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HANSARD

Tuesday, April 9, 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

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

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Liz Hanson	Leader of the Third Party Whitehorse Centre
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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 9, 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No. 446, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South, has been removed from the Order Paper as it is now outdated.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gallina: We have a number of guests who have joined us here today as we tribute the Ronald McDonald House charity. I would like members to please join me in welcoming Keira Kucherean, Gabby Kucherean, Jeanne Kucherean, Mike and Julie Thorpe, Louise Gentles, and Michelle Arthurs. Welcome.

Applause

Ms. White: I invite my colleagues to welcome a really vibrant group of people here today. We have GSA members from both Porter Creek and F.H. Collins high schools. From Porter Creek, we have Hannah Cross, Ursula Westfall, Grey Capot-Blanc, Taiga Troy, and we have, of course, their teacher, Jason Cook. From F.H. Collins, we have Aidan Falkenberg, Mercedes Bacon-Traplin, and of course Annie Pellicano, their teacher.

We have a lot of community support today. We have Dylan Smoke, Paul Johnson, vice-president of the Yukon Employees' Union, and Sue Harding, the YTA president. We have Chris Hine, Alyssa Carpenter, Shelby Maunder, Malkolm Boothroyd, Dan Bader, Brandon Murdoch, Tracy Dart, and Erik and Grace Pinkerton. We have Lauren Porter and Bodie Birkett, Deborah Turner-Davis, and Justin Lemphers from the Yukon Federation of Labour.

Thank you so much for being here today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would like to ask all my colleagues to help welcome to the gallery somebody who has played on almost every stage in the Yukon — an old friend of mine and no stranger to the music scene in Yukon — Mr. Rick Sward.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Ronald McDonald House Charities

Mr. Gallina: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the Ronald MacDonald House charity. Ronald MacDonald House BC and Yukon provides accommodations to families who have a child who is seriously ill and are in Vancouver to receive medical treatment. This service has helped families for over 30 years, and for many, it is considered their home away from home.

I recently learned about a very special little girl in our community named Gabriella — or as she is more affectionately known by her family, “Gabby”. Gabby has a brainstem tumour that was discovered at the age of four, and at four-and-a-half years old, she received a nine-hour craniotomy at the BC Children’s Hospital. Despite her diagnosis, Gabby is a joyful, vibrant little girl who brings a lot of light into the lives of her family and her friends.

As a father of four daughters, it is hard to bring myself to imagine what it would be like to go through an experience like this. Aside from the emotional stress the medical situation can place on a family, the other stressful aspect many families express is the financial burden of having to travel from Yukon to Vancouver to receive medical treatment. This is where the Ronald McDonald House helps. Yukoners pay only \$12 a night to stay at the house, which has spacious suites for families with private rooms and lots of fun extras — like a magic room and a Lego lounge — to brighten the spirits of children and families who are guests.

The Ronald McDonald House has become a home away from home for Gabby and her mother, Keira. Gabby and her mom have spent over 500 nights at the Ronald McDonald House since Gabby received her initial diagnosis. Keira described being overwhelmed by how touching and positive their experiences at the house have been. Keira and Gabby have built strong bonds with the staff and other families who use the house, and this has helped to build an amazing support system for them.

In fact, this year, Gabby will be attending Camp Goodtimes, which is a camp for children and teens with cancer and their families. Gabby and Keira are attending this camp with several other families who they have met through their stay at the Ronald McDonald House. Keira has expressed how therapeutic it has been for her as a parent to spend time speaking with other parents who are going through the same thing as she is.

Even on tough days, the activities and the atmosphere of the house keeps a smile on the faces of all the children there. Keira tries to do things in the house with Gabby that would be normal for them to do back in the Yukon. One of those things is shovelling snow. One winter, they experienced heavy snowfall in Vancouver. This was a task they tried to help out with as much as they could while they were there at the house, and it made them feel like they were back at home.

All of the services that are provided by the Ronald McDonald House would not be possible without the support of the community that has generously contributed to donate to this worthwhile cause. One of the biggest annual fundraisers

in Yukon is the McHappy Day event. The owners and operators of Whitehorse McDonald's, Mike and Julia Thorpe, and their dedicated staff have been instrumental in the success of this event every year and in promoting awareness about the Ronald McDonald House to Yukoners.

In 2017, McHappy Day in Whitehorse raised \$47,179. In 2018, they wanted to beat that number and they set a target of \$50,000. The entire team at McDonald's should be extremely proud that because of their hard work, dedication, and excellent promotion of this event, they far surpassed that target and ended up raising a total of \$61,186.

I'm really looking forward to McHappy Day 2019, which is scheduled for May 8. Our office always makes a point to organize a team lunch at McDonald's on McHappy Day to show support to this amazing initiative.

I hope that learning about Gabby's story today helps to inspire people to contribute to this cause any way that you can. Gabby and Keira will be returning to Ronald McDonald House next week for Gabby's final treatment.

I would like to close by sharing a quote from a speech that Keira delivered at a Ronald McDonald House event — and I quote: “For a child whose life is being turned upside-down dealing with new scary medical treatments and leaving their home and friends, it has been such a blessing to be able to have a consistent place where, for the time being, we can put some roots down.”

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Ronald McDonald House of BC and Yukon. For 36 years, Ronald McDonald House has been providing accommodations for seriously ill children and their families from across BC and the Yukon who travel to Vancouver for major medical treatments.

Of more than 80,000 patients who visit BC Children's Hospital each year, 68 percent live outside of Vancouver. To those families, Ronald McDonald House provides more than just accommodation — it provides a home where families can share their stories, their meals, and their support for one another.

Ronald McDonald House BC and Yukon is one of 14 Ronald McDonald houses across Canada. It began in 1983 as a 13-bedroom house until June 2014, when the new 73-bedroom house opened on the grounds of BC Children's Hospital providing for the increased demand in services.

Ronald McDonald House BC relies on the amazing fundraising efforts from its McDonald's families from north to south and the generous support of donors. Across the country, a portion of the proceeds from every Happy Meal goes toward Ronald McDonald House, and McHappy Day proceeds have raised over \$56 million for Ronald McDonald House in Canada and communities since 1977.

We would like to give special thanks to Mike and Julie Thorpe, who are the owners of both Whitehorse McDonald's restaurants. They and their staff do a phenomenal job as ambassadors to a great cause in the run-up to McHappy Day and throughout the year.

I would like to remind and encourage Yukoners to take part in McHappy Day this year. Make use of those coin donation boxes year-round and remember that when you give in to your kid's request for Happy Meals, you are helping to raise money for a great cause.

Applause

Ms. White: It is with a grateful heart that the Yukon NDP caucus pays tribute and thanks to Ronald McDonald House.

No one anticipates that their child will be diagnosed with a life-threatening condition or illness, and when it does happen, you're suddenly thrust into an alien world of high-speed medical technology and of endless waits for testing and procedures that are frightening for both you and your child. It is a whole different sphere — far from home, far from what is familiar and comforting and what can feel like a world away from our regular support systems.

Having the opportunity to access the Ronald McDonald House is like being provided a home away from home — one where you meet others who are going through similar situations. The experiences of each family and each child are unique, but the stresses, anxieties, and fears are the same. During the times between hospital visits and hospital stays, families and children are able to spend time together, play, and rest in the company of others who understand what it is they are experiencing. It is here that deep friendships are formed. We can only imagine that, for many parents, these are friendships built around a common experience and they are bonds that endure.

Proximity to the hospital is key for families who may be — and often are — called to the hospital to attend to urgent situations with their child. The Ronald McDonald House offers a safe and welcoming haven to return to where you don't have to explain the stress and fear you feel — it is understood, and you are supported in your hope for a better tomorrow.

So we salute the work done by all involved in making Ronald McDonald Houses across this country the beacons of comfort and security that they are and for truly making these houses home.

Applause

In recognition of anniversary of Battle of Vimy Ridge

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise in recognition of the anniversary of Vimy Ridge.

I want to tell you a story about my grandfather, Ed Kivell, who fought in World War I. My grandfather was born in the year of the Klondike Gold Rush. Orphaned at age eight and earning his own living by age 12, when my grandfather turned 17, he and his two brothers walked 45 miles — or 70 kilometres — to enlist with the Canadian Whitehorse cavalry unit, the 1st Hussars.

During training, grandad was promoted to Second Lieutenant, but when he learned that might mean that he would have to stay in Canada to train new troops, he got himself demoted. In 1915, he went overseas with his two

brothers. He fought in many of the major battles of World War I — Passchendaele, Ypres, and the Somme — and my grandfather fought in the Battle of Vimy Ridge. When he fought in these battles, my grandfather would have been the age of someone just out of high school. He was awarded four medals — two for service and two for bravery, including the rare and beautiful Croix de Guerre from Belgium, which his great-grandson has now. He would never describe himself as brave, but I think he probably was.

Later in life, he was reluctant to tell his own children about what the war was like, but over the years, my mother did hear stories. One that I remember was when a buddy came to him during the war, distraught from a dream. His friend was set to ride point that day to draw machine gun fire so that the rest of the cavalry charge knew where to concentrate their attack. My grandad's friend had dreamt that he was going to die in the charge, and he told my grandad. So my grandad offered to ride point in his place. Grandad, I think, accepted that death was always a possibility in war. During that charge, my grandfather came through only grazed, while his friend was killed late in the charge by a stray bullet.

During the war, grandad was wounded twice and had three horses shot out from under him. He served for four years, four months and four days — all this while he was in his late teens or early 20s.

On the 102nd anniversary of Vimy Ridge, as we fly our flags at half mast, I think about war. I don't want to romanticize those who fought in the war; I want to remember the incredible price that they paid for all of us.

Today, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated that through the great sacrifice and loss at Vimy Ridge, Canada was born that day.

I never knew my grandfather, though he got to meet me. He died when I was one year old. My grandfather taught my mother lessons that my mother, in turn, taught me — that we should strive to create a world of peace, love, music, humour, and respect for all.

Thank you to those who fought to give us all so much. Lest we forget.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to pay tribute to the Battle of Vimy Ridge which took place from April 9 to 12, 1917.

That year, there were a number of bandwagons careening through Yukon society. The long-debated issues such as women's right to vote and the prohibition of alcohol gained new currency from the patriotic rhetoric of war. With the war came an interest in pursuing the vote for women and federal changes were made to enfranchise most women by 1919. Yukoners were less enthusiastic about the national prohibition of alcohol, which was eventually brought in as a wartime measure from 1918 to 1920.

As these issues heated up across Canada, men and women overseas prepared for a different agenda. Attacking together for the first time on this day, 102 years ago, four Canadian divisions stormed Vimy Ridge at 5:30 a.m. on April 9, 1917.

More than 1,500 Canadian infantry overran the Germans all along the front. Incredible bravery and discipline allowed the infantry to continue moving forward under heavy fire even when their officers were killed.

There were countless acts of sacrifice and bravery as Canadians single-handedly charged machine gun nests or forced the surrender of Germans in protective dugouts. Hill 145, the highest and most important feature of Vimy Ridge and where the Vimy monument now stands, was captured in a frontal bayonet charge against machine gun positions. Three more days of costly battle delivered the final victory. The Canadian operation was an important success, even if the larger British and French offensive of which it had been part of had failed. But it was victory at its heaviest cost: 3,598 Canadians were killed and another 7,000 wounded. Vimy became a symbol for the sacrifice of our young dominion.

In 1922, the French government ceded to Canada Vimy Ridge in perpetuity and the land surrounding it. The gleaming white marble and haunting sculptures of the Vimy memorial, unveiled in 1936, stand as a sad reminder of the 11,285 Canadian soldiers who were killed in France who have no known graves.

I can attest, Mr. Speaker, to how impressive this memorial is, having been in a Remembrance Day parade there in 1988 as a young Canadian soldier.

Many consider the Canadian victory at Vimy a defining moment for Canada, when the country emerged from under the shadow of Britain and felt capable of greatness. Canadian troops also earned a reputation as formidable and effective troops because of the stunning success.

So today we remember their bravery and sacrifice and we remember all those who fought to protect our freedoms that we have in our great country of Canada today. Lest we forget.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 8

Ms. Hanson: I have for presentation the following petition, which reads as follows:

“THAT there is an overwhelming number of community members interested in having the services offered by Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services being restored after months of turmoil, and

“THAT community members have come together to develop a new Community Counselling & Support Services Society that would like to open its doors as soon as possible to fill the need for counselling support to Yukon residents,

“THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to work with officials to end this crisis and to immediately consider allocating funds from the Health and Social Services

budget to the funding proposal from the Community Counselling & Support Services Society.”

Mr. Speaker, this petition has 245 signatories.

Petition No. 9

Ms. White: I have the following petition for presentation. It reads:

“THAT the Government of Yukon is strongly committed to supporting equality in human rights of the LGBTQ2S+ community and all residents;

“THAT ‘sex’, ‘sexual orientation’ and ‘gender identity or expression’ are prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Yukon Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code of Canada;

“THAT the practice of ‘conversion therapy’ or ‘reparative therapy’, is seriously harmful to individuals and is opposed by the Canadian Psychological Association, the World Health Organization, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Medical Association and others; and

“THAT the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child indicates that children should not be discriminated against based on what gender they identify with.

“THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to:

“1) urge the Government of Yukon to introduce legislation to ban conversion therapy to minors in Yukon and prohibit transporting minors outside of Yukon or Canada for such purposes, and

“2) pass all legislation as required.”

Mr. Speaker, this has 401 signatures.

Speaker: Are there any other petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(3) of the *Human Rights Act*, does remove Carmen Gustafson from the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, effective immediately.

Mr. Speaker, I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Judith Hartling to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective immediately; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2.01) of the *Human Rights Act*, does designate Judith Hartling as deputy chief adjudicator for a term of three years, effective immediately.

Mr. Speaker, I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(1) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Karen Moir to the Yukon Human Rights Commission for a three-year term, effective May 24, 2019.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to update the Yukon *Pharmacists Act* to modernize and expand the scope of practice for Yukon’s pharmacists to recognize the full scope of the pharmacy profession’s contribution for delivery of patient-centred, integrated health care and to align the Yukon *Pharmacists Act* with Canadian best practices.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to advance the five-year capital plan and new capital planning process to:

(1) make government’s plans for construction and infrastructure projects more timely and transparent; and

(2) ensure that better information is available to help businesses with decision-making and economic opportunities.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Robert Campbell Highway maintenance

Mr. Hassard: On a handful of occasions, the Minister of Highways and Public Works has told this House that he is going to pave the road between Faro and Ross River. Last March, the minister told us that they had started design work to pave the stretch between Faro and Ross River. Later, he said that he was working on — and I quote: “... paving and engineering work we’re doing on the Ross River stretch...” Then later he said, “We are continuing the necessary engineering work planning for the paving of the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River.” Mr. Speaker, those are his words.

Yesterday, I asked him about this commitment and he seems to have walked it back. Now he is talking about applying BST to this portion of the road. There’s a big difference between pavement and BST, and it’s pretty concerning if the Minister of Highways and Public Works doesn’t know this. Can the minister tell us if he actually knows the difference between BST and pavement?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker — yes.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, because we are really not too sure if that is in fact the case.

We can only imagine the editorials that he would have written if he had found out that a minister knew so little about their own file. The fact of the matter is that he stood in this House on a handful of occasions and told Yukoners that he was going to pave the road in between Faro and Ross River.

Will the minister live up to his commitment to pave the road between Faro and Ross River — yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to address this issue again on the floor of the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

The member opposite is really asking about the road from Faro to Ross River. He has made that evident in his questions over the past weeks and months. Anybody driving up to Faro and on to Ross River sees the striking disparity between Faro and Ross River. You drive up on a maintained road, then you hit a gravel road, and then it carries on to Ross River. Quite frankly, we have expressed on this side of the House that we want to improve that road from Faro to Ross River, and we will do so. We have already started the engineering work to do that upgrade. When we get the budget to do it, we will proceed with that work.

The member opposite has talked a lot about our capital plan over the last little while and I do want to talk about that. The Campbell Highway is in the five-year capital plan. There is up to \$5 million worth of work identified in that capital plan. I urge the members opposite to read the plan and familiarize themselves with it because it is an integral planning tool for the business and contracting community to make sure that they have an idea of what work is coming in the near future and help them plan and start to assemble the gear and crews they need to actually deliver on that work.

It is one of the improvements that we have made in our budgeting processes in this government keeping —

Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hassard: I will remind the minister that this is a commitment that he made on the floor of this Legislature, so it is concerning when he starts to backtrack.

Last year, the minister told Yukoners that he was going to spend \$500,000 in design work to pave the road between Faro and Ross River, so the question is very simple: Was the design work completed? Why is the contract not in the contract registry? Was the final price tag \$500,000?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: What the member opposite is talking about in broad terms is the seasonally dependent contract list that we have brought forward. There is already this year \$66 million identified for the coming summer season. Those contracts were all released before the end of March. There is an actual additional \$19 million in projects to be tendered before April and May. Among this contract list will be a number of roadworks throughout the territory — on the Klondike Highway and the Robert Campbell. They are being executed to make sure that our contracting community has work in time for them to plan their coming season.

It is important that we let them do this, Mr. Speaker, and we have heard very good things from the contracting community about the way that we are currently tendering our projects. That is an improvement this government has made in the way that we procure goods and services, and I look forward to more questions from the members opposite on this file.

Question re: Aging-in-place action plan

Ms. McLeod: Yesterday, the government released the “what we heard” document for aging in place. According to the document, there were calls coming from across the

territory to do more to support our seniors. With inflation, carbon taxes, and the already high cost of living, life is becoming less affordable for Yukon seniors. The government’s own report identifies the call for increased financial supports for seniors, such as reducing taxes or increasing the pioneer utility grant.

Now, as we all know, budgeting is about priorities, and over the last couple of years we have seen the Liberals give the Premier a raise while increasing the budget for the Cabinet Office by \$255,000.

Since the government has found ways to increase their own comforts, will they commit to cutting taxes for seniors or expanding the pioneer utility grant?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I can say is that the process in which we undertook to engage with Seniors Action Yukon was triggered by Seniors Action Yukon. They wanted to have a comprehensive review around services and programs that aligns with their needs. Clearly there was a direction to look at programs and services, but also to look at conducting a series of public engagements.

We engaged over 1,200 seniors. In these discussions, we had many conversations around services, programs, infrastructure, housing, transportation, and living full and meaningful lives but also looking particularly at four pillars that will help develop the aging-in-place action plan.

I’m very pleased with the great work. I am also very pleased with the feedback and the participation of our seniors in all of our communities.

Ms. McLeod: The government’s report also highlights calls to improve pharmacare, as there are concerns over the lack of coverage for certain medications such as diabetic medication. The report actually provides a quote from one concerned Yukoner with diabetes who is struggling with the growing cost of living in the Yukon. She says — and I quote: “We are lucky that we have what we have, but it needs to be improved. I pay \$65.00 per month out of pocket and that is because I have benefits from the Yukon Government as a retired person. The \$65.00 is only 20% of the cost that others have to pay, without benefits you would pay 5 times that amount.”

Seniors in our territory are struggling and the government is aware of it, but do they increase these benefits? No, they do not. They increased the Premier’s paycheque and the budget for the Cabinet Office instead. Since the Liberals found money for themselves, are they considering increasing pharmacare coverage for seniors?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Interesting dialogue leading up to the question. Of course we’re looking at increasing services and supports to the seniors. We’ve worked with the chief medical officer of health. We’ve worked to collaborate on medical services and supports that our aging population potentially may require in the future. We’ve done that in good faith. We’ve worked with the Hospital Corporation. We worked with the Seniors Action Yukon group.

We’ve worked with many organizations across the Yukon really to look at efficient, effective services to meet the needs of our aging population where they choose to reside — be it at

home, be it in their own communities, be it in the seniors complex, be it in the re-enablement unit at the Thompson Centre, be it at the Whistle Bend facility. Whatever means is chosen, we will certainly look at ensuring that we have the plans in place to fully meet the needs of that vibrant population group because clearly they've made it quite known that we need to take some action, and we're committed to doing that with their support and with their involvement.

Ms. McLeod: As we've highlighted, the government's report that was released yesterday — there are major concerns with the cost of living for Yukoners. With the inflation, the carbon tax coming in, the GST being charged on top of that, housing prices, and the rental market skyrocketing, life is becoming far less affordable. Despite the spin that the Liberals like to give, many Yukoners already live paycheque to paycheque, so waiting around for some rebate cheque isn't an option. But there are solutions if the government is willing to listen.

The government's report that they tabled yesterday says that one seniors focus group suggested that the government could change its tax policies for people over 70 years of age so that they would not pay taxes. Is the government considering this option — yes or no?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Certainly I would like to acknowledge the comments with respect to cost of living. We have seen significant pressures across the board with our aging population — be it medicare, be it travel, or be it taking care of their grandchildren, for example, with an extended care program.

What we have committed to do is to support our seniors where they reside and we will continue to do that with the implementation of the plan that we just compiled. I am very happy and pleased about that. It really highlights a lot of the major barriers and challenges that we have seen and heard from our senior population. I want to just acknowledge them for triggering that because that has never been done before, Mr. Speaker. Now that we have a growing demographic in that particular age category, it's very important and vital that we take into consideration all that they have to offer and all that they have done historically for our Yukon and ensure that we take appropriate care of them as they age and age well and healthy within their respective communities. We will do that with their input.

Question re: Conversion therapy

Ms. White: On March 7, when asked by the media about banning conversion therapy, the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate was quoted as saying, "Up until the young high school students brought conversion therapy forward we had not heard this in any of our consultations and we've done several focus groups, many community dialogues, and it has not come up one time. It's not happening in our territory right now."

By coming out with this statement when there was an ongoing consultation being conducted by QMUNITY, the minister has undermined the very process of the consultation and appears to be attempting to pre-determine the outcome.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why she made these remarks and whether she still stands by them today?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I thank the member opposite for the question.

I want to start by saying that I absolutely applaud the high school students who are taking action and talking about concerns that they have. I want to be clear that this government does not support conversion therapy in any form. It has been demonstrated to be harmful, discriminatory, and it absolutely undermines the human rights and mental well-being of LGBTQ2S+ individuals.

This government is deeply committed to an agenda to work with the LGBTQ2S+. We have demonstrated this throughout our mandate. We have made this a major priority for our government. The member opposite is correct that there is an ongoing engagement that's happening. We have put a lot of time and effort into it. It's the most extensive consultation that has been done around the LGBTQ2S+ community. We are absolutely committed to the results of that.

Right now, we are at the point of finalizing the "what we heard" document, and I am happy to get up and add more to the dialogue.

Ms. White: I was more interested in whether the minister still stood by her comments from March 7.

In the gallery, we have two GSAs and their allies who have worked hard to gather signatures for a petition calling on the government to ban conversion therapy in the territory, and we appreciate that the minister has acknowledged that hard work.

The federal government has recently indicated that making the practice of conversion therapy illegal is a provincial or territorial responsibility. We have heard the minister state that conversion therapy is not happening in our territory. She said that in the media, but I don't know how she can say that with such confidence. Without legislation, it can happen here. Without legislation, queer youth and adults can be subjected to conversion therapy.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain how she is able to assure all Yukoners that conversion therapy isn't currently happening and assure Yukoners that it will not happen to any Yukon resident, in or out of the territory, in the future without legislation?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thanks for the supplementary question. I would like to go back to talking about the engagement that we are just wrapping up. We have the "what we heard" document now and we are reviewing it. We are working with the LGBTQ2S+ community to prioritize — to put some priority around that report. We are committed to working with the community. What we committed to is not doing anything for the community without the community, and we stand by that. There are many priorities that are being put before us, so we will have to prioritize and work with the community to determine what first steps we will take.

I am not saying that we will not ban conversion therapy. That is something we will work together on. The Minister of Justice and I both have this within our mandate letters and we will continue to work with the community to determine what

their priorities are. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done because — let's face it, Mr. Speaker — not a lot of work was done with the LGBTQ2S+ community before this government took office, and we are committed to it.

Ms. White: In the absence of law, conversion therapy is a possibility and it is legal here. I would suggest that it has been a priority and it has been shown to be a priority.

The Member for Copperbelt North tabled a motion on the first day of the Spring Sitting urging the government to address concerns regarding conversion therapy. The motion was tabled three weeks before the minister's comments about the topic not being brought up in any community meetings. It speaks to a clear disconnect between the Liberal back bench and the minister responsible for consultation on this important matter.

I trust that the member tabled it knowing the emotional and permanent harm such pseudo-treatment can cause to queer individuals. It is well-known that conversion therapy is a non-starter and that it causes more harm than good.

Mr. Speaker, what assurances can this minister give those queer youth and their allies who raised the petition presented in the House today that their concerns regarding conversion therapy will be taken seriously, that it will form part of the community consultation, and that it will be banned in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Again, through this engagement that we are just wrapping up — we had 12 focus groups and we had three community dialogues. We heard from a lot of Yukoners. At that time, by that point, we hadn't heard conversion therapy. However, we heard it when young people from our high schools brought it forward. It is now part of the "what we heard" document. It is now part of the considerations going forward.

We will, again, not do anything for the community without the community, and we will continue to work with all of our stakeholders to determine what the priorities will be going forward. We certainly have taken on legislation with regard to ensuring non-discrimination of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. If this is a priority that is determined in the short term, mid-term or long term, we will work on that as a government. We are not afraid to open up legislation. We have proven that over and over — over our mandate — and we will continue to do so.

I am really proud of the work that this team has done to do the right thing for Yukoners, to make our laws reflective of a modern Yukon. I will continue to work in that regard as minister.

Question re: Aging-in-place action plan

Mr. Istchenko: I have some more questions about the government's aging-in-place report. The report makes it very clear that accessibility and seniors-friendly buildings are huge barriers for quality of life in the territory. As indicated in the report, seniors make decisions on whether to stay in their communities based on things such as housing and public building options being elderly friendly.

For example, one retiree points out in the report that a lot of their community lacks something as simple as ramps. The report highlights that residents of remote communities such as Haines Junction and Mayo are looking for more age-friendly buildings, such as having ramps installed in houses and public venues so that seniors have better accessibility.

Will the minister commit to the creation of an accessibility infrastructure fund to allow communities such as Haines Junction to make their town more elderly friendly?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Our government has already taken action to support successful aging in place. We have resources in place to provide the necessary supports for our seniors. We have oftentimes referred to it as the home first initiative. That's in collaboration with the Yukon Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services to ensure that seniors are given the opportunity to reside in their own home first for as long as they possibly can.

The resources are there and we will continue to work with our seniors, so we are very pleased with the additional investments in home care, which have been increased over the last year to align with the home first philosophy.

Mr. Istchenko: I don't think I got an answer to my question.

So staying in their community as they age is important for my constituents in Haines Junction. Currently, there is a shortage of seniors housing in Haines Junction as highlighted by the report. Haines Junction is asking for an assisted living facility. This facility would provide a quality of life for elderly Haines Junction and Kluane area residents so that they could stay close to their families and the community they grew up in.

The minister has promised on multiple occasions to meet with the seniors in Haines Junction to discuss this proposal, but she still has not. The Liberal platform promised that they would provide community options to allow for aging in place in the communities. Will the minister commit on the floor of the Legislature today to an assisted living facility in Haines Junction?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I will commit to is to work with the Yukon seniors and Seniors Action Yukon, as well as many of the aging population who have come forward to participate in the "what we heard" document. That is exactly what it is. There is an opportunity for us to start working with the seniors on the implementation, and they have clearly identified some of the key priorities that they put forward as pillars they would like to work on. We are committed to doing that and we will continue to work with the aging population — our elders in our communities.

Certainly we are committed to doing that and working in collaboration with the Yukon Housing Corporation and, of course, Health and Social Services and our municipalities as we look at the demographic groups within each one of the First Nations so that we can then prioritize service delivery models within each one of those communities to better align with service needs. Of course, there are pressures — greater pressures in some communities that do not have any supports

whatsoever for seniors and we want to try to look at balancing that throughout the Yukon.

Mr. Istchenko: I think the residents of Kluane will be very disappointed in that answer. As you know, budgeting is about priorities. I will just point out for the minister that, while she's refusing to commit new money or even to meet with the seniors for enhanced services in Haines Junction, the government did find money to give the Premier a raise, raised the budget to the Cabinet Office — how about buying a new logo that nobody really wanted? I'll make sure to let seniors in Haines Junction know that the Liberals prioritized those things for themselves.

The report also highlights that everything is centralized in Whitehorse, and community members would like to have some essential services located in the communities. For example, there are 50 elders in Mayo and they want a nursing station, a long-term care facility, and more home care workers to support elders in their community. So is the minister considering providing these enhanced supports for seniors in our communities?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Interesting dialogue leading up to — I don't know what the question was, but certainly when we talk about a Whitehorse-centric model, it's not something that we consider as a means in which to address service supports for seniors — nor did they see that as a priority.

Building and putting all your resources into a Whistle Bend facility without any O&M funding and programming around that — the point is that everything being centred in Whitehorse was not a vision of this government. We are looking at services for all rural Yukon communities, ensuring that communities — like Mayo, for example — are engaged, cooperating, and participating in a health facility that better aligns with their service need.

We are also looking at implementation models when we look at some of the pressure areas that we're seeing — say, for an example, we see aging populations and palliative care in our communities that we've not seen before. Taking our older populations out of the communities to put them in a facility is not the answer. We want to be able to align service needs within the respective communities and bring a collaborative care model to all Yukoners.

Question re: Education assistants

Mr. Kent: As of October 1, the amount of education assistants or EAs assigned to Yukon schools was 244.67 FTEs. Can the Minister of Education give us updated numbers? Have they gone up or down since October? How does this compare to the previous year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. Education assistants are one of the several resources that a school has to support students. There are a number of other resources, of course, to support students at schools, including counsellors, teachers, learning assistant teachers and school administrators, student support services branch and the student support services unit at the department.

The Government of Yukon continues to provide consistent funding for education, as we discussed at some

length yesterday regarding the 2019-20 budget. We continue to work to ensure that resources like education assistants are effectively supporting student needs.

I note that the member opposite has a number of figures that he likes to refer to, and I am happy to support them with the information that I have. For the 2018-19 school year, 243.677 FTEs for education assistants are currently allocated to schools.

Mr. Kent: So that appears to be about the same as it was in October, if those numbers are current for the minister.

The minister informed me and the NDP by a letter yesterday that there are currently 179 English-language learners identified by staff for the current school year. She went on to say in that same letter that there are only 3.855 FTEs identified to support the learning needs of these students across all of our schools.

Does the minister believe that this is sufficient to assist English-language learners with their learning needs? Does every classroom with an ELL have EA support?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Just to be clear, the letter noted by the member opposite was in response to a number of questions that were presented during the briefing on the 2019-20 Education portion of the budget. A number of questions were raised by the members of the opposition. We took the time to respond to those questions in writing so that they would have that information. The information was given to them both verbally at the briefing and then later in the letter that was noted by the member opposite today in his question.

What my opinion is of English-language learners and the support is not the critical question here. The critical question is: Are students getting what they need in our education system to be the best possible versions of themselves? The numbers, as noted by the member opposite — I don't have a copy of that letter in front of me — are what they said. The determination has been that it is the appropriate number at the moment for supporting our English-language learners.

Mr. Kent: I am sure that it is critical for those families of English-language learners that the support is there and that it is sufficient to assist them in their learning needs.

One of the questions I asked that didn't get answered by the minister is: Does every classroom that has an English-language learner have EA support for those students? Can the minister tell us how many EAs she has budgeted for in the 2019-20 school year? Will additional support be given to ELL students throughout our system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Government of Yukon continues to provide consistent funding for education, and that works to ensure that the resources like education assistants are effectively supporting student learning needs. I don't think we are disagreeing on that at all.

We use a needs-based model to allocate education assistant staff in a fair and equitable way across Yukon schools. These allocations vary and are adjusted from year to year as school and student needs change and as students move between schools or to and from the Yukon.

Schools receive an initial allocation of education assistants each spring based on their projected needs, so that

work is being done now for the projected need for the next school year. There are allocations of course that take into account intensive one-to-one support that might be needed, a vulnerability index, and overall student enrolment. Once the school year has begun, the allocations are adjusted to support any new or changing needs that are identified throughout the time between the spring planning allocation and what actually happens when the students get to school in the fall. Those assessments are ongoing so that their needs can be met at every turn.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, April 10, 2019. It is Motion No. 437, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, April 10, 2019. They are Motion No. 462, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre and Motion No. 463, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 31: *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 31, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that Bill No. 31, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 31, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It's my privilege and honour to introduce Bill No. 31, *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*.

The Yukon, as with most other jurisdictions, typically provides leave periods that align with Canada's employment insurance programs. This alignment enables Yukoners to access various benefits, when necessary, without risk of losing their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* will support Yukon employees so that they can easily access federal programs for extended parental benefits, parental sharing benefits, compassionate care benefits, family caregiver benefits for children, and family caregiver benefits for adults.

I would like to thank everyone who participated during the public engagement that we held last fall on the proposed changes to the *Employment Standards Act* for taking the time and effort to provide feedback. This government is committed to well-being, to investing in health and education, building strong communities and growing the economy, and is committed to supporting Yukoners to lead healthy, happy and productive lives. These leave benefits uphold the importance of family and recognize the needs Yukoners have when welcoming new family members, caring for family, or supporting a loved one toward the end of their life.

Before I begin to talk about these leaves, I think it is important to take a moment to explain who falls under the *Employment Standards Act* and who is exempt. The *Employment Standards Act* governs employment in Yukon. That being said, there are some exceptions. The act does not cover the federal government's relationship with its employees, nor does it cover other sectors that it regulates. These sectors include banking and other financial institutions, telecommunication companies, air transportation, and the postal service. Leave allotments and benefits for these industries and groups are set out in the *Employment Insurance Act* and the *Canada Labour Code*, which were recently amended by the federal government in December of last year.

Yukon government employees, including teachers, are also exempt, as they fall under the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*, where their leaves are established in their respective collective agreements.

There are additional exemptions to particular provisions of the *Employment Standards Act*. If employers and employees have any questions pertaining to the applicability of the act, it is best to contact the Employment Standards office.

The assurance of job protection when accessing various leaves may help employees to support their families during life events that are already highly stressful. This is why, Mr. Speaker, we are amending parental leave to include extended and parental sharing benefits, expanding compassionate care leave, amending leave related to critical illness of a child, and introducing a new leave related to critical illness of an adult. All of these leaves allow families to better support one another in ways that best suit their particular needs — for example, during the birth or arrival of a child and at critical times when family members need each other the most.

I would like to take a few moments to provide an overview of each of these new and amended types of leave. The birth or arrival of a child is a joyous time for our families. It is often a time of celebration and significant change as the birth parent recuperates, parents and siblings bond with their new family member, and the ensuing caring and feeding takes place. It is an adjustment for the entire family. We know the extensive benefits of children being able to spend additional time with their parents, especially at the earliest stages of life.

As a result, we are expanding parental leave for those families wanting to access the new federal extended parental benefits program. Instead of 37 weeks of unpaid leave, the

employee will be entitled to up to 63 weeks of unpaid leave. Extending this leave will allow Yukon parents to take advantage of the choices offered by federal employment insurance benefits. Parents will be able to choose between the standard parental benefits at 55 percent of their average weekly insurable earnings or the extended parental benefits which allow them to take more time with their family while receiving 33 percent.

As is now the case with parental leave, parents are eligible for this unpaid leave if they have been working with the same employer for 12 months, and the maternity and parental leave must be taken in one continuous stretch.

The second type of parental leave is the parental sharing leave. The purpose of this leave is to encourage both parents to take an active role in family responsibilities. When the two-parent families, including adoptive and same-sex couples, agree to share parental leave, and if they choose the standard parental benefits program, the second parent may take an additional five weeks of unpaid leave.

When the family is accessing the extended parental benefit program, the second parent may take an additional eight weeks of unpaid parental sharing leave. Couples may divide the parental leave as they wish, as long as one partner takes a minimum of either the five or eight weeks of parental sharing leave. In either case, all of the combined maternity and parental leaves must be taken within 78 weeks. For instance, if the mother opts to take the standard maternal and parental leave of 54 weeks, the other parent may take the five weeks of parental sharing leave at the beginning or decide to take it later when the mother returns to work.

This new leave encourages both parents to take an active parenting role during those first exciting and critical stages of a new child's development. For first-time parents, this could be especially important — that extra five or eight weeks will be invaluable for adjusting to being a new parent.

The new parental sharing leave will not only support infant health, but family health too. New parents may experience not only physical and emotional changes after bringing a new child into the family, but also changes to their mental health. The new parental sharing leave supports women who may be experiencing post-partum depression by providing time for partners to care for both the baby and the birthing parent. If there are already children in the family, these changes will also provide time for the partner to help the siblings adjust to the newest addition.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, enhancing parental leave benefits will improve supports to families in the long term and will benefit society by helping to create a healthy family and providing consistency in care.

Mr. Speaker, these options also help to reduce potential childcare costs and offer employees more alternatives when managing their family responsibilities. Most importantly, they can support their family without worrying about their employment.

We recognize that, for employers, providing these leaves will require balancing business priorities. We also know that Yukon employers value family and community, and they care

about the health and welfare of their employees. In the Yukon, both employers and employees recognize that they need each other. To that end, we encourage them to work together to communicate about this type of leave as early as possible so that both parties can plan for a smooth transition.

In addition to providing more employment opportunities for temporary employees, these parental leaves provide greater opportunities for employers to access prospective employees and create long-term continuity in a company's workforce. Employers whose employees opt for the extended parental leave may find it easier to attract and train temporary staff for a longer period, especially if they view the Yukon as having a modern work environment similar to other jurisdictions in Canada.

The next group of special leaves that I'm going to speak about are fortunately not accessed very often. However, they exist to support families when they need to look after their loved ones in times of crisis.

One of the fundamental changes for all types of special leave is a broadening definition of "family member" to reflect modern social trends and non-traditional families. In addition to immediate family and other relatives, the definition of "family member" also includes other individuals considered to be like family. By providing support for non-traditional families, the new definition of "family" acknowledges that some people may not have blood relatives nearby but still need care and support from a loved one when difficult life events happen.

Mr. Speaker, we know that Yukoners are generous, kind, and caring people who often look after each other even when we are not related. We have a strong sense of community, coming together during tough and critical times. Expanding the definition of "family member" is consistent with this northern trait and allows Yukoners to support one another as family regardless of marital status, common-law partnership, or legal parent-child relationships.

Helping when someone is gravely ill and likely to pass on is also something that Yukoners do for each other. Compassionate care leave is currently available under the *Employment Standards Act*; however, this bill will extend the allotted unpaid leave from eight to 28 weeks and allow intermittent use over a 52-week period or until the family member passes. As I noted earlier, people do not use this type of leave very often. Within those 28 weeks, though, it does ensure that when families need it most, they do not have to choose between their job and supporting or taking care of a family member or someone who is like family. This leave will support access to federal caregiving benefits and ease the burden for employees as they support loved ones with end-of-life care.

As our population ages, leave for compassionate care will provide a better quality of personal care for those Yukoners who are in the end stage of life. Being at home, surrounded by those you love in the place where you are most comfortable is the ideal situation. In a time when health care costs are rising, this leave may also complement government services such as home care and palliative care.

There is nothing more difficult for a parent than having a critically ill child. We heard about that today during our tributes. The *Employment Standards Act* currently provides 37 weeks of unpaid leave related to a critically ill child, and this will not change. This bill will, however, make changes to allow family members and those considered to be like family members to use this leave on an intermittent basis over a 52-week period. This leave ensures, once again, that families can focus on supporting or taking care of their gravely ill or critically injured child under 18 years of age. For those family members who are 18 years of age and older, we're introducing a new parallel type of leave called "leave related to critical illness of an adult".

For eligible persons, this leave will provide 17 weeks of unpaid leave that can be used within a 52-week period or until the passing of the individual to provide care or support for an adult who is injured or critically ill. In both cases, an eligible employee must have completed six months of continuous employment with an employer and they must provide a medical certificate.

All of these amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* will provide support for Yukon employees when they need it most. Availability of these leaves will provide job protection to support Yukoners accessing federal employment benefits and further contribute to their well-being at all stages of their lives.

I thank the officials from the departments of Community Services and Justice for their work in preparing this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from members opposite and I look forward to further debate.

Ms. Van Bibber: The *Employment Standards Act* outlines and regulates all efforts to ensure that employees and employers can be compatible and there is no infringement on either's rights in the workplace. It is necessary for us to be compliant and treat each other well.

The amendments to this act, as outlined by the minister, are related to entitlements to leave without pay following the birth or adoption of a child; to provide end-of-life care or support to a family member; to care for and support a child who is critically ill; and adding an entitlement to a new type of leave to a now-employee to care for or support an adult family member who is critically ill or injured. These are all supported by the Yukon Party. Being supportive of this bill in second reading, we look forward to getting into a more fulsome discussion in Committee of the Whole.

Ms. White: We are pleased to speak in support of Bill No. 31. It's important that Yukon's legislation matches the available federal programs and benefits. Anything in law that can help better the life of Yukoners through such changes as the birth or adoption of a child or the ability to provide care and support at the end of life for a family member is important to us.

I think the minister touched on it, but particularly close to me is the broadening definition of "family" — to not just

include those who we're born to, but those who are the family that we choose.

The changes in Bill No. 31 also extend the time a person can take away from work to care for or support a child who is critically ill. Of course, that is something that we don't wish for anyone.

We thank the legislative drafters, the department officials, and all those who made these changes possible. We look forward to passing this when the time comes.

Speaker: If the member speaks, he will close debate on second reading of Bill No. 31.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will take but a moment.

I just want to acknowledge the opposition parties and I thank them for their compassion and their support for this — support for Yukoners, I guess is the way I would frame it — for the bill as it is proposed, but in support of Yukoners and for acknowledging that this does line up with federal initiatives — and also to the Third Party for their acknowledgement of the importance of seeing family in a broader sense, as I think we all have come to do as people.

I look forward to Committee of the Whole when we will get into question and answer and then look forward to the bill coming forward at third reading.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 31 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Hutton): I now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Do members wish to take a 10-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Bill No. 210: *First Appropriation Act 2019-20* — continued

Chair: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Is there any general debate?

Executive Council Office

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would like to welcome the officials here today. I have Jasmina Randhawa, Assistant Deputy Minister of IGR and Corporate Programs, and also Deputy Minister Stephen Mills. I welcome them today for our Committee of the Whole debate.

I am very pleased to be introducing the 2019-20 budget for the Executive Council Office. The Executive Council Office supports all of the government departments and the Cabinet Office. It helps keep the wheels of government decision-making turning. It helps implement the government's commitment to meaningfully involve Yukoners in decision-making.

A further responsibility is strengthening government-to-government relations and reconciliation with First Nations. The department also supports intergovernmental relations with Canada and internationally, helps the government implement its environmental and socio-economic assessment responsibilities, supports positive youth development, provides objective advisory services, and encourages northern science.

The Executive Council Office also administers the Water Board Secretariat and also the Office of the Commissioner.

The 2019-20 Executive Council Office budget estimates an operation and maintenance budget of \$22.1 million, which

represents a net increase of \$1.2 million or 5.7 percent from the previous year. This increase is mainly due to funding for negotiations and agreements with First Nations and an increase in the budget for land claims implementation boards and councils.

Now, Mr. Chair, I would also like to also discuss each of the Executive Council Office's three divisions and their work, starting with Strategic Corporate Services. That particular division liaises between Cabinet and departments to ensure that my ministers and I have the information and advice that we need as decision-makers. It helps ensure that the government is open, efficient, and coordinated as we develop programs and policies to improve Yukoners' lives.

It is leading the ongoing expansion of the yukon.ca website that we launched in February 2017. This work will help to fulfill our promise to improve access to government services for all Yukoners, especially people living in the communities. The website yukon.ca has received a 400-percent increase in site traffic compared to last year. The Strategic Corporate Services division is also home to an in-house public engagement specialist who helps to lead the government's approach to inclusive and participatory decision-making.

We are fulfilling our promise to seek the views of the public more meaningfully in our discussions and our decision-making, making it easy for people to get involved and share and to explain our decisions.

The engageyukon.ca website, which we launched in 2017, has so far hosted more than 50 public engagements. It provides a single point of access for Yukoners interested in participating in government decisions. We now, as part of all of our engagements, ask the public to rate their experience with us using a scorecard created as part of the Talking Together project that we did with the City of Whitehorse. We have been tracking this information to measure our success and identify areas for improvement.

Now to the numbers — the operation and maintenance budget for Strategic Corporate Services division is \$4.4 million. This is a net increase of \$57,000 over the previous year's estimate, primarily because the department realigned its resources to support the Canadian Index of Wellbeing for Yukon and electoral reform projects. Electoral reform is important to our government. We want to strengthen the fairness, integrity, and accessibility of our democracy. That is why we asked Yukoners what areas of our electoral system are most important when it comes to reform. These priorities will guide the work of an independent commission on electoral reform that will be appointed later this year.

I also mentioned the Canadian Index of Wellbeing for Yukon project. Last spring, we published our first performance plan, detailing our commitments to Yukoners and reporting on our progress. In the first update to the performance plan published at the end of last year, we committed to producing a more comprehensive profile of our territory's well-being. We are going to develop Canadian Index of Wellbeing indicators for Yukon, which will help us to measure the territory's social, economic, and environmental

conditions and provide us with a tool for evidence-based decision-making. This work is all about asking the questions, “How are Yukoners really doing?” and “How can we do better?”

Another initiative that I wish to mention is the lobbyist registry. Yukoners have the right to know who is lobbying public officials in an attempt to influence government decisions. A public registry will provide them with this information. The division is setting up an online registry, and the legislation will come into force once the registry is ready. It will then be mandatory for lobbyists to disclose their activities.

I would like to now take a second to talk about another of the Executive Council Office’s three divisions, Aboriginal Relations — the fundamental importance of reconciliation to this government. Reconciliation is all about working with First Nations to overcome the harms caused by this country’s history of inequality and discrimination. In Yukon, we are strengthening the relationship with First Nation governments through collaboration, openness, and respect. We are collaborating with First Nation governments to bring tangible benefits to all Yukoners through environmental, economic, and social projects, both collectively through the Yukon Forum and individually through accords and agreements.

The Aboriginal Relations division leads the Government of Yukon’s negotiations, consultations, and discussions with First Nations. The division builds relationships with First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations, manages collaborative initiatives that emerge from the Yukon Forum, and engages in discussions and negotiations with transboundary First Nations regarding their Yukon interests.

A key part of the role of the Aboriginal Relations division is to support government-to-government discussions with First Nations throughout the Yukon Forum. The forum continues to meet four times a year and there are working groups advancing vital issues including economic development, mining, health and social services, justice, and land use planning. With all this in mind, the operation and maintenance budget for Aboriginal Relations is estimated at \$7.4 million. This is a \$1-million overall increase with additional funding for negotiations and other agreements with various First Nations and transfer payments for land claims, implementation, boards and councils.

Reconciliation with indigenous peoples is one of the most important matters facing society today, and the ongoing level of collaboration between the Yukon government and Yukon First Nation governments is unprecedented.

I will now talk about the third Executive Council Office division and that is Corporate Programs and Intergovernmental Relations. This division incorporates the Office of the Science Advisor, Major Projects Yukon, Intergovernmental Relations, the Youth Directorate, and also the Yukon Water Board Secretariat.

The division’s operation and maintenance budget is estimated at \$6.4 million, which is a slight increase of \$18,000 from the previous year. To support evidence-based decision-making within the government, the Office of the Science

Advisor pursues opportunities for advancing scientific research in the Yukon while increasing the benefits of that research to the Yukon.

Staff are working collaboratively with First Nation and transboundary aboriginal groups to develop an approach for the public service to respect and reflect Yukon First Nation ways of knowing and doing in government actions and decisions.

The Office of the Science Advisor also provides \$30,000 to support the Arctic Inspiration Prize. The prize is the largest in Canada dedicated to northern projects and it was an honour that the award ceremony was held in Yukon this year — the first time it has been hosted in the north.

Moving into the division’s Major Projects Yukon branch — this team helps the government fulfill its responsibilities under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*. The branch supports impact assessment in Yukon that guides decision-making to meet present as well as future needs. It supports the government’s commitment to developing a diverse economy as well as ensuring a sustainable environment.

The Intergovernmental Relations branch has a budget of a little over \$1 million, with a \$27,000 increase in the personnel budget. On the national front, I continue to invite Yukon First Nation chiefs to join me and my ministers in Ottawa for Yukon Days to meet with the federal government. We recognize the value of speaking for Yukoners with a single voice and helping the Government of Canada to understand the unique circumstances and needs of the north. The value of face-to-face meetings and collaboration with leaders within the territory, across the north, throughout Canada, and over our borders can never be underestimated. I’m looking forward to hosting my fellow territorial premiers in Yukon later this year for the annual Northern Premiers’ Forum which takes place every year in a different territory.

Supporting Yukon’s younger generation remains a core commitment at the Executive Council Office. The Youth Directorate provides funding to a number of organizations, programs, and services, with a focus on positive youth development. Currently, the Youth Directorate is providing more than \$1.5 million in combined funding support to a variety of organizations. There is \$320,000 earmarked for the youth leadership and activities program. Sixteen Yukon communities and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation benefit from funding through this program, which is about supporting positive youth development in rural Yukon communities.

Over \$1 million annually supports three-year operational funding to a couple of different organizations. We have: \$274,000 for the BYTE — Empowering Youth Society; \$277,000 for the Boys and Girls Club of Yukon; \$198,000 for the Heart of Riverdale Community Centre; and \$271,000 for the Youth of Today Society.

We provide \$60,000 annually to support the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce and the Singletrack to Success youth mountain-biking trails project. We also provide \$25,000 annually to the Association franco-yukonnaise to support francophone youth programming. We continue to provide

\$102,000 annually to support the youth investment fund, which focuses on funding programming directed at marginalized youth who are 18 years and under. Investments such as these are vital to the well-being of youth in Yukon and help set them on a path to a promising future.

Before I close, Mr. Chair, I would like to go over some of the other Executive Council Office functions that do not fall under these three divisions that I have outlined.

The department's operation and maintenance budget also includes over \$2 million for the operation of the Yukon Water Board Secretariat, which is consistent with previous years. Also the Office of the Commissioner — although the Office of the Commissioner is independent of the Government of Yukon, its staff and operating costs are funded through the Executive Council Office budget. This year's budget for the Office of the Commissioner is \$297,000, which includes a net increase of \$16,000, mainly due to departmental funding being reallocated to support the new Order of Yukon program.

The budget for the Cabinet Office is also included in the Executive Council Office budget. This year, the estimate for the Cabinet Office is \$3.1 million. Also under the Executive Council Office umbrella is the Government Internal Audit Services unit. It receives \$571,000 in funding in this budget. This branch provides objective risk-based assurance and advisory services supporting the government's commitment to openness and accountability.

Mr. Chair, in conclusion, I appreciate this opportunity to provide an overview of how the Executive Council Office budget is being carefully managed to maintain services while reallocating existing funding to support new and emerging priorities. I hope that I have also conveyed a sense of the scale, significance, and diversity of this department's work.

As I said at the start, the function of this department is all about building relationships and working together, delivering results that tangibly improve people's lives. I look forward to answering any questions that my colleagues may have about the 2019-20 budget for the Executive Council Office.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the officials for being here as well today to assist the Premier as we work through the Executive Council Office budget.

The first question I have for the Premier would be in regard to the new website and the logo change. I am wondering if the Premier can provide us the full cost to date for the new government logo. In those costs, we are wondering if we could include all of the new signage, vehicle decals, letterhead — et cetera — that have piled up because of this new logo.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I want to start talking a bit here about the visual identity. A visual identity for the whole government helps people find and recognize government services, information, and locations much more easily. Our visual identity, with its consistent look and feel, is about much more than just a logo or branding; it's about an improvement of the delivery of services and communicating more effectively with the public.

Yukon.ca, as far as the website itself and costs — in 2018-19, Highways and Public Works spent \$106,000 on the

continued development and improvement of yukon.ca. This builds on the \$250,000 investment made in the 2017-18 fiscal year for planning, design, development, and assessment of the website. Ongoing maintenance of the website will cost \$75,000 per year — half of what it cost to maintain the previous site. This does not include staff time, though.

As far as the actual visual identity — again, this embodies the territory and the people who live here. It highlights our uniqueness, our culture, and our history and strengthens a modern and more identified branding. We're not only improving services — the visual identity gives us the tools to save significant time and significant money. The visual identity helps us to make better use of financial and staff resources, and we anticipate that it will generate a return on our investment.

In the past, we had a lot of different departments putting a lot of human resources toward working per department on visual identity, on branding, and on logos. By having a whole-of-government approach to this, those cost-savings will be abundant. We are making sure that we move through this so that we keep signs that are still healthy and intact with the old logo there, and we are actively working every year to update and upgrade the new logo, knowing full well that we are going to do this over the long term — again, as a cost-saving process.

The visual identity itself — the total cost for the project for the visual identity was just under \$124,000. Again, our old logo was more than 35 years old and was the only element of the visual identity that we had. Again, we improved that with new tools and new templates. We did that in a whole-of-government way. This is going to have cost-savings as we look at this from a whole-of-government approach.

Mr. Hassard: I was hoping we were just going to have back-and-forth with questions and answers and not history lessons. We will try this again.

Can the Premier provide the full cost to date for the creation of the new government logo?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member wants a back-and-forth — I told him that the complete project cost for the visual identity, which includes the logo, is just under \$124,000.

Mr. Hassard: That number includes all new signage, vehicle decals, letterhead, et cetera?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The operation and maintenance of each department can be discussed in each department. Each department has annual budgets for new gear and new vehicles. They will also have a budget for implementing the new logo. Again, the plan is to not necessarily just replace everything right away, but to replace what is necessary, to make sure that we extend the cost over time.

We are taking it as a phased-in approach. That is the most cost-effective way of doing this — whether we upgrade the vehicles with old logos or new logos, they will be getting upgraded on a phased-in approach, which is a regular cost for government. We will then use up all of our existing materials that have the old logos on them, as much as we possibly can, during the transition as well.

Mr. Hassard: We have heard a lot about a one-government approach and whole-of-government and evidence-based decision-making — the importance of having all of the information for budgeting.

Does the Premier mean to tell us that he doesn't know how much this is going to cost in the end — that we are just kind of going to go through this and eventually we will get there? Or does he know how much this is actually going to cost taxpayers?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As I said before, it is going to cost less than the old system, where individual departments would have individual budgets to go over individual logos and individual approaches. With a whole-of-government approach, as old logos get worn down and old signs get worn down — as opposed to replacing them with the old logo, we are replacing them with the new logo.

We talked about the up-cost of funding as well, and that was \$124,000 for the visual identity exercise. We have heard from the Yukon Party that they are not happy with the logo. If there is anybody else — I am not hearing it — I am hearing that the whole-of-government approach works really well to showcase our identity, not only locally, but also nationally and internationally. It has been picked up with a lot of compliments.

Again, we are doing it in a cost-effective manner that, over time, reduces the cost of those operation and maintenance budgets for all those departments as they do the natural and logical transition from older, worn-out signage to newer signage. It just so happens that new signage will also be a new logo that is going to be shared across departments.

Mr. Hassard: In regard to the website, can the Premier confirm how many pages have been transferred now to the new website from the old and how many are left to be transferred?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The yukon.ca website is definitely an improvement in accessing government information and services for all Yukoners. By having a website that is designed for the general public as opposed to being for public servants, more information becomes readily available. That mobile-enabled website focuses on the needs of the public, and it also means that we can continue to expand our online services for Yukoners. By creating this single website, we are providing a better experience for the public as well as decreasing costs and reducing the bureaucracy.

Since we launched yukon.ca in February 2018, we have added over 3,000 pages, including department repository, emergency and safety information, campground and recreation pages, government event listings, and a directory of government buildings as well. There is a team of dedicated professionals who are working very hard to add even more improvements very soon, including topics pages, transitioning engageyukon.ca into a new website, and adding images to pages and updates to the news and to campgrounds and places as well. The new website also benefits users with accessibility issues, such as Yukoners who are visually impaired. The new site works with a variety of apps to support an individual's

needs — for example, being able to magnify or change the contrast of the content, or even have the content read aloud.

Since the launch, there have been over 330,000 visits to yukon.ca and over one million page views, and those numbers keep on growing. We have also gathered more than 900 feedback forms and are continuing to adjust content to meet the public's needs.

The website provides us with a platform to deliver on key government priorities, including the expansion of e-services right across the territory. We have identified the most popular tasks that Yukoners want to accomplish online through our website statistics, feedback from citizens, and user experience. The Executive Council Office had a contract, as we have discussed in the past, with Yellow Pencil, and that was valued at just under \$25,000 for the development of that content. Highways and Public Works spent one quarter-million dollars in the 2017-18 fiscal year for the planning, design, and development of the yukon.ca website.

One other number would be that the ongoing maintenance on the website will cost about \$75,000 a year, which is half of what the previous website used to cost for that ongoing maintenance. So what we have developed is something that is more user friendly for the public, more user friendly for those with disabilities, and more able to expand our e-services and to work with our e-services across the territory, and we are doing it with an ongoing operation and maintenance cost that is half of what the previous website cost. I believe that this is a benefit for Yukoners, and it's a cost-savings as well.

I don't have a number in front of me as far the total number of pages left to be migrated over, mostly because not all of the pages will be migrated over. That content — we're going to use an evidence-based focus on user needs and make sure that we prioritize the next pages to move over — but again, some pages will, for a whole list of different reasons, not be necessary anymore or not pertinent or not modern. So not all of the remaining pages are necessarily going to migrate over. But again, we are prioritizing the content based upon user engagement and what pages are the most important to the Yukon public.

With that being said, I would say that there is probably an estimated 25 percent of that content left to migrate over.

Mr. Hassard: Just to clarify on that — he said that 3,000 pages have been transferred over, and that 3,000 is 75 percent of the content. I just want to clarify that, because I thought that the last time we had discussed this — and I would have to look back in Hansard — but my recollection was there was somewhere in the neighbourhood of 11,000 pages to be transferred.

Anyway, just to move on with that — I'm curious as to if the Premier could update us on when he anticipates the new website to be completed — when he thinks that all of those pages will be fully migrated over.

Also, when he's on his feet, if he could just let us know: Who is the contact person to notify when the public encounters either inaccurate or broken links to this new website? It has been a concern that we've heard from more than one person, for sure.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm not able to give a timeline as far as when the last 25 percent — but yes, the member opposite is clear in his understanding that 75 percent of the work is done so far. User needs will determine what pages get migrated over next. Not all pages will be migrated over. They're based upon user need.

Again, we have about 25 percent left and that progress as we go — it does get quicker and quicker as we develop a system to get that material migrated over.

Every page does have a feedback section on it, so if you're having problems with the page, there is an area on the page that you're currently on — if you're having an issue and trouble, you can use that feedback form directly on it.

Mr. Hassard: The Premier, in the previous question, talked a lot about numbers through Highways and Public Works and different amounts of money that was being spent. I'm curious as to if he has a number that he could relate to the House today — how much money is actually budgeted for work on this new website in this year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, for Executive Council Office, we had the 2018-19 contracts that we paid out in that year. That was just under \$25,000 — \$24,129 for the development of that content design guide and also for staff training. That happened in a previous year. But also, with the transition being complete, that ongoing maintenance of the website is going to be \$75,000.

I will clarify with the member opposite: Is he asking if there is some ongoing dollars in this budget in Executive Council Office for the website and for the visual identity? I just want to clarify if that is his question.

Mr. Hassard: I am just asking in general how much money is budgeted throughout government for the website for this year.

Hon. Mr. Silver: There is no other necessary line item here in my budget for Executive Council Office. There may be ongoing costs that are associated with any visual identity or any website that might come through Highways and Public Works, so I would ask the member opposite to ask the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Again, this process is a cost-savings, not an increase. As we look at how this money is being spent per department, this money is being spent as it was always being spent in every individual department as an individual effort. Now with the combination of those efforts, as a one-government approach, this is a cost-savings to those line items.

Again, I don't have another line item in my budget in front of me today for the Executive Council Office. If there was anything else — and we're guessing at this point as far as what the member is looking for specifically — there would be technological monies available through Highways and Public Works and that department could break down what that overall overarching budget from the government is dedicated specifically to new branding. I don't know if that's what he's asking for or the new visual identity per se, or if he's asking about taking a look at how historic costs of keeping up the visual identity and keeping up the website have increased or decreased. Again, it is my understanding as we work with

these departments that by having a whole-of-government approach to the visual identity and to the website being more user friendly and oriented toward the public as opposed to toward the public service that this is a cost-savings.

Mr. Hassard: I will move on then. A Liberal platform commitment was "Examining the current mining assessment process to find ways to harmonize the Yukon Water Board processes within the *Yukon Environment and Socio-economic Assessment Act* framework".

Mr. Chair, I'm curious if the Premier could tell us what role ECO is taking in this work.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the member opposite knows, the YESAA reset oversight group is a joint effort between the governments of Canada, Yukon, and First Nations to collectively seek efficiencies and other improvements to the YESAA process. That oversight group and other results of the YESAA reset memorandum of understanding demonstrates our genuine commitment and the commitment of all parties to improve relationships and make progress on long-standing issues.

That oversight group has jointly drafted a priorities and work plan document. Action on that work plan will occur through the YESAA forum and technical working groups as well. The oversight group's priorities look at how we can each interact with and understand the YESAA process in order to help guide the improvements in those efficiencies as well.

With that being said, Mr. Chair, the YESA board is responsible for the implementation of much of the YESAA process. Recognizing its unique role, that oversight group has engaged constructively with the board and will continue to work with it on these important priorities.

Mr. Hassard: I am curious if the Premier could give us any timelines on when this work is anticipated to be complete.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think I know where the member opposite is going with the line of questioning and I appreciate the questions from him.

Industry is expecting immediate and tangible outcomes. We have had many meetings with many proponents of many major and minor companies. We are very much committed to bringing industry into these conversations regarding their issues and with the goal of delivering practical solutions that work for all Yukoners, but we are dealing with an issue here where there wasn't trust before. Yukon First Nations were feeling that some of the processes in the past were definitely not being worked upon or they were not at that table. To unwind the relations and try to get to the table to come together government-to-government where the First Nation governments trust a territorial government is a huge goal. It is not just a goal of the good people of Aboriginal Relations, but it is also a goal of all of our departments.

There is definitely a whole-of-government approach when it comes to working at the Yukon Forum. There is a myriad of working groups right now that are working on a whole bunch of topics, including this one specifically. We understand that the mining groups and mining proponents want to see this unravelled as soon as possible. My commitment to them is to make sure that we get it right with

the First Nation governments first and foremost. There is good progress here.

The priorities of the mining MOU and also the YESAA reset MOU are distinct and they don't have any substantial overlap at this time. Commitments are being made during the Geoscience Forum to explore options like section-49.1-like solutions to challenges on projects that those conversations are ongoing and there are positive conversations there. Nobody sees the red tape more so than First Nation governments that are working placer claims or mining claims where they don't have a lot of resources. We're working with First Nation governments. We're sharing in human resources. We're doing what we can to make sure that conduits of communication continue so we find solutions to very complicated issues that have gone all the way to Ottawa with changes with Bill S-6 and then subsequent changes after that as well — to haul back that control.

I will say that the one update I can give is that the government agreed to the priorities and work plan in March of 2019, so within the last month. Canada and Yukon First Nations previously agreed to the priorities and the work plan, so the work plan guides the next year of the oversight group activities. The priorities documented processes that work on a dozen specific items and there are three specific areas which we are working forward and considering. First of all, a revitalized YESAA forum — the last forum met in March 2016. We're working on certainty and consultation and processes for clauses of YESAA that have seen little use in the past and also policy development in targeting technical working groups which will include amendments and renewal work.

Again, there is work happening. It's a huge benefit to this process to have the Yukon Forum meeting four times a year and having the oversight of executive committees with First Nations, CAOs, CEOs, administrators, executive directors, and our ministers all at tables so that public servants from all governments are working together to make sure that we not only get this right as far as the MOUs but also reset a relationship and reset some trusts among these governments.

Mr. Hassard: So the Premier talked about priorities and a work plan in regard to the MOU in mining. Would the Premier be able to provide us with those priorities? Or maybe he could table them as well as the work plan.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think the member opposite is now moving more toward the mining MOU as opposed to the YESAA reset MOU. The mining MOU, of course, is not being led by my department but being led by Energy, Mines and Resources. I'm happy to have the minister responsible for that mining MOU answer any questions during that debate of Energy, Mines and Resources. Of course, with the Executive Council Office and my responsibilities for the YESA act and for YESAA responsibilities and therefore the reset group, I can speak at length of the reset oversight group. We can talk about Major Projects Yukon and Energy, Mines and Resources. They are examining options for addressing amendments and renewals that will meet the needs of the mining sector that can be applied to all project sectors. That

work will remain in the interest and the interpretations of government and regulatory agents responsible for minor amendments and renewals.

Again, I am happy to talk about the oversight group as they present their priorities and work plan to the CYFN lands and resource managers meetings. That happened in February of this year. The group is seeking input and further developments on options and on solutions as well to those identified priorities. That work is going on. I share the member opposite's desire to get to a place where we can speak more freely with mining proponents on these changes, but it does take time, and we are taking the time necessary to make sure that First Nations are at the table when it comes to resources and the environmental stewardship that comes along with those resources.

Mr. Hassard: In regard to that MOU, can the Premier tell us who they are seeking input from? He said that it was done in February. Would we be able to see that work plan and see what those priorities are, Mr. Chair?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, we are seeking input with the oversight group, with Canada, and with the First Nation governments.

Mr. Hassard: The rest of that question was about the work plan and the priorities and when they would be out for the public to see.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I assume that the member opposite would understand the confidential nature of a lot of the conversations that feed into the oversight group itself. Suffice to say, though, that we will have a priorities document that will become a public document. We will wait for CYFN. That is where you will see it when it shows up, but again, we are taking the time to make sure that we work on priorities together. I can't speak on behalf of First Nation governments or the Government of Canada, nor will I. Not necessarily the oversight group having a draft or any of that — but we are looking more for a priorities document, and that will become public as soon as possible.

With that being said, we are very committed to bringing industry into the conversations regarding their issues with the goal of delivering practical, made-in-Yukon solutions that work for Yukoners. Until all three governments are ready to provide any more public documentation, we will continue those discussions in earnest.

Mr. Hassard: I would think that it would be important that industry would be present from the beginning. I am curious as to why the Premier would feel the need to leave industry out of it until later. It seems like the governments could all do a lot of work, but if it's not the priority of industry, then maybe the working groups will have missed the point, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Silver: We're not the only government at the table. I would say that Bill S-6 would have an awful lot to do with the fact that we're in the situation that we're currently in right now. I don't want to speak on behalf of other governments, but there definitely is a perception that the previous government was working too much with industry and not enough with the First Nation governments who signed

modern treaties decades ago which have chapters that determine their involvement in these industries.

Do I want to reach out right now and talk to the industries? I would love to. I would love to get to a place where we can actually have those conversations. This is something that definitely keeps the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources up at night. It keeps me up at night — knowing that we have put Yukon and these processes back by years in the past. So to build that trust up again and to get moving forward — that takes time and we're going to take that time.

When the member opposite says that certainly the Premier would want to have those conversations, he is right.

Mr. Hassard: According to the YESAB website, it says — and I quote: “The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) has developed a new Pre-submission Engagement (PSE) process for Executive Committee screenings. PSE will support early and meaningful engagement and provide proponents with better guidance on project proposals. The process represents a major change to the screening process.

“The purpose of pre-submission engagement is to bring interested and affected parties together to review project requirements well in advance of a detailed proposal being submitted for assessment. This helps identify gaps and issues of concern, define values and baseline information requirements and ensure a timely and certain screening process.”

On this side of the Legislature, we have heard of significant concerns from industry about this process and what it could do to timelines for reassessments. I'm curious, Mr. Chair, as to if we could hear from the Premier what the government's position is on this as they act as both a decision body and sometimes a proponent on the Executive Committee screenings.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do really appreciate the question from the member opposite on this initiative.

I have had conversations with other jurisdictions. I have spoken directly to another premier, Premier Horgan, on their processing in British Columbia. It's very similar to what the pre-screening is here.

Of course, we're actively engaged in the review of YESAB's proposed new pre-submission process, and we'll be providing our views. We're doing that very soon, if not already today. YESAB is also seeking input from First Nations, from industry and stakeholders and we encourage active engagement and input from all parties.

We support timely, efficient, and effective processing. That's a big goal for the Executive Council Office. We do have concerns about the pre-submission process. We have spoken to some proponents out there. There are two ways of going about YESAA processing for the Executive Committee. There are lots of great anecdotal stories of companies that come in — major companies that have a lot of experience in these processes — and do their due diligence. They speak with the First Nation governments first and foremost, they get a sense of the land, and they show themselves as corporate

citizens and also do the research of our Water Board process and our YESAA process as well.

There are some concerns from those types of companies that do their work properly: that pre-screening does not necessarily help them in the process and if you are setting up a pre-screening to help industry that doesn't need the help, how is that helpful?

I can see as well that if there are other companies that come in and don't know the processes, where a pre-screening may help to make sure that the material given down the line is more succinct and proper.

Again, we do have some serious concerns from the process and we will be making those concerns known in a very short time.

Mr. Hassard: I am hoping that when the minister makes those concerns known, he can table them here for us so that we do, in fact, know what his concerns are as well — because the point of the question was that we were hoping to find out.

Mr. Chair, the Premier has also promised industry a collaborative framework on timelines and reassessment. It has been over two years now since this commitment was made, so I'm curious as to if the Premier could tell us when industry will see this promise delivered on.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Sorry, Mr. Chair — I didn't hear the question. Can the member opposite repeat the question, please?

Mr. Hassard: In regard to the collaborative framework on timelines and reassessment for industry — there was a promise made by the government over two years ago. We're just wondering when industry will see that promise delivered on.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As I mentioned earlier, that YESAA reset oversight group is where those conversations are happening as we speak. Again, commitment was made during the Geoscience Forum to explore options for a section-49.1-like solution to challenges on project amendments and renewals, so a policy or regulatory solution to that problem — or to the problem of even other minor amendments or renewals — is definitely a stated priority of the oversight working group. Again, Major Projects Yukon and EMR are working on examining different options within that, but that is where that work is happening.

If the member opposite wants to know some of the topics of concern from our government's perspective on the pre-submission engagement process, we are concerned about the complexity of the pre-submission engagement process. Currently, there are eight steps that are part of a pre-submission engagement process and they each have different names for each of those steps. At its current level of complexity, it will be very challenging for participants to understand this new process and the roles of each party as well — particularly for those in the public who typically do not interact with the assessment process regularly.

We have a concern there. We have a concern about the legislative context for the pre-submission engagement

process. We have concerns about timelines with the pre-submission engagement process as well.

Again, we will be providing our letter to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board outlining these concerns and expanding upon them.

Mr. Hassard: If I could move on — we know that this past weekend, the Premier was in Skagway to meet with the municipality and the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority to discuss, according to the news release, the future of the Skagway port.

Can the Premier tell us what the objectives of the trip were — the agenda, maybe what was accomplished — that sort of thing?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We had a tour of the ore terminal with representatives of AIDEA and also representatives of the mining industry here in Canada. We also met with mayor and council and members of the community, with industry at the table and AIDEA at the table as well, to discuss the future of the ore terminal.

Mr. Hassard: Would the Premier be able to give us a little bit of an update on what the future of the ore terminal in Skagway looks like?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I thank the member opposite for the question. This ore terminal is extremely important to Yukoners. It is extremely important to the mining industry. The good news is that it is extremely important to the borough of Skagway as well. There is huge consideration that has to happen before 2023, when the ownership changes hands and the borough of Skagway has some huge decisions to make — huge decisions around clean-up, huge decisions around the open nature of the conveyor belt right now, huge considerations about modernizing the facility for environmental considerations, and also speed of use.

But the good news is that the Borough of Skagway understands that while tourism is a huge boon to the economy in Skagway, it is limited to certain seasons of the year; whereas, the mining industry and the jobs that come from that and the money that can be made on that ore terminal is a year-round endeavour. Looking at the historic numbers at that ore terminal, it is amazing how modern-day transportation of ores from Minto, for example, are dwarfed from previous years, and the ability to fill these ships up in under 72 hours — it is astounding how older, antiquated technology was so effective and efficient.

But as we move forward and as the community wraps its head around a sustainable mining industry moving forward and the benefits from that, they want to make sure the clean-up happens. They want to make sure that the transition of that ownership comes with responsibilities — a conversation about responsibilities. I think we had a very productive conversation. It was great to have industry there. There were representatives of two major mining projects in the Yukon who were at these conversations as well and it was good conversation. For a late-afternoon meeting on a Friday, I was impressed to see a whole bunch of Skagway folks in the gallery, listening in to the conversation. I think we went

overtime by about an hour or so because the dialogue was good.

It was positive, but those were the concerns. Environmental clean-up needs to happen. The city has a big decision to make on that ore terminal. The conversation never went into necessarily whether or not — some of the fears would be that they might turn away from the ore terminal. The good news to bring back is that it doesn't seem to be on the plate. One of the councillors talked about how we have to make decisions now because mining is an important part of the economy of the north, and it's not going away. We need to make these decisions because of the timeliness of the transition of the authority for that port. If those decisions aren't made now, they are just going to be punted off to future generations.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that update from the Premier.

We know that the Premier recently went to Juneau to meet with the governor of Alaska. According to the press release — and I will quote: “This was the first time that Premier Silver and Governor Dunleavy have met since the Governor's election to office in November 2018. The meeting included a discussion of topics of shared interest such as infrastructure, economic development and the growing northern tourism industry.”

We are hoping that the Premier can expand for us a bit on the topics of conversation and that we can find out what was covered with respect to infrastructure besides the Shakwak funding.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. We and Alaska share many common interests. It was a privilege to go over and meet with commissioners, state senators — the senator and also the lieutenant governor and the governor. There were great conversations, about many of our common interests and outlooks and many of our common challenges.

Our government has engaged with the US and with Alaskan governments for a long time now. These have been long-standing partnerships, and we are more than willing and able to continue — and capable of continuing — those conversations. We have had many mutually beneficial agreements, such as the fishing licence fees for residents, coordination on highway and transportation issues, and also emergency management. We are continuing to develop that strong relationship with Alaska on the basis of economic development.

We did meet with Mike Dunleavy in February, and we did discuss resource development. There was a conversation about mining, about growing tourism, and about maintaining and improving critical infrastructure that supports resource development and tourism.

We also met with the lieutenant governor, the commissioner of transportation, the commissioner of the environment, and the Senate majority leader.

We are going to continue to engage with the US on federal issues such as border security and trade through the

Council of the Federation and also through the Canadian federal government.

As you can imagine, when we were over there, it was in every paper and on every radio as well that they were in the midst of their budget and lots of cuts. There were lots of concerns over there right now with the ferry system and how that transportation system needs to continue and how that will do so, or concerns as well on education. We would finish our conversations and we would go back to the hotel and watch on C-SPAN the presentations there in education as well. So there were lots of conversations there. They're in a unique situation. We're pleased, though, that both the governor and all of the other officials had ample time to talk with us about a whole bunch of different issues that are of importance to both ourselves and to the Alaskans.

One of the most profound meetings, I believe, was with the commissioner responsible for transportation, Mr. McKinnon. This is an individual who understands this history and the connection between us and his state and is working actively with a senator and our Minister of Highways and Public Works on some solutions and some places where we can move to try to find some relief for the Shakwak funding.

We had some great conversations with the commissioner for the environment on pretty interesting considerations of the environment. Obviously, they're taking a different approach when it comes to ANWR, but we also had conversations — you know, we have concerns about calving grounds; they have concerns about downstream issues when it comes to some of the BC mining that's happening that is just right outside of Juneau and how that impacts their fisheries industry.

The more that we can sit down and have these conversations and showcase that both jurisdictions are concerned about the environment and maybe taking different tacks and different approaches but continuing those conversations definitely helps not only our economy but also our environment.

Mr. Hassard: The Alaska governor has recently asked the US president to issue permits to extend the Alaska railroad to Alberta. We all know that railcars could carry passengers and freight including bitumen from the oil sands in the Fort McMurray area. We're curious if the Premier has talked to leaders in Alaska, Alberta, and BC about the possibility of this as it is quite obvious that the rail link would pass through a fair portion of Yukon. Could he just update us on that and let us know what the government's position is on that as well?

Hon. Mr. Silver: There is no current position on that. We have had conversations with the A2A group, Mr. Treadwell, and others — again, it's a good reason to have a lobbyist registration to allow everybody to know the conversations that are being had. We've had very preliminary conversations on this from the proponent and also anecdotal conversations in our meet-and-greet in Alaska. I believe there were some representatives at that meeting as well who were asking about this. At this moment in time, we don't have an opinion or anything else to share on those conversations.

Mr. Hassard: I have a question regarding the USMCA. Can the Premier provide an update on the free trade agreement between Canada, the US, and Mexico?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the member opposite knows, NAFTA is not being negotiated by the regions. As far as any update on the progress on NAFTA, that would definitely be a federal question. I am ready, willing, and able to help out the federal government whenever there is a need to explain, per region, the importance of getting rid of tariffs, especially when they are a consideration of national security — which, in my opinion, is interesting, if not bordering on ridiculous. Canada does not pose any threat to the United States, but again, those conversations and negotiations happen on a federal basis.

We have spoken in the Legislative Assembly about our work with the Council of the Federation. As we were working with the federal government, the federal government wanted every jurisdiction to get out there and explain to every trading neighbour and partner in all states at the state level how important Canada is to trade. This is always an educational experience when you can sit down with the Premiers and hear these things. Who would have thought that the number one export in Prince Edward Island is aerospace technology?

Again, it was important work that was met by the Prime Minister thanking every region for coming together — non-partisan — to talk about a really important issue that only the specific regions could speak to, which is how important our trade is with the United States.

Mr. Hassard: I guess I was also hoping for a little bit of an update on how the tariffs are impacting us now. In the same breath, I wonder if the Premier could give us an update on the steel and aluminum tariffs and the retaliatory tariffs — if there is any news on when they may be removed. Also, I am curious if the Premier himself has written to Canada to express concerns over the negative impact that these tariffs are having on local businesses here in the Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I have provided anecdotal information here about Highways and Public Works and other departments speaking about how, overnight, just the concept of tariffs increased the cost of steel and aluminum. This was anecdotal from a lot of the private sector companies that do work with our government.

I wish I had an update on the retaliatory tariffs and how this is going to ease. There has been language from the federal government to immediately get rid of these upon signing for the USMCA — or whatever we are calling it today. As to a letter per se, no, I had the benefit of sitting down at the First Ministers' meetings and had debates with my counterparts across Canada where we have expressed our interest in the removal of these tariffs. They don't help anyone.

We have a massive trade agreement with the United States, and you know, as we described it at the time — going into Washington and talking to the federal representatives — this trade agreement that has happened for decades — it is like the insulation in your attic. You don't really know it's there, but when it's gone, you sure do notice it.

Again, we are urging the federal government to continue the conversations, to encourage Minister Freeland to continue her good work internationally to add recognition of the ridiculousness of these tariffs.

Mr. Hassard: I don't have any further questions, so I would just like to thank the Premier for the responses that he was able to provide us today. Again, I thank the officials for the good work that they do.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Chair, I thank officials for being here and for their briefings that they did provide when we were doing the mains.

I would like to go through each of the areas as they are presented in the budget documents, and I want to try — and this is the challenge — to link those then to the government's website for Executive Council Office, because that is where the challenge comes.

I don't want to belabour the point. The Premier spoke about yukon.ca and I want to come back to that because it is a critically important piece here in terms of our role as Members of the Legislative Assembly — our role in terms of accountability.

The minister spoke quite a lot about the work that has been done and the money that has been spent. I guess, quite frankly, what we see reflected in yukon.ca is front of the house and the minister quite accurately described this as a way for citizens as a portal to get information about if you want to get a driver's licence. If it works, you can get linked to how you get a driver's licence. If you want to find out information about a health care card, if it works, you can find out how to get your health care card and where you can go. What is missing, Mr. Chair, is the information that we, as Members of the Legislative Assembly, require to determine — basically, when I look at Strategic Corporate Services and it is \$4.377 million — who, what, when, where and how? How is the government spending that \$4.377 million? How are they measuring? What are the indicators that they are using?

The fun of it is — we get a line that says we are doing these kinds of activities, but the effectiveness, the performance indicators are what are missing. This is why I keep coming back to: Where does this back into information for members of this Legislative Assembly that are commonly reflected in strategic plans, business plans that say, "This is what we are going to do and this is how we are going to assess whether or not we have actually achieved anything against that for the monies that we are being asked to vote in support of in this Legislative Assembly."

The minister looks sceptical as to whether or not we would vote for it, but I can tell you that if I had information, I might be inclined to do so. I can't vote for a pig in a poke and that is what I am being asked to do here, Mr. Chair.

My question is to the minister: When will we see that kind of information that allows an informed discussion in this Legislative Assembly against clear performance measures that can allow us to assess — and where the activities will be rolled out by department and by branch within those departments?

So for the Executive Council Office, when I see "To provide management, personnel, financial and operational support for the department, Cabinet and ministers.

"To support the Cabinet decision-making process..."

How? "To provide effective government communications to the Yukon... by developing and implementing strategic communications, online communications, and public engagement planning."

Let's just look at the last one: public engagement planning. We say that we have X number of those that have gone on. How has that informed? Where do we see it tracking back into informing the decision-making of government? When I see that we have a score card, what do you do with the score card?

Mr. Chair, I am looking for that back-of-the-house information that Members of the Legislative Assembly require in order to make informed decisions.

I can tell you quite frankly: It's not in the so-called "performance plan". That does not say. It's a litany of activities and every once in a while, a little flash of an indicator — and I will come back to the indicators issue because, quite frankly, what we found so far in this Legislative Assembly is, when you ask a detailed question about one of the highlighted indicators, there is no backup information. That's why it's so critical. We should be able to know — when we say that 61 percent of visits to the emergency ward are unnecessary, we should be able to say why, how much that costs, and what are we doing to remedy it.

That's why I am asking these questions, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Silver: That's a lot. I will try my best to provide some information for the member opposite. I do appreciate the question. I do appreciate her lack of patience, I guess, with the other foot dropping on the performance plans and where we are going to go moving forward from those other updates that we provided in the Legislative Assembly in the past.

I will touch a bit on emergency room visits. Mr. Chair, when we had the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board in here talking about the presumptive legislation for post-traumatic stress, it was noted in dialogue at that time that, when you bring awareness to mental health issues, you will see increased visits to the emergency room. That will happen. When you increase your mental wellness campaign so that you are talking more about mental wellness, the good news is you will have more pressure initially because of that dialogue.

I will give congratulations out to the private sector, like Bell Canada. These types of initiatives make it so that more people are more likely to work on mental wellness, and so these things do add to pressures as well.

Are we statistically analyzing that? Absolutely. Do the performance plans help us to see if our actions actually come to fruition — if our actions work? That's where these performance plans will help. Are they done? No, they are not done, Mr. Chair, so I could see, if we are looking at these as performance plans as 100 percent of what we're doing as far as indices of well-being, yes, that wouldn't be enough,

because what's missing is Yukon-specific indicators of well-being, and we're working on that.

I'm not saying that every single new increase to the ER is based upon these two initiatives that I spoke about, but when you change from acute care to collaborative care, when you put more emphasis on healthy lives, on healthy individuals, you will see more people taking their health into the hospitals and having those conversations.

I'm not saying that is 100 percent the reason — but again, I can speak to that on the floor today — that our performance plan isn't to see how shiny and amazing the Yukon is; it is to identify exactly these things that the member opposite is now using as information in the Legislative Assembly to help in her pursuit of being a critic for these departments. So I commend her work, and I tell her that more will come when it comes to our performance plans. There will be more indicators. We are working toward incorporating performance measures and targets into our planning that will help us to make those informed decisions. We are going to be focusing in on those outcomes and those results, and that is the best way forward.

We are going to be continuing to build that capacity with these performance plans. A number of Canadian jurisdictions are working to integrate planning and budgeting with performance measures. We are not inventing this on our own. We are going out to other jurisdictions that are using exactly this particular index of well-being and using it, integrated with their budgeting plan, to say where we actually fit in the context of other jurisdictions. We are making these improvements, and it does take time. We are taking that time, and we are going to get it right and use that time to get it right. I understand that the member opposite wants that done now. Well, it's not done now. It is coming.

We do have more information on that.

Just for context, Mr. Chair, that Canadian Index of Wellbeing offers 64 indicators of well-being, 27 of which have comparable data for Yukon. This tool is helping us to adapt from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Better Life Index and has been used in a number of Canadian municipalities, sub-provincial agencies, and non-profit support.

This is a process that works, especially when you couple it with a budgetary system, and so we are going to continue down this pathway. I do share the member opposite's desire to have this completed now so that we can have a fulsome look and can move forward on using the statistically relevant information that a performance plan gives us to help us make sure that we are effectively maximizing the programs and services that Yukoners have come to know and rely on.

When it comes to Strategic Corporate Services — the member opposite listed some of the bullet points of what they do. There are 9.1 positions in that particular division which these topics would be related to. There is a director, two senior communication advisors, a public engagement senior advisor, two communications analysts, 1.1 FTE of a communications information officer, one online communications manager, and one manager of citizen

communications. These folks have been working very well and putting a lot of effort into both the new public engagement approach and also the visual identity and the website.

I won't go over the numbers of the visual identity website. We have already had those numbers for debate with the Leader of the Official Opposition.

I hope I helped the member opposite a bit in understanding where we are today and where we are going. There is more to come and there will be a public engagement process to the next level — the next step — and that will happen very soon this spring.

Ms. Hanson: I surely hope we are not talking about getting into a protracted public engagement process with respect to how the business of government is done — how this government will develop its performance plans so that it can come to this Legislative Assembly and say, "This is strategically what we plan to do over the next three years. This is the business plan for this year and these are the measurable outcomes that we have set — the targets we have set — by performance indicators." Surely to goodness this is not something that we're going to be waiting another one year or two or three years for. I'm looking for that kind of information in this Legislative Assembly. I have been asking this question for many years.

I understand and I appreciate that the minister opposite is willing to say that this is something that they are moving toward, but it has to have a finite target date. We can't simply say that we're going to go there. We have to say that we're going to be held to account that by the end of the 2019-20 fiscal year — that when the budget is tabled for the next fiscal year, it will have this information in it and it will have those performance indicators.

Mr. Chair, the minister also talked about — I appreciate that we have seen the application of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing over the course of many years in various projects that have been done in various sectors of this territory, particularly in the health field. It is an important counter-assessment to simply the economic or GDP assessment of whether or not and how well we are performing as a society and as a territory, but what we need to be assuring in those eight major domains that are in the Canadian Index of Wellbeing is how that is being incorporated into the performance plans — the business plans — for each of these government departments and how those ministers and deputy ministers are going to be held to account. It is not simply saying that there is this big long list of things that is kind of amorphous.

Accountability is being able to say, "This is what we said we were going to do and this is what we achieved" or "This is why we didn't achieve it." Sometimes that is quite reasonable. Not all things can be achieved within the timelines that we set, but we have to be able to say what the impediments were. Otherwise, we get into partisan bickering. We don't need that.

What I'm looking for is when the minister opposite anticipates the incorporation of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing into all departmental planning exercises — so those

eight major domains that he's outlined and the eight that go with each of those — whether it's the environment or the economy or any of the sectors, such as education, which is a big one — and where it will be reflected. Will it be reflected in the business plans for each of the departments — and when?

The second or third part of that is: What are the attendant costs of incorporating the Canadian Index of Wellbeing? He mentioned that this was something that they are adapting to the Yukon's context. There is going to be a requirement for adaptation because the parameters — and certainly some of the statistical parameters — when you look at it, some people might wonder whether or not we have the scale on some of those parameters to make it work well. I am interested in knowing how much is being invested in adapting the Canadian Index of Wellbeing to the Yukon context and when and how we shall see it reflected in the ongoing performance planning and reporting — actual performance planning and reporting — by government departments and agencies and the accountability mechanisms that feed back through the deputy to the minister, and the minister to this House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I really do appreciate the question from the Leader of the Third Party. This is something that I believe we need to do as we come of age as a government under the context of openness and accountability. What I can say — there are things of course that I can't say, because I would be breaking Cabinet confidence. If we haven't made the announcements yet, there's probably a reason why we haven't made those announcements yet. I will say that decisions are being made as we speak.

I can say that the strategy is to align strategic plans with the budget cycle and integrate risk management, performance measures — all to ensure value for money. That's the desire through these. We have had different internal reviews, and that's where we're being recommended — to present budget information in a way that reports on results achieved under the spending objectives.

From that, Finance and ECO are partnering and aligning those future strategic and operational plans with budget cycles, subject to the final approval of Cabinet and Management Board. Strategic plans already incorporate risk management; they incorporate the performance measures — all to extend as much as they possibly can in supports to improve and mature the quality of these measures. That will continue.

I think that's where we are right now — those supports and making sure that we improve and mature the quality of those measures. That's what the member opposite speaks of.

The budgetary information aligned with the strategic objectives — and also the core mandate, particularly of business units — this is the concept that will then be grafted onto other departments, and they will then — through a coordinated effort — work with these performance measures, work on reporting on results against milestones along the way, looking for specific outcomes identified for the strategic initiatives and also the costs for reaching those milestones.

All that work, once we go past this next phase of rolling out the performance plans, will absolutely happen in earnest within those departments. We are committed to moving forward on that evidence-oriented governance, including the use of those performance indicators. In doing so, my department is leading the implementation of that resource-based strategic planning.

I wish I could share more right now — I really do — but this work is not stalled, by any means. We're working on this project quite expeditiously, really. At our last bilateral conversation for the Executive Council Office, we had the representatives in from the department who were working on this. I have yet to see a more engaged group of individuals, passionate about what they're doing.

This goes past budgetary highlights of naming out the good things from the budget and this goes to the real meat and potatoes of where we stand as a society here in Yukon, here in Canada, and here in North America.

I do know that the Leader of the Third Party has been raising questions regarding our communications or how the government is communicating strategic objectives — we're hearing it again here today — and those performance measures as well. We had this conversation, I believe, the last time at Committee of Whole in general debate.

The model for integrating, budgeting, and strategic planning varies across jurisdiction. However, we believe the research is there to indicate as well that integrated plans, including performance measures, is a multi-year process and it does require significant shifts in organizational culture — I know that for a fact — and operations for that successful implementation.

As we move forward, the Executive Council Office is aiming for a collaborative approach to that strategic planning that the member opposite is asking for per department and making sure that those departments interact with the budgetary process, measuring progress toward those goals that are established through those performance indicators.

I would say that work to date by Executive Council Office suggests that an incremental approach may be needed as we get to the other departments. Some planning that occurs within YG includes performance measures, but there are also some inconsistencies within departments and across government as to how these measures link to departmental priorities and outcomes. Those are being worked out as we move into this next phase. That's not to say that other departments aren't working through different tables with my deputy minister so that each of these departments are filled in to what the long-term plan is. Again, this process does take time. I wish I could tell the member opposite when specifically the departments are going to be able to have the information accessible, ready, and available, but again, I don't have anything else to update the member opposite on as far as those timelines, other than to say this particular topic is definitely not one that is being left on a shelf. It's one that I'm extremely passionate about and interested in. That work is ongoing.

I can add that, in our budget, there is a line item for, I believe it is, \$78,000 that does support this index of well-being for this year, and so that money is definitely going to get spent.

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

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. Hanson: When we left off, I was getting quite pleasantly enthused about what I was hearing from the minister and it was one of those “hope springs eternal” kind of moments. The last part of his comments, I just want to clarify. I don’t want to be dashed, but the reality of this job is you have to ask the question that may dash your hopes.

When I was asking the questions with respect to the process he just outlined and the timelines he outlined with respect to planning that will have some indicators and performance measurement tools that will be made available that aren’t the sort of marketing piece for government but are the internal tools that will assist Members of the Legislative Assembly, as well as departments, in terms of accountability of ministers and senior officials — my question was premised on this being a rollout across government, that this is absolutely critical. And so I am hoping that I didn’t hear the minister say that this was something that ECO was working on because that would be dashing — “dashing” as not a good thing, not flash, not wonderful — but dashing of hopes.

Can the minister confirm that this is intended as a rollout across government and that we will see this kind of — to quote him — sort of steps toward modernizing the accountability of government?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will be very brief. Yes, this is a whole-of-government approach.

Ms. Hanson: I am very thankful to have that affirmed. I have one last question, because I have to — because it drives the Yukon NDP crazy: When will the Yukon font become sort of universally available? It is one thing to say that we have this new look, we have this new font, it’s great and it looks beautiful, and then when you send documents to us and they come out looking like “What? Where did that come from?”

How and when do ordinary citizens — maybe the NDP; I don’t know about the Official Opposition — have access to the government’s “new look” font?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The goal of consistency is applied to fonts as well. I’m not necessarily sure specifically which document the member opposite is quoting, but ultimately, the desire is to make sure that those fonts are all uniform among all the publications. I don’t have a timeline for that

specifically, but I will endeavour to look into that further to see if there are any specific timelines.

Ms. Hanson: It’s just one of those things. Any job that’s worth doing is worth doing well. So when you get ministerial statements or anything else that looked like they have the whole-of-government look and then come out for us looking like a 1982 typewriter, you go, “Hmm, cute — not quite that professional looking.”

I’m not going to belabour the fact that, when I go to Aboriginal Relations and I look at the link that says we’re migrating our content, when I actually look at the content there, I can tell you from a legislator’s point of view that this is useless information. When I look at the old information that says “Yukon Forum”, I can actually see the links to the activities. I don’t have to go through a big, long, convoluted page that tells me that maybe I can find, if I’m fishing, what I’m looking for there.

I’m asking, in terms of the kinds of accessibility to information, for assurances that, when we see these performance indicators and the new business plans that are being developed and the process, there will be some means for members of this Legislative Assembly to not have to go through the front of the house, the marketing piece, to ascertain where we’re going to find those.

If we look across the country, you’ll see different governments have different ways of putting out — these are business plans; this is how we’re going to do it; this is how you measure us; these are our performance indicators — and they’re separate from the nice look about: as citizens, this is where you go to get your health care card.

I’m looking for assurances that this kind of information is going to be made available to all of us, not just the opposition. Members opposite should want to be able to do that for their own departments quickly and easily.

Hon. Mr. Silver: A couple of different things: Two times ago when the member opposite got up and spoke about the consistency of fonts and was talking about the ministerial briefings — I believe that comes from our caucus, not necessarily the government, so that would be a little bit different of a consideration, I guess, compared to looking per department at the font.

So I am clear, I believe that is what she was holding up — a ministerial statement — so that would have come from our caucus office. That is just for clarification and is good to know. I will talk with the communications team about that — to take a look at the font and see if there is an issue there.

As far as the design on the website and how we are moving forward, our focus is on the people of the Yukon, not necessarily on legislative members of the Assembly. However, with that being said, if there are specific pieces that cannot be found and are not readily available, I would be happy to take those particular suggestions and those particular documentations that she is looking for — and again, because this is a process where we are prioritizing based on need, we will definitely look into how we make that readily available.

As the member opposite knows right now, the two different website — the old government website, and we have

yukon.ca being the newer website. We also have the older www.gov.yk.ca site that does have a lot of those pages designed more for someone who is doing research and that sort of thing.

If there is anything particular as we move forward, I will work with the member opposite to prioritize that. I do agree that it is frustrating if you are trying to get some information that you were able to get from a modus operandi that is no longer there. What percentage of this is user error — which is me, usually — and when is it just a matter of not looking in the right places? If it has just absolutely disappeared and is not available, that would be a concern for sure.

We are gathering feedback on the website. As users — not just necessarily as Legislative Assembly users, but as users, we start to get more and more familiar with the website; we are gathering those feedback forms. That has been completely successful. As I mentioned before, there were over 900 feedback forms, and they are continuing. We are using that to continue to adjust how we orientate our content to meet the public's needs.

Ms. Hanson: I just want to clarify: Does the minister agree that there are distinct needs and distinct differences between me as a citizen going to look to find out how I get XYZ government service and me as a Legislative Assembly member who is looking to get a clear understanding of what the Department of Tourism and Culture, for example, has as key activities — what it is going to be doing, how it's going to be doing that business plan, how it is laying it out, what its expenditures are against each of the line items, and how it is measuring that? That is a different kind of information than me asking how I get the Tourism Yukon information about travelling in the Yukon. I want to know if the minister and I are on the same page here at all.

I am asking as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, asking for a site — because we don't have it in the budget documents; there is nothing that lays out what the government's plans are. There is nothing except the rollup of the large numbers.

I can't even find in the Executive Council Office the detail that he gave today with respect to the Youth Directorate and the funding transfer payments that are being made there. It's not even in this budget document. That's what I'm talking about in terms of transparency and accountability. I go to yukon.ca and I can say, "Oh yes, youth — these are the things that are going on with youth." That's great, but it doesn't tell me why government is funding that or how they're determining how much they are giving them. That's what I'm looking for in terms of information. I think all of us should be looking for that as members of this Legislative Assembly — whether you're a minister, a back-bencher or a member of the opposition parties.

There are two different things here. We have the customer service front end that yukon.ca is quite readily morphing into, but on the back end, that's where the accountability is and that is the business of this Legislative Assembly. I'm not seeing it reflected, so I'm asking the

minister if he does see that these are different products — I guess that is the question I have.

Hon. Mr. Silver: There are a couple of things there, I guess. I don't think the member opposite is implying that we are decreasing the amount of content, because we are not. Pages being transferred over — there are going to be pages that are not going to be shared because of relevancy, but not because of content. It's not like the new website is going to be the old website lite. That is not the intent. We will have a modern website that allows us to coordinate modern technical resources per department through a website that allows for greater access to the general public.

That is not to say that this means that the information the member opposite is looking for is no longer there. That is not the way it is designed; however, the focus is different because we know that Members of the Legislative Assembly do have briefings. They have information line by line, they have the ability to meet and discuss these things on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, and they have other resources. So maybe some of the content that the member opposite is looking for is still part of that 25 percent as we migrate over.

Again, just for the record — so that we are still on the same page — the new website isn't less content. It might be harder to circumnavigate for the member opposite because it might be a different way of looking at it — or for the users who are used to a process that is more driven by a lens toward those public servants — but I would be happy to look at what specific pages of content the member opposite is looking for. She talked about the numbers for the Youth Directorate. Again, we provided that information to the member opposite as far as what funding obligations are there. I will take a look on the website to see if there's a lack of information — compared to the years as we went from an old website to a new website — but again, our priority is to design this website for usability by the general public — for people who need to quickly find the things that statistically have been accessed the most on our website, and that's our intent — to start with those processes.

Maybe the way that we look to the website and our needs for gathering information are different. I'm happy with the website, as far as how it's designed. I'm slowly figuring out how it thinks and how antiquated I think at times, that's for sure — or even how I've been kind of programmed to look at the website a certain way as far as — I used to want to get the departments right up front and take a look specifically at those departments and the subcategories. That's not necessarily how the site works. But again, I just want to make clear that there's not a lack of — as we transition from the old website to the new website, we're not getting less material there. We're getting rid of pages that are irrelevant or that actions have already been done or they're just not necessary now.

I don't know what else to say on this particular topic. If the member opposite would like to sit down with the officials who are working on this page, we could take a look at specifically what content is missing comparatively, but I do believe that we need a website that is accessible to the public and also to the public officials, as well as the Members of the

Legislative Assembly. I believe that the content is there. It's just there in a different format.

Ms. Hanson: At the risk — one more time — of belabouring the point, I was asking the minister — I'm not criticizing or suggesting that information is being denied or whatever in terms of the current information. We have been talking all afternoon — for the last hour — about the issues with respect to accountability, performance measurement, and performance planning — all that kind of stuff.

My question was: Did the minister agree with me that those are two different kinds of information? The front of the house for the citizens with respect to how you access services — and then I guess, to be very clear: Will the new performance plans — strategic business plans and performance indicators that will be completed and that will be the means for both the ministerial accountability within government — will those be published as they are in other jurisdictions? Will the strategic plans and the business plans for the Department of Tourism and Culture, for the Department of Justice, for the Department of Community Services — will they be accessible online? Not necessarily through this portal — but will they be available so that we can have one place to get that detailed level of information that is not contained in the rollups of the budget?

I have made it clear in budget briefings when I walk into a room and I have officials sitting across from me with a binder that is five inches thick which is the detailed budget briefing and I say to them, "Well, that's clearly very useful information. That would be helpful for us to have. Clearly those are not Cabinet confidences. That's just basically the line items that make the cumulative total that make up the branches, which make up the departmental budget." We don't have access to that. I don't necessarily want it, but I would like the summary that gives me the performance indicators that they'll be using to assess whether or not they've achieved the cumulative total of those line items.

My question really is: Does the minister accept that there is a difference in functionality of those two kinds of data sets that would be built into two different websites or sources for information?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think the member opposite lumped a few different things into that concept of — "What are we going to make available that, in the past, has not been available?" is the question — whether it be the performance plans specifically or other things that the member opposite asked about — moving forward in our desire to make things more accessible to the public. When it comes to the performance plans specifically and the index of well-being, decisions have not been made yet, as we get into this next phase, of how accessible these are or where they are going to be accessed. I wish I could have that information for the member opposite.

However, if you look to other jurisdictions that have used this index of well-being — that all becomes public information. Have we had the conversation of how each department is going to use that information and how they are going to make it readily available? We haven't had that

conversation yet. But, again, the whole point of having an index of well-being is to make this information publicly available. I don't have the specifics as to how that works, because that information is still being debated through the regular processes as we move toward a couple of initial steps of public engagement that will be coming up soon.

Ms. Hanson: I note that when I looked at the website for the Executive Council Office, the branches don't correspond to the branches that are in the budget document here. We have Aboriginal Relations, Government Internal Audit Services, Intergovernmental Relations, Major Projects Yukon, Science Advisor, Statistics, Youth Directorate, and the Yukon Water Board — we don't have Strategic Corporate Services in the website, which is interesting.

On the Science Advisor, one of the things that is quite notable is that the science advisor's website has an amazing array of information and I commend the folks in the science advisor's office — "folk" perhaps — maybe there is more than one because there is no clear indication of FTEs assigned to any of these either.

The question I have is that: The Office of the Science Advisor has a very wide scope, and one of the questions I have — again, going back to the whole-of-government approach and how information is integrated. There is, as I said, an amazing wealth of data and various initiatives that the Office of the Science Advisor is engaged in. My question is: What is the process for getting advice from the science advisor? Is their advice solicited based simply on the judgment of the minister, or do they comment at their discretion? How is the expertise of the Office of the Science Advisor rolled into the work of the Minister of Community Services, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — for sure the Minister of Highways and Public Works — and Health and Social Services? When I look at their website, there is work they have been doing that crosses all of those sectors.

Can the minister provide any examples from the last few years that were received from the science advisor and then incorporated into the actual work being conducted by a department?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Core to this particular branch of the department is the active pursuit, the gathering and the storage of scientific knowledge so that it can be easily transferred among all departments, shared and used to support that evidence-based decision-making that we speak of. Recognizing the equal importance of incorporating the traditional knowledge of the Yukon indigenous people in decision-making, this branch does an awful lot of work with Yukon First Nations to develop government-wide policies for our government as well to support the respectful use of traditional knowledge in our government's actions and in our decisions.

The main aim of the science strategy would be to establish that long-term approach to that development of science capacity in the Yukon and to maximize those social, economic, and environmental benefits of that research. Recent work that is under the science strategy would include anything

from initiating work on corporate guidelines for evidence-based decision-making — Yukon-specific — and ongoing coordination of the Scientific Community of Practice. The Scientific Community of Practice is called SCOPe. It has over 300 members who host luncheons and talks. The fall 2018 series provided northern and indigenous-led research projects and partnerships. In the past — going back to 2017, there was the launch of the compendium on the current research and monitoring website, which lists over 90 current research projects being conducted by or in partnership with the Yukon government. It does a lot of collaboration with the University of Alberta — or with Yukon College specifically — the Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research and also others across Canada and the Yukon. That is kind of an outline of how the particular department works.

We do have some line items on the science advisor positions that we can go through. Operation and maintenance of the Office of the Science Advisor is at \$477,000. We have a breakdown in costs there specific to operations, support, and personnel costs. All of the work under the science strategy engages interdepartmental committees to share this information across departments. So it's not necessarily a public engagement per se, but more making sure that our evidence-based decision-making has the scientific strategy developed inside of those internal committees to be shared as information for all those departments.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister, though that wasn't quite what I was asking.

With respect to the Youth Directorate, when I look at — again, there is no information, but the minister did break down the recipients of the funding from the Youth Directorate. Can the minister confirm whether or not the monies allocated to the essentially five entities that received or will receive funding this year is the same amount that they received the year prior and the year prior to that? I thought I heard him say that this is three-year funding, so has he asked these NGOs to accept three-year funding at a flat rate going forward?

Hon. Mr. Silver: 2017-18 saw a bump in those funding agreements on a three-year basis. So 2016-17 and 2015-2016, under the previous government, BYTE — Empowering Youth Society received \$220,000. We are now giving that NGO \$274,000, which is a substantial increase. It's the same with the Boys and Girls Club of Yukon. The previous government was giving out \$220,000 to that organization. We bumped that up for the three-year agreement each year from 2017-18 forward to 2019-20 to \$277,000 — so again, an increase from the previous government.

Also the Youth of Today Society — again, this represents a substantial increase to that budget. The previous government was giving \$220,000 per year. Our three-year commitment as of 2017-18 was \$271,000 as well. Those numbers do stay the same for those three years right across, but there was a substantial boost from those 2015-16 years.

Ms. Hanson: So if I understand this correctly, the government rebased when they got elected in 2016 and has held it static for the three-year funding agreements that these NGOs have.

Can the minister clarify — the Youth of Today Society, from observation, has morphed from what its original function and objectives were. Can the minister indicate what the funding being provided to the Youth of Today Society in 2019-20 is versus what it was in 2016, when they took over?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I really do appreciate the question from the member opposite. I completely agree that the Youth of Today Society has really done a tremendous job of expanding their presence and working with our youth, providing a safe and nurturing environment and programming for high-risk youth ages 15 to 24 in Whitehorse. We have increased their funding from previous governments. The Youth of Today Society signed a three-year contract — so every year for three years, starting in 2017-18 — they were receiving \$271,000 for each year.

We were approached also by the folks who run the society, asking for contributions to *Shākāt* specifically — the journal that they've resurrected in fine form. As this is a media presentation, we're not at liberty to be putting money toward that. However, the Department of Economic Development did provide funding for a business case for that journal — so not only through our department of Executive Council Office increasing the operation and maintenance money that goes to the society itself, but to speak to some of these extra initiatives that are happening because of the society — whether it be the journal or the millennial town hall, which is an excellent opportunity for youth to ask questions of political figures like me and others, and then subsequently after that, six months later or — I think it was a little bit more from that — the tables get turned and we get to ask those questions of the youth — extremely important endeavours that this particular society is completing for our at-risk youth.

Ms. Hanson: That gives me heart because then I think that if I see the government's engagement and willingness to fund a radically different Youth of Today Society from what it was, say, eight, six or four years ago, then I would see an openness and a willingness for this government to look at a radically transformed Many Rivers society when they do come back to the government or the community counselling services entity because they do provide and perform those essential services — or will be.

Mr. Chair, when we look at the Executive Council Office's website, there's a page on it that details the cost, destination and the purpose of ministerial travel. When we look at the travel statements — keep in mind, Mr. Chair, that I'm not questioning the merits of any one of the trips that are detailed there — but it does raise some interesting questions about the processes associated with ministerial travel.

For example, some trips are attended by the minister responsible alone, while others can include the minister's EA or chief of staff, et cetera. My question is: Is there a policy related to ministerial travel — for example, something that says when it is appropriate to take an aide? Also, I am assuming that this government receives more invitations to conferences and events than they can actually attend — by that I mean that there are likely events that are turned down. I

am wondering if there is a rationale or policy that is referred to in trying to decide which offers to take up and which to turn down. Is assessment based on a potential return-on-investment-type metric — like what Yukon is going to get out of that?

My office also noted that on one occasion last July, the Member for Porter Creek Centre took the place of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on a trip to the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region forum.

Can the Minister responsible for Executive Council Office explain how this works? Can anyone be deputized to attend a conference in the place of a government minister? Does it have to be a Member of the Legislative Assembly or does it have to be a member of the Liberal caucus? These are all questions we're interested in, in terms of government and ministerial travel.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will work backward. I apologize — I was talking with my deputy minister, so if I miss anything on the question, I would ask the member opposite to get up and ask that question again.

As far as ministerial travel, or non-ministerial travel — we are talking specifically about PNWER. We have changed the representation so that it is no longer the minister who is the representative at PNWER, but the member who travelled is now the member for PNWER and will continue down that path as our representative. Great conversations with our Alaskan counterparts — re-solidifying how important those conversations are with our partners in the United States. Again, it is great to see a continued effort here from our government to make sure that there is representation on that forum.

When it comes to ministerial travel and expenses, I do want to take some time to talk about why that budget increased. If we take a look over the years, this budget hasn't moved since 2007-08. Back then, and up until this year, the total budget for travel for ministers, Cabinet, and staff was \$175,000.

The Yukon Party, in 2012-13, went over that by \$81,000. They went over it every year for five years to the tune of — over five years, they spent an extra quarter-million dollars in travelling. When we looked at these numbers, we realized that this number is too low for historical travel. In the year of 2015-16, the Yukon Party went over that budget to the tune of \$95,000.

If you take a look at all of these overages every year, it tells us that this line item being so low — \$175,000 — is not a good indicator of the actual cost of doing business, and so we did increase that. The Yukon Party has used that as a meme for the whole session, but it is interesting to know that they went over that budget every single year of the last five years that they were in government. The only difference with this government is that we are accounting for those overages by putting a number that actually makes more sense in that line item.

I will ask the member opposite if there was more to her question. I apologize — as I said, we were having a conversation as she spoke and I apologize.

Ms. Hanson: The difficulty is that, as a member of the opposition, I don't have access to that line item so I don't know what the line item is. What I do know is what is available on the website. When you add it up, you see the cumulative total. If the minister could state what the line item per year is — because we do know that in the first two years of their mandate, this government spent over a half-million dollars on ministerial travel. That includes the cost of every trip that is so far posted, including the cost of bringing along caucus aides.

What I had said to the minister was that — the website does have a page that details the costs, destinations, and purpose of ministerial travel. I had said that I didn't question the merit of any of the trips, but it did raise questions that I was asking with respect to who makes the decision. We see that some trips are attended by the minister responsible alone; others include the minister's executive assistant or chief of staff, et cetera — so we wanted to know: Is there is a policy related to ministerial travel — something that says when it's appropriate to take an aide?

We also wanted to know what process of assessment, if any — were there any guidelines that would indicate that there was a return on investment? Clearly it is not a return on investment to attend PNWER. We are going to send a back-bencher. That's great. We have a face and ears there — perfect. But a judgment call was made that it wasn't worth a minister attending. So is there a rationale or some way of determining that?

Absent that information, I would appreciate knowing what the line item forecast for this year for ministerial travel is. Based on the website, it says that they spent a half-million dollars in the first two years. That compares to what was posted by the previous government from April 2014 to March 2016 of \$230,000 for that travel period.

I'm just curious as to the structure of what I was asking there.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is only quoting that out-of-territory expense for both the Yukon Party government and our government. If you take a look in that year — she mentioned the number of \$231,000 for the previous government — that was just out-of-territory travel. If you add to that almost \$40,000 for in-territory travel as well, that number would then come up to \$270,000 — again, \$95,000 overbudgeted from the amount that was budgeted year after year, which was \$175,000.

So our estimates for this year — we believe that in-territory, we will be spending \$65,000 and out-of-territory, we will be spending \$210,000, for a total of \$275,000. Again, if you take a look at the historic averages over the years, that is a more realistic amount.

What we are doing that the previous government didn't do is that we are posting expenses online like they did, but we enhanced that service in 2017 in three different ways: by including Cabinet staff expenses; by providing information about the purpose of the trip; and by organizing the information by trip. Ministerial and Cabinet expenses are posted online once all invoices and expense claims are

submitted and reviewed by the Executive Council Office. This does take some time. It takes about three months to get that information readily available.

As far as policy — policy is changing. In our first year of government, of course to get a new vision and mandate out there, we did spend more than the budgeted amounts. Since then, working to make sure that we streamline those trips is definitely important to us. We have internal policies. I wouldn't say that they are government policies; they are more caucuses trying to spend their money most efficiently. Ministers now know what the total is. We believe that, for the first time, this line item of \$275,000 is the sufficient amount that actually does reflect the travel.

As I said, in the past — since 2012 forward — no government hit that number that was budgeted for since 2007; therefore, we need to change that number. We have changed it to an amount. We have told all ministers that they have their quantum from that and are expected to spend within those means. That would mean that if you want to go to more events, you have to go with less people. Again, it is making sure that we go to the places where we need to go. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources needs to do promotion and there are particular trips that we have to go on, but it's a matter of how we make sure that we're doing that — in partnership with the Yukon Mining Alliance and in partnership with other stakeholders — to make sure that we are then able to go to other places as well.

My trips to Ottawa, again, are extremely important. I am happy to see the fruits of that labour in the last budget from this government as they go into election mode. We have done an awful lot of travelling with the other premiers as well from the Northwest Territories and Nunavut to discuss a joint vision for Canada's north. We also met with the Prime Minister and federal ministers jointly to advance those territorial interests — infrastructure funding flexibility, the carbon pricing, and the Arctic and northern policy framework.

Again, as I mentioned, I have had the honour and privilege to attend with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources as we opened the Toronto Stock Exchange with representatives of the Yukon's mineral exploration industry. I delivered a keynote speech at the Empire Club on topics of reconciliation in the 21st century and the economy. I wasn't going to go to the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame dinner for the induction of Kate Carmack, but it was actually industry that said, "You should be there" and it was the representatives of Victoria Gold who gave up their seat at the head table so that I was there, because it is important for industry to have the political representation there for this community. We agreed, and I really appreciate Mr. McConnell giving up his chair for me at an extremely important and historic dinner and engagement.

Suffice to say again — we believe that we have the number right this year. We have instructed all the ministers that this is the number, and so we are all engaged in each department to make sure that we take a look at the table, take a look at the year and decide, "What are those important engagements?" Of course, FPTs are extremely important

because they come with agreements with the federal government. Yukon Days are extremely important as we work on reconciliation files with the First Nation governments — to have everybody in Ottawa. Those are extremely important trips. Finally, we have a number that reflects the importance of these travels.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that clarification with respect to the line item from the ministerial travel at 275,000. The last question on that, before I turn it to my colleague from Porter Creek: What is the budget for Yukon Days, all in?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Just to clarify, I was looking at 2018-19 estimates — sorry — when I was giving the numbers for ministerial travel. To clarify and to correct the record, travel in the Yukon is \$83,400 and travel outside of Yukon for this year — 2019-20 mains — is \$210,000. I apologize. I was looking at the wrong line of all those line items.

I assume the member opposite is asking for Roundup 2019 numbers. So the ministerial travel for 2019 Roundup was \$2,039.01 and Cabinet support staff was \$10,372, for a total cost of \$12,411.01.

Ms. Hanson: I was asking for the all-in cost for Yukon costs with respect to Yukon Days. So it was \$12,000 — there were no other costs associated with that — no hospitality and no other costs that would have been incurred by the Yukon government in relation to Yukon's presence in Ottawa over a number of days with respect to Yukon Days?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So again, for Yukon Days — which was December 2018 — ministerial travel and Cabinet support staff costs a total of \$20,224.71.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Chair, I'm clarifying — does that include all hospitality costs for those events?

Hon. Mr. Silver: That covers all ministerial travel and staff accommodations. Again, the member opposite knows that we do work with the Yukon Mining Alliance, so they will have expenses and a budget there. We also do provide some financial support for First Nation chiefs. I don't have that number in front of me right now. That is not budgeted here through Executive Council Office.

Ms. Hanson: In the interest of a whole-of-government approach, could we have the minister ask his colleagues to table that information on behalf of the whole of government for members of the opposition?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, to clarify: Which number?

Ms. Hanson: My question was simply about the all-in cost associated with these travels to Ottawa — so Yukon Days, whatever the big do is in February — associated with hospitality, travel for all costs that Yukon pays out of Yukon government sources to facilitate the participation, presence and whatever engagement goes on around those activities — a simple exercise. It's a simple exercise of knowing — it is Yukon revenue and Yukon expenditure. I'm asking for the government, which talks about a whole-of-government approach, to tell this Legislative Assembly — or table it in a legislative return — what the expenditures are.

If it's coming from EMR, if it's coming from Economic Development, if it's coming from ECO, if it's coming from

Tourism — it doesn't really matter. At the end of the day, it's coming from the same source — the consolidated revenue fund. I want to know. I would like to have that tabled by legislative return. If the minister could do so — not necessarily the Minister responsible for the Executive Council Office, in this case — perhaps the Minister of Finance has an interest in this.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I didn't mean to offend the member opposite. When she says an all-in number, does that include the Yukon Mining Alliance? Does that include other organizations? Because those costs would be based upon the agreements for those, and I don't have those numbers available.

What I can endeavour to do is get the costs number through Aboriginal Relations and the money that we spend on getting chiefs to Yukon Days. We can work with EMR to see what their complete costs are outside of the travel — which is what we were talking about — travel. I guess I apologize to the member opposite that I didn't veer from the travel numbers, because I think that's what we were talking about — but yes, we can endeavour to get that information to the member opposite.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for his responses and to the officials for their support for the minister today. I believe my colleague has a number of other questions.

Ms. Van Bibber: I also extend my welcome to the officials from the department at this late hour. I have just a few questions on aboriginal affairs.

During the briefing, we were told about — and I believe the minister called it a reset group. Can you tell the House who makes up the reset group and how often they meet — those who are doing the collaborative framework between YESAA and the First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, I assume the member opposite is asking about the YESAA reset oversight group. I'm getting a verbal cue that is what she's asking about. So we did go over this earlier — that reset oversight group is a joint effort between the Government of Canada, Yukon, and First Nations to collaboratively seek efficiencies and other improvements to the YESAA process. To answer your question, the membership is tripartite.

As far as regular meetings — I wouldn't say that they necessarily have regular meetings, but they do coordinate regular meetings based upon topics. With the agreement to priorities and the work plan in March 2019, with Canada and the First Nations already previously agreeing, that now sets the stage for regular meetings for these priorities and for that work plan. That work plan will guide the next year of the oversight group's activities, and meetings will be regularized based upon the priorities of that work plan.

Ms. Van Bibber: I had asked: Who makes up the group? I would also like to ask: Who chooses the members and how many are in this reset group?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So again, this oversight group and others — this is all the result of the YESAA reset memorandum of understanding to demonstrate that genuine commitment from all of these parties. Just a little bit more of

that background information as far as the regular nature of these meetings — commitments were made and so we prioritized. We spoke about that earlier — about the section-49.1-like solutions to challenges on the project amendments and on those renewals. The priority document proposed work on over a dozen specific items — we went over that as well — put into three different categorizations of a revitalized YESAA forum and again certainty in that consultation and processes for clauses of YESAA that have been little-used in the past and also that piece of the policy development and targeted technical working committees.

That oversight group met with YESAB on August 9, 2018 to initiate that conversation about its participants and their roles. This meeting was extremely positive and productive. YESAB then sent a letter to the oversight group chair in September 2018, and that input was incorporated into the priorities document.

Industry spoke of a collaborative framework in 2017 and definitely is there waiting for that response — including how they would have an opportunity to represent their interests at the reset MOU table.

The oversight group's engagement with industry did take place in April 2018. Officials from the Yukon government and the Council of Yukon First Nations updated the Yukon Chamber of Mines in August 2018 and also in December 2018. There is engagement with the industry proponents with the oversight group.

We do have four members who are on this tripartite group: We have a regional director general, which is Ms. Dionne Savill from Canada; from the Yukon government, we have Mr. MacDonald from Aboriginal Relations; and we also have two First Nation representatives. Each party picked their own representatives.

Ms. Van Bibber: Who does this group respond to with their final deductions on the framework? How long does Aboriginal Affairs expect this group to continue?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, I guess the best way of describing who they report to is that each of these particular members then report back to the governments that appointed them.

As far as moving forward, the next steps would be — this is ongoing work. It is not like they are just going to finalize a document. It is ongoing work. The next step is going to be doing that engagement with industry, and those conversations are ongoing. We are getting closer to that stage where we will be able to have that engagement and go past some of these preliminary meetings that were had with industry back in August 2018 and in December 2018.

Ms. Van Bibber: Another group called the Yukon Forum secretariat has a senior committee comprised of senior government officials and EAs of First Nations. If I understood correctly from the briefing, the objective of the secretariat is to better align government-to-government relationships and ideas.

Can the minister tell us how many times this group meets? Is it similar to the Yukon Forum — four times a year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The secretariat that the member opposite is speaking of usually has monthly meetings. Of course, the member opposite knows that we have committed to revitalizing the Yukon Forum as a place to collaboratively work with Yukon First Nations and I'm very proud to say that we have continued to fulfill that commitment. The next Yukon Forum, which is the work of the secretariat coordinating all the efforts of governments together, will take place May 30 and will be the tenth Yukon Forum since 2017.

That ongoing level of collaboration between the government, the secretariat, and Yukon First Nation governments is unprecedented. I want to give a shout-out to all the good people of the department for all the work they do — and Aboriginal Relations in general, as well. We are achieving meaningful change and real results that we can continue to build on. We are continuing to strengthen the government-to-government relationships through those frank and solutions-focused conversations with our First Nation partners regarding issues and shared priorities. We have said this a few times — the Grand Chief and I started with some items that we could work on together that were the next obvious steps to get reconciliation moving forward. By allowing those conversations to start with some easier wins, by the time we got to the forum in May, we really had solidified many conduits of communication that are working on some files that have lain dormant for way too long.

Those conversations are very, very difficult. Do we agree all the time? No, we do not agree all the time. But the ability to have so many working groups and the Executive Committee working together — we believe that this pathway forward is moving more quickly than in other jurisdictions in Canada when it comes to relations with our First Nation governments in Yukon.

Through that action plan, we have signed an agreement to clarify how resource royalties will be shared under chapter 23 of the final agreements. We have advanced the mining MOU and supported the development of the implementation of the YESAA reset MOU. We have started a review of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board to assess the effectiveness of current mechanisms. We have created the new Joint Senior Executive Committee that I have mentioned a few times on my feet today in the Legislative Assembly. This supports a whole-of-government approach to collaboration with the First Nation governments as well. We have engaged with the federal government in a more unified and strategic way when we go to Ottawa.

Basically most of the work — the secretariat does an awful lot of organization of this work that I'm talking about — again, the Yukon Forum being established in 2004 under the memorandum of understanding. In 2005, the *Cooperation in Governance Act* was passed to formalize that relationship.

Under that act, a senior officials committee is responsible for recommending a shared agenda for those meetings, and the secretariat works alongside the government officials from all these governments in accomplishing that shared agenda. As I mentioned, they meet monthly.

Since we revitalized the forum in 2017, through the signing of the *Working Together* declaration, Yukon Forum members have approved a list of joint priorities and also an action plan. The list of joint priorities was May 2017 and the action plan was September 2017. That action plan outlines those next steps that need to be taken on a number of topics that are very important to Yukoners. It was last updated in September 2018 to add fish and wildlife into that as well.

Again, all these activities — the secretariat works hand in hand in their role to coordinate a lot of these efforts that I have mentioned here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly today.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.