainty and a significantly strong quality of life.

This government is mindful of how strong demographic and economic growth create financial pressures. Some spending is needed immediately to meet the growing demand and to tackle a fiscal gap. The government is expected to run a small deficit in 2019-20, but through a disciplined capital planning approach and efficiencies in government services, revenues will be able to catch up to expenses, resulting in a \$5-million surplus in 2020-21, with additional surpluses in the future.

Ensuring a disciplined capital planning approach begins with a plan — a five-year capital plan. The 2019-20 five-year capital plan builds on the process that was introduced for the very first time in 2018-19. Not only will a disciplined capital planning process steer us in the direction of surplus budgets, it provides certainty to Yukoners and helps to optimize the planning and timing of procurement. This year's five-year capital plan sees capital projects in six categories: land development, social development, education and health, community and First Nation infrastructure, real property and asset management, transportation infrastructure, energy and information technology.

Continuing on through the economic fiscal and economic outlook, the carbon-pricing rebate program begins to be defined. Simply stated, the intent of the federal carbon levy is to make polluting more expensive, not to raise revenues for government.

Yukon's carbon-pricing rebate program makes this point explicit by returning all carbon levy revenues back to individuals, businesses and First Nations and municipal governments. Individuals will receive quarterly rebates starting in October 2019. Businesses will receive their rebate as a refundable income tax credit. Placer miners and quartz mines emitting fewer than 6,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide will receive a full rebate on fuel purchases. First Nations and municipal governments will be paid on a fiscal year basis with payments made at year-end.

In looking at the second part of the fiscal and economic outlook, the economic overview continues with the narrative of Yukon's economy being in a robust expansion and one of the hottest economies in Canada. Real GDP is estimated to

have grown by 2.6 percent in 2018 and is projected to grow by 3.3 percent in 2019 with further growth through 2023.

There are tight labour market conditions as Yukon had the lowest unemployment rate among Canadian jurisdictions in 2018 at a rate of 2.7 percent. Increased competition for workers is lifting wages, with job vacancies rising last summer between 850 and 900 unfilled positions. Population and employment gains are driving housing market performance. This is positive for housing and real estate values, and this government is mindful of ensuring housing affordability is available throughout the territory.

Mr. Speaker, in looking at two of Yukon's top economic sectors, the mining sector outlook remains generally positive, with good exploration and development activities. Exploration spending is estimated to have increased 10.3 percent in 2018 to over \$186 million, and development activities at a number of mines and projects continue to build in capacity. At Victoria Gold Eagle Gold mine alone, nearly \$300 million has been spent to date, with \$150 million of those dollars going to Yukon companies.

In the tourism sector, we are seeing strong and positive growth. The number of overnight visitors is continuing to increase. In 2018, overnight visitors to Yukon grew by 4.6 percent to 355,000 visitors, and additional gains are expected in the following three years. Mr. Speaker, it is clear by the fiscal and economic outlook that Yukon's economic environment is healthy and poised for growth. This government will continue to foster this environment for the benefit of all Yukoners.

Shifting gears, I will spend some time now highlighting the projects and initiatives within these main estimates that the constituents of Porter Creek Centre will be interested to hear about. This government will invest \$15 million in each of the next five years in residential lots both in Whitehorse and the communities. The bulk of this investment will help develop the Whistle Bend subdivision. Current Whistle Bend developments are being tendered in multiple phases and sub-phases of construction to reflect the anticipated lot demand. This summer, 240 Whistle Bend lots will be sold through multiple releases. This includes 186 single, townhouse and duplex lots, 19 multi-family lots and 35 commercial lots. This is significant progress in keeping up with market demand.

Another important project I am happy to see identified in the main estimates — I know my constituents are as well — is the inclusion of \$1.6 million to begin planning for a new school in Whistle Bend. The new school facility will help address a growing student population and provide capacity for future school replacements in Whitehorse.

It is anticipated that construction of the school will begin in 2021. To ensure that the school meets the needs of residents and school communities, the project will include working with the nearby school communities of Takhini Elementary, Holy Family Elementary, Jack Hulland and the Whistle Bend community at large.

As I begin to touch on the importance of community, I'm driven to ensure the residents of Porter Creek Centre have been heard and also informed. I'm honoured to serve the

constituents of Porter Creek Centre and all Yukoners in my role as MLA.

As I reflect on my work between Sittings, I look at the connections I've continued to foster with area residents, especially with both the Porter Creek Community Association and the Whistle Bend Community Association. These associations have provided excellent venues to engage with residents and hear from them about their priorities — in the case of Whistle Bend, since it's such a new community, it is to hear about the vision residents have for this neighbourhood.

In February, I was pleased to participate in the fifth annual industry conference hosted by Highways and Public Works. I was a panelist for a discussion on land development, and I took the opportunity to outline the benefits of including area residents as key stakeholders in the development process.

This connection with area residents can take many forms, and we've seen some good success in this area when we look at how community associations have engaged in the development process with their territorial and municipal governments. Take the City of Whitehorse engagement with the development of the Whistle Bend town hall. Area residents had the opportunity to speak with the city and Yukon government officials, development professionals, along with representatives from Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, who shared some of their First Nation values and their connection to traditional territory that Whistle Bend resides on. In all, this was a very productive process that I was proud to be a part of, and I believe the result will be a beautiful space that caters to all residents of Whistle Bend.

A key priority of the Whistle Bend Community Association specifically has been trail designation and connectivity between neighbourhoods. Residents of both Porter Creek and Whistle Bend see value in having their neighbourhoods linked with some form of trail, bike or walking paths. This would provide an opportunity, for example, for Whistle Bend residents to walk or cycle to Porter Creek to access restaurants, schools and businesses. Down the road, when we begin to see commercial development within the Whistle Bend community, residents of Porter Creek would then be able to venture into Whistle Bend, to enjoy the services and facilities that will exist there. I know my family and I particularly enjoy spending time at the Whistle Bend pond and walking along Whistle Bend trails.

Mr. Speaker, FireSmart has been a popular topic and a regular agenda item for the Porter Creek Community Association in particular. This year the government is allocated \$850,000 to FireSmart initiatives throughout the territory. What I really like about the FireSmart program is that community associations have the ability to secure funding and have the discretion of determining where treatments will happen. This past year, the Porter Creek Community Association has done a great job of engaging with residents, holding community information sessions where they have brought in a range of professionals to educate the community on the benefits of firesmarting.

I'll shift now to a bit of a different topic that again has been a large focus of both community associations, and that is

of road safety, about which a number of members in the Assembly today have briefly touched on. Road safety is a broad topic that encompasses many things — pedestrian safety, crosswalks, cyclists, speeding, road maintenance, parking concerns and safety within school zones.

This is a fairly complex topic and I think what the community associations and residents are finding is that there are no easy solutions.

We saw a really great project last fall that was done in collaboration between the Yukon government, the City of Whitehorse and the RCMP where Highways and Public Works painted large blue triangles around school crosswalks. This road painting helps to educate drivers on how close in proximity it is safe to park on either side of the crosswalk to ensure that the line of sight for any pedestrians using the crosswalk is in no way compromised. Initiatives like this are rather small in cost, but I know conserve to make a significant impact. Additionally, this Sitting, I tabled a motion urging the government to work with the City of Whitehorse and parents to enhance road safety around our schools.

As I conclude my address of the 2019-20 main estimates, I will reiterate some points that I believe are worth reinforcing. Yukon's economy is doing well and is poised for growth. Yukon government continues to budget strategically and provide more certainty and transparency through supporting budget documents such as the budget highlights, the fiscal and economic outlook and the five-year capital plan.

We see dollars allocated for the design of a new school in Whistle Bend to meet the needs of area residents and school communities. We also see significant investments being made to release lots in Whistle Bend to keep up with market demand.

Finally, I continue to foster my relations with the community associations of Porter Creek and Whistle Bend, both of which are strong advocates for area resident priorities.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address this Assembly today.

Ms. McLeod: As always, budget response day is an excellent opportunity to thank all the people in my riding for their ongoing support, but it's also a good time to thank them for their hard work on our community activities that keep us all connected as a community — activities like the outdoor bonspiel, the Kiki Karnival, the RCMP and Chamber of Commerce gala, the spring fling and the library board's fall fair. That's just to name a few, but they're a testament to the hard-working volunteers in our community.

I'm not going to talk too much about the budget today, because really the questions I have are for the departments. I don't expect to get any answers today from any of the government members, but I have heard a number of times today about how all communities matter. I know that my community has made many requests of the government regarding road safety, and with the exception of one item, they've been denied.

The one item that we did get a couple of years ago was four solar powered speed indicators at Upper Liard and in

Watson Lake, and sadly, they don't work all that often. There are some other major considerations that we had asked to be looked at, and of course, the Minister of Highways and Public Works has not been accommodating, but we don't give up. We will continue making those requests that we think are beneficial for the ongoing safety of our residents.

The Minister of Economic Development made a comment about providing the Watson Lake daycare with a dishwasher. That's great, and I'm sure the daycare appreciates it. I appreciate it, but if that's the minister's idea of economic development for southeast Yukon, I think he needs to do a little more research.

I have heard today that the unemployment rates for Yukon are the lowest in the country, but I am interested to know what the unemployment rate is for Watson Lake — or whether or not Watson Lake even factors into those numbers. It is something that, as soon as I can determine which minister that might be, I will certainly ask that question when that department comes up — just a heads-up on that one.

That's really all I'm going to say today. I look forward to getting into the departments, because that's where we'll finally get some information regarding this budget. Because I can tell you, when I look through the budget, I can't find what I'm looking for. I can't see where we've covered off highway maintenance. I can't see where we've looked at brushing. I don't know where that stuff is in here. Maybe it's here — it's hidden deep. When we get to the departments, we'll certainly be asking those questions.

That's it for me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to stand up and speak to this 2019-20 budget our government has introduced this session. I would like to begin my remarks this afternoon by recognizing the citizens of Whitehorse West and thanking them for their support. It's truly an honour to represent their interests in this House. It's great speaking with people in the neighbourhood. I was doing that just the other day, going door to door, hearing from daycare operators and graphic designers, health care workers and business people, and hearing their hopes and dreams for the territory.

Their ideas are integral to the work I do in this House; they're really integral to the work we should all be doing in this House and that we all strive to do on a daily basis. It's great to get that reminder in the neighbourhood. I really did enjoy their time. They were very gracious with their time, and I enjoyed hearing their thoughts about the territory and the direction it's headed.

I look forward to more conversations like that in the coming weeks and months as I continue my tours and continue working in this House. I also want to thank all the civil servants who worked so very hard on this budget. I said it before, but I'm going to say it again: pulling so many disparate threads together into a tapestry like this budget — these reams of numbers — is very difficult work. Bringing it into a coherent tapestry so deftly takes an enormous amount of work.

I know how hard the officials at our Finance department and throughout all of our government departments worked to deliver this document. It certainly is not easy work. It is incredibly hard, and I applaud their efforts on our behalf, both in this government and also the people of the territory. I want to thank them.

With that, I want to set the stage for this budget. Contrary to the tepid remarks from the members opposite, there are some really exciting things happening in the territory, and I'm a little surprised they don't see it for what it is.

We're talking about real progress on real issues that Yukoners have wanted addressed for a really long time — for example, a new *Motor Vehicles Act*, which my colleague the Minister of Justice — the Attorney General — and I are working together on. It's real progress, Mr. Speaker.

We're talking real progress on reconciliation. We've started working very closely with our First Nation partners on the vexing issues that face us all in this territory — from land planning to justice to heritage and culture to procurement, mining, the environment and economic development. We are all working very closely with our First Nation partners for the benefit of us all.

We are also working with our municipal partners across the territory — again, real progress, Mr. Speaker. Our caucus has worked very hard to visit and hear the views of every rural community in this great territory. My colleague the Minister of Community Services has done an exceedingly — he has had an arduous task travelling the entire territory. He has done a remarkable job. I'm in awe of his road trips and the amount of time he has put into this job.

Again, that work — the work of this caucus — through the work of this caucus, we have made real progress, real partnerships. We are also working to provide more information to our citizens, more transparency, more accountability — again, real progress on real issues. That collaborative effort across our Yukon society is bearing real benefits for us all. You can just look at the stats, Mr. Speaker. The territory's population is growing faster than any other in the country. This year, we crossed a threshold: We now have more than 40,000 people living in the territory, and this is the first time we have been able to make such a claim.

Our real GDP grew by 2.6 percent in 2018, and it's projected to grow by 3.3 percent this year. We have the country's lowest unemployment rate. Apparently it does need stressing, Mr. Speaker: This is not tepid; it's awesome. It is real progress on real issues.

So there's a lot happening in this territory — a lot that we can applaud, a lot that is contained in this budget that has just been tabled by our Finance minister and Premier.

The territory is a good place to invest because of the change in approach of the Yukon government under our stewardship. Today, we are now working together with our municipal and First Nation partners in a way that hasn't been seen in decades — perhaps ever. This is a profound change in culture. We are working very hard to settle issues by talking across a table rather than talking through lawyers in a court room. This change is profound and is helping advance files

that have long languished. I can go through a few of them — Peel Watershed land use planning process, for one. That is probably the biggest, but there are others as well.

This new approach is creating new opportunities in all our communities — real progress. It is also helping create a place where companies have faith that they can invest. That is translating into jobs and into opportunities. It is translating into an unemployment rate that is the envy of the nation.

The outlook for mining is positive. Exploration funding has increased to more than \$186 million. Victoria Gold is well underway and investment on this site has surpassed \$300 million. There are more than 420 people working on-site and 275 of them have come from the Yukon. Production at the site is scheduled to begin in September. There is real progress happening in our mineral sector. That is not something that we can call tepid; that is something that is, frankly, fantastic, and we should applaud it. My colleague the Minister of Economic Development has been working very hard on these files to bring them to fruition, and we should all celebrate his work on those files.

We are also seeing growth in the tourism sector with my colleague the Minister of Tourism. That industry grew 6.1 percent in 2018, pushing revenues to almost \$325 million. The number of overnight visitors in the territory grew 4.6 percent to 355,000 in 2018. This important private sector industry will continue to be supported by this government to further growth in the coming years — again, not tepid, Mr. Speaker — that is fantastic. It is awesome, and we should celebrate it, not cheer against it.

We are also building houses. Last year, more than \$72 million in residential building permits were pulled, and that is more than 50 percent over the previous year — a 50-percent increase in housing starts. That too is phenomenal — not something that is tepid or lacklustre or whatever the phrase is. Investment in houses amounted to \$188 million, up roughly 30 percent from the previous year — real progress.

It's not just about money and spending; it's all about working to change the culture of spending in the territory. It's very important. It bears noting that since 1999, the average growth in our operation and maintenance spending was 6.3 percent. So when we're talking about growth in government, we're talking about an average growth in the operation and maintenance spending of this government of 6.3 percent over the previous 10 years. That's incredible. It's unsustainable. It is not sustainable. We saw upon taking office that something had to be done to curb the rampant growth in government spending that we saw in the past, so we worked on that. That 6.3-percent growth was an average, and that really bears noting. In some years — 2003-04 — the government's size by spending grew 12 percent — 12-percent growth in government in that year. In 2009-10, it was 11 percent. In 2013-14, it hit a high. Those weren't even the highs, Mr. Speaker. Those were sort of middling. In 2013-14, it hit 14-percent growth in government. That's history; those are the real numbers.

So here we are in 2019-20. We're looking at a growth in the O&M budget of just over two percent. That's roughly the

cost-of-living increase. That is real progress — taming that beast. Curbing the average growth of six percent to just a little over two was not easy. We have done it without cuts to services that Yukoners have grown accustomed to receiving.

How are we doing that? It's a good question. We talk about efficiencies. A good example of that is saving money through human resource improvements. With the time, leave and labour program, we were processing 100,000 pieces of paper through this government — 100,000 pieces of paper, where people filled out time sheets and had to submit them to HR people across government who had piles of them sitting on their desk a foot or foot-and-a-half high. Through a little bit of imagination and a little bit of technology, we have managed to get that down to almost none. So now our civil servants aren't processing paper. They are actually doing the good work that an HR professional should be doing: looking into the issues surrounding the people who work within our government.

In the Public Service Commission, we now have a central place to hire administrative assistants for all Yukon government. We're starting to move this into other areas as well — again, creating a pool of resources that we can then pull on throughout government, making things streamlined and getting rid of some red tape, something we often hear about but don't see much progress on.

There is real progress being made on red tape reduction within and without government. I have a little bit more to talk about in the future. Now we have departments like the Public Service Commission, ECO and Finance all streamlining their processes for human resource recruitment. That is making it easier for the government to run.

When we are talking about changing culture — it has sort of been a theme — we are also changing the culture of the way government buys goods and services. I have spoken about this issue a lot on the floor of the Legislature. I expect to be talking about it a lot more.

Over the past two years, we have made improvements that addressed each and every recommendation of the Procurement Advisory Panel — each and every one. We created a new Procurement Business Committee that gives us a wider perspective on procurement issues that matter to vendors, things like defining a Yukon business, improving selection criteria for the regional economic development exceptions and revising the bid challenge process. This is real progress on issues that matter to Yukoners.

We now have a committee that includes all First Nation development corporations as well as a half-dozen industry associations and chambers of commerce on this Procurement Business Committee, all of which are advising, providing deep advice to us as we work to improve the way we buy goods and services within the Yukon government.

We meet regularly with local businesses and industry associations and host well-attended annual events to connect staff with vendors. In total, 155 vendors attended the reverse trade show this year, and 125 people registered for the industry conference. We added standard clauses in our value-driven procurement that gives points to First Nation

participation and northern experience and knowledge. Since June 1, 2017, just a few months after we took office, we tendered 189 value-driven procurements with these mandatory clauses — real progress for real Yukoners.

We are proceeding with a new e-procurement system, again, making it easier for Yukoners to do business with the Yukon government — reducing red tape. The plan is to have this new tendering system posted for competition this spring and to have this system implemented this year. This monitoring system will make tendering and evaluation by government staff more efficient by eliminating the current paper-based process, a substantial lessening of red tape, making it more convenient for Yukoners to do business with our government and improving the procurement system.

We now have more than 150 employees involved in a professional procurement certification program. The goal is to improve the procurement system to make it more transparent and open for all Yukoners. The goal is to ensure more money is being spent in the local economy to benefit Yukon citizens and businesses.

We're seeing tangible results with the tendering of the French language school, where a local company, Ketz Construction, is building that school for us.

We have had some success. We have reached an important milestone — all of the recommendations addressed. But are we done? No. Initial reviews of this process have been positive, and I'm grateful for the feedback that we're getting from industry players who are grateful that we've improved the system. But we're not done yet.

As I've said before, procurement is a journey, not a destination, and we will continue to assess our performance and address issues and shortcomings that we identify so the territory continues to do better, continues to streamline its processes, continues to reduce red tape and continues to improve for the benefit of us all — real progress, Mr. Speaker, real progress we should be celebrating and not talking down.

What else are we doing? The Yukon government manages and maintains more than 550 government-owned buildings valued at more than \$1.6 billion. That's a big number. We're now assessing every one of these public assets methodically over a five-year period — methodical assessment.

That's a new thing in this government — something that we haven't seen before, but again, that's real progress. It is very important to assess all of our key buildings, which has now been done, especially when you're processing more than 14,000 work orders for repair and maintenance of our buildings every year.

Speaker: Order, please.

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. 210 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.