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HANSARD

Wednesday, October 11, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Fall Sitting

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Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation
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Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Pauline Frost	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, October 11, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the International Day of the Girl Child

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to the United Nations International Day of the Girl Child. As a former girl child, along with seven other sisters, and also as a sister, that was one of the most important roles of my life. As a daughter, as a granddaughter, as a mother, as an auntie to 62 nieces and nephews, I take my role very seriously as Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate. I stand here today with such pride and honour to represent the Government of Yukon in this portfolio.

I would like to acknowledge our staff of the Legislative Assembly have lit up the main sign for the administration building today in pink in recognition of this important day.

The United Nations has declared October 11 as International Day of the Girl Child. This year, the International Day of the Girl Child will focus on the theme, "EmPOWER Girls: Before, during and after crises".

We are proud to recognize this day by celebrating the creative spirit and achievements of Yukon girls and the advancements that they have made toward gender equality in the territory.

Since 2012, October 11 has been marked as International Day of the Girl Child. The date aims to highlight and address the needs and challenges girls face while promoting girls' empowerment and the fulfillment of their human rights.

This day also serves to foster a great understanding of girl-specific issues. For example, throughout 2017, we have seen growing conflict, instability and inequality with 128.6 million people this year expected to need humanitarian assistance due to security threats, climate change and poverty. More than three-quarters of those who have become refugees or who are displaced from their homes are women and children. Among these, women and girls are among the most vulnerable in times of crisis.

We humbly recognize that we are extremely privileged here in Yukon by not having to focus on the conflict aspect of the day in the same way as some of our international neighbours do. However, in Canada, young women from ages 15 to 19 experience nearly 10 times the rate of dating violence as young men. Nearly 70 percent of victims of Internet intimidation are women or young girls. Girls and young women are nearly twice as likely as young men and boys to

suffer certain mental health issues, such as depression, and issues of body image and self-esteem remain prevalent for young girls.

In September, the Yukon Territory hosted a Daughters of the Vote initiative, and I am proud to also acknowledge and highlight a small sampling of Yukon groups that work specifically with or for young women and girls. At the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, there is the GNorth Network, which is a group of Yukoners who do programming for girls in communities around the territory. Bringing Youth Towards Equality is hosting "MOVE! Youth Ending Violence" workshops. This is a series of workshops that will take place this month. Youth for Lateral Kindness is a business based out of Whitehorse, Yukon, which offers youth lateral violence workshops and blanket exercises. A team of young indigenous women encourages healthy behaviours and reconciliation among Yukoners through the services they offer. These young women showcase action, positive change and that girls are being taken seriously for their contributions.

In closing, I encourage all Yukon girls to reach their highest aspirations and for us, as members of this Legislative Assembly, to support gender equality in everything that we do.

Ms. McLeod: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to today as the sixth annual United Nations International Day of the Girl Child. This day was initiated to bring focus to the need to address the challenges girls face, promote girls' empowerment and the fulfillment of their human rights.

It serves as a reminder of the very broad range of issues that girls continue to face around the world, especially through adolescence. We must acknowledge these issues, such as dating violence, Internet intimidation, body image disorders, mental health, and bullying. Although many of these issues are not gender-specific, they are statistically more heavily weighted as being issues faced by girls and young women, and we must also recognize that these issues often happen simultaneously.

We need to work to address these issues and end stigmas around them, and we must continue to promote gender equality among our youth, to instill positivity in our girls and remind them to hold each other up and not bring each other down, to remind them of the importance of pride, strength, love, self-esteem and self-worth. We must raise our girls to stand up for themselves and to be proud of their achievements.

We, the grown women and men, must all be positive role models to work together to promote gender equality.

Ms. Hanson: I too rise on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party to pay tribute to the International Day of the Girl Child. The focus of this day is on victims of armed conflicts or natural disasters and empowering young girls in the aftermath of a crisis during war or a natural disaster. One of the most critical needs is the provision of, or access to, clean drinking water.

While watching the news last night, I was inspired by a young girl from Manitoba, Autumn Peltier, a member of the Wikwemikong First Nation. Autumn is still a teen but has been advocating and speaking out for the protection of water and the universal right to clean drinking water since she was eight years old.

This young woman, this girl child, has spoken out in her home province, spoken with the Prime Minister and spoken internationally about protecting the one resource every person in the world relies upon — clean drinking water.

Her work has been recognized internationally. She is the only Canadian who is in the running for the prestigious International Children's Peace Prize. This prize is awarded annually to a child who fights courageously for children's rights and who has shown a commitment to combatting problems that millions of children face worldwide. A past winner is Malala Yousafzai, a young woman to whom we have paid tribute in this Legislature. I would suggest Autumn Peltier certainly meets the mark.

Mr. Speaker, there are many young girls in our communities, in our country and around the world who are speaking up, becoming leaders and showing the way. Our girl children face many odds, not the least of which is the confidence to believe that they — like Autumn, like Malala — can be anything. So whether it is a symbolic gesture of lighting the sign in front of our building in recognition of International Day of the Girl Child or demonstrating to girls, like those who sat in this Legislative Assembly during a recent day-long gathering with female political leaders from across Canada and Yukon, who revealed to us that they — unlike 70 percent of boys who were asked — didn't think they could become politicians, didn't think they would be good enough or qualified enough because they were girls.

Our job is to ensure that these girl children have the support, the education, the safe communities and the opportunities to continue to grow and to become our future leaders.

Applause

In recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Hon. Ms. Frost: I rise on behalf of the Liberal Party to pay tribute to October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, it is estimated that one in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. It is the most common cancer among Canadian women and it is the second-leading cause of death from cancer. On average, 26,300 will be diagnosed with breast cancer — 72 women a day — and 5,000 of these women will die from breast cancer, roughly 14 every day.

In Yukon, about 25 women are diagnosed with breast cancer and, as in Canada, it is the second-highest cause of cancer deaths. With statistics such as these, it would be hard for me to find a member in this House who hasn't had a friend, a family member or a co-worker who has not been impacted by this disease. As disheartening as these numbers sound, the incidence of breast cancer death has decreased since the 1990s and has remained level since around 2013.

While much work has been done to increase the rates of detection and the treatment of breast cancer, there is still much work to do, which is why organizations such as the Canadian Cancer Society encourages donations to help fund research to outsmart this disease.

Work happens on many fronts to combat breast cancer. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the volunteers behind last week's fundraising efforts in the Mardi Bra event. Mardi Bra is a fundraiser for Karen's Fund. Karen Wiederkehr was a young Yukon woman and a wife who died of breast cancer in 2000. She wanted her legacy to be a quiet, comfortable place for cancer patients to undergo chemotherapy treatments. Her husband Jack made that wish come true with Karen's Room, a comfortable room in the Whitehorse General Hospital for patients to receive their chemotherapy treatments. In that room, you will find a beautiful art piece donated by my sister, Shirley, in recognition and in honour of our Auntie Minnie and sister Sharon. These are people who directly impacted us and, as a contribution to creating awareness, we all need to do our part.

Karen's other wish was to find a way to help those women who were experiencing financial stresses while undergoing treatment for breast cancer because, while Karen's family was financially able to deal with all of these things that go with having a breast cancer diagnosis, not everyone is as fortunate. While health insurance covers treatment and travel, things like childcare cost — even costs of kennelling a dog — when leaving to travel or when having to travel to medical treatment outside of the territory are additional costs. Karen's Fund provides a \$1,000 grant that can be used for anything. The Mardi Bra evening of music and dancing with a silent auction is a fun evening to raise money for a serious cause. This past weekend, \$12,000 was raised, which means financial assistance for 12 women.

I would like at this time to acknowledge the member opposite, Kate White, MLA for Takhini-Kopper King, for her many years of dedication and service to the fundraiser and the fundraising efforts — I've been told she has been a real asset to the organization — and people like you and others in our community who contribute. This is clearly an asset we all need to contribute to. The Mardi Bra fundraiser, as well as other initiatives, such as Run for Mom and fundraisers held by the Canadian Cancer Society, show how community involvement can help support women and their families as they battle breast cancer.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Ciara Stick and Val Pike for their contribution as well. Thank you so much.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Canada. Breast cancer is one of the highest-diagnosed types of cancer in women over 20 years of age. It is reported that one in nine, or one in eight, women will develop breast cancer at some point in their life.

Researchers estimate that 230 men will develop breast cancer in 2017.

In the Yukon, there is a large chance you know and love someone who has been diagnosed with breast cancer. In small communities such as ours, it is true that we are all affected by the disease. In the face of breast cancer, among other things, Yukoners band together in unique and thoughtful ways to make the disease a little easier on those we love. Mardi Bra is one of those most-anticipated and exciting fundraising events to complement Breast Cancer Awareness Month. It features dancing, entertainment, food, music and costumes. A large portion of the proceeds goes directly to Karen's Fund, which was created in 2000 in memory of Karen.

After her death from breast cancer, her husband Jack created the fund that gifts money to Yukon women diagnosed with breast cancer. He also helped create Karen's Room at the Whitehorse General Hospital, a beautiful, quiet space for patients undergoing chemotherapy.

Last Saturday, Yukoners came together to show their support and raise money. It was a wonderful way to get out for an evening of fun while directly supporting members of our community who are in need.

I would like to thank the organizers of Mardi Bra, Karen's Fund, staff at the Whitehorse General Hospital and, in particular, the staff at Karen's Room and, of course, health practitioners throughout all our communities. Your dedication to treating patients and families with kindness and grace is so important to all those affected. Thank you.

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

There are so many reasons why living in the Yukon is the greatest. There is the scenery, the air, the wildlife, but, most importantly, it is the people. We're fortunate to be surrounded by the go-getters — people who see a problem or a need and, instead of sitting back, wringing their hands in despair, they face the problem head-on and figure out the best way to help. Breast cancer has been one of the rallying cries in the territory.

Although I have never had the privilege or joy of knowing Karen, many Yukoners are still affected by her legacy and, based on that legacy, I know that Karen thought about more than herself and, based on her own lived experiences, there were two things that she wanted to leave behind to make the journey and the battle easier for those facing breast cancer who came after her.

She wanted to make sure that no other shared her experience of receiving chemotherapy in the pre-op or emergency rooms at Whitehorse General Hospital in the midst of the hustle and bustle. She wanted to leave a space that would provide chemo patients and their families a quiet, comfortable, dedicated place to receive those treatments. With the help of the construction community, Karen's husband Jack made that dream come true with the creation of Karen's Room at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Karen was also concerned about the additional costs of illness. While financially secure herself, she feared that others

less fortunate could not afford some of the extra costs not covered by the public health care system. She wanted a way to help ease the financial stress that many breast cancer patients face while undergoing treatment. The Karen J. Wiederkehr Memorial Fund, or Karen's Fund, was created in October 2000. Since its inception 17 years ago, the fund has helped hundreds of women, and now men, affected by breast cancer with a one-time, no-questions-asked gift of \$1,000 to those diagnosed with breast cancer. Mr. Speaker, breast cancer knows no gender.

Thanks to the visionaries behind Mardi Bra, Karen's Fund is a living, breathing entity. The fundraising efforts by the Mardi Bra team reflect the woman herself — dynamic, fiery, fiercely organized, and creative.

For nearly a decade, an ever-evolving group of women throws a party every October or sometimes, in this case, every second October to raise awareness and money for Karen's Fund. These events can't happen without the generous support of the community, volunteers and those who attend. Val Pike, who we are lucky enough to have in the gallery, and Pat Living have been organizers since the very beginning. This year they were joined by possibly the biggest board that we have ever had — Lindsey Beal, Alex Hill, Brianna Bremner, Hilary Simpson, Ciara Stick, Alison Morham, Annaka Sarek, Meagan Lang, Melanie Sherud, Sarah May, Stephanie Pike, and me — because Mr. Speaker, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and, to quote a superhero friend of mine who shared her journey conquering breast cancer on Facebook, "You're never too young or too old. Check yourself and do it often. If you find anything or have questions, talk to your doctor."

Mr. Speaker, we wish to thank all those who donated their time and energy supporting those facing the challenge of breast cancer. We want to thank those who donate their hard-earned money to support Yukon women and men dealing with breast cancer.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. White: I am just elaborating on what the minister said: We have in our midst two people who work very, very hard at making sure that the Mardi Bra event goes on. You might recognize Val Pike from everything she volunteers for, but Mardi Bra and the Run for Mom are two of the biggest ones. Sitting next to her is Ciara Stick, and I am really glad that Ciara is here because she recently faced breast cancer. It was through her bravery and her constant — every update she had for almost a year reminded women and men to check themselves. She bravely shared the ins and outs, and it wasn't pretty. She talked about the pain and she talked about the fear, and then she talked about the relief of being on the other side. It's really exciting because Ciara was involved with Mardi Bra prior to diagnosis, and she was one of the recipients of Karen's Fund. So to have you two in the gallery today is really lovely. Ciara, of course we are really excited that you have gone to the other side. Val, thank you so much for

making sure that Karen's memory lives on. It has been a pleasure and thank you for being here.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to confirm that radon testing will now be included in the list of requirements for licensing of childcare centres and day homes, pursuant to recommendation 3 of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, second report, dated September 2017, on the public proceedings of the Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — 2017: Capital Asset Management — Yukon, dated March 2017.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Public airports legislation

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Yukoners learned that the Yukon Liberals are bringing forward a piece of legislation that will give themselves the power to implement an airport tax. The minister claims that he doesn't want an airport tax, but actions clearly speak louder than words. If the minister does not want one, then why did he have a piece of legislation written that includes the ability for the Liberals to implement an airport tax? If the Liberals are sincere that they do not want this, then they should have no problem amending the legislation to remove that power. Will the minister agree to amend the legislation to remove that power — yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question. The question of fees is interesting coming from the members opposite. They were responsible for the largest airport-fee grab in recent memory. They imposed fees at the airport totalling more than \$1.5 million since 2013 — \$1.5 million — taken from the hard-working Yukoners who live here in the territory.

The Liberal government has made our aviation industry more competitive and cheaper to operate. We have lowered their taxes. Let me repeat that: our aviation industry and others are now paying less, thanks to this Liberal government.

Let's correct the record: the Yukon Party imposed fees at the airport, unilaterally, without consultation; we lowered taxes to business, helping our aviation industry and others. The record is clear, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hassard: The minister has put forward a piece of legislation that gives him the power to implement an airport tax. It makes us wonder why the Liberals want this power, and are they intending to use it?

I'll try again: very simply, will the minister agree to amend the legislation to remove any powers that give the Liberals the ability to implement an airport tax? A simple yes or no would be great.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We in this Liberal government will not be imposing an airport improvement fee. We will not be raising fees to the industry — clear.

Mr. Hassard: That's great to hear; however, as I said before, actions speak louder than words. So if this minister is saying that they're not going to raise any fees or create any new airport taxes, will the minister then please amend the legislation and remove any ability for the government to bring forward an airport tax?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite and I are in agreement: actions speak louder than words. This Liberal government has reduced taxes to businesses in the territory, making it easier for them to operate, making them more competitive. The members opposite raised fees on Yukoners. They took \$1.5 million out of Yukoners' pockets by raising fees at the airport unilaterally without any consultation.

Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words. The record is clear.

Question re: Yukon Hospital Corporation funding

Mr. Cathers: In the spring, we raised concerns about the adequacy of funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The Minister of Health and Social Services told this House that the hospital had asked for \$5.2 million more in O&M funding than the government provided. The Premier defended the decision to only provide the Hospital Corporation with a one-percent increase in O&M funding. One percent for the hospital is simply not enough.

Whitehorse General Hospital is facing overcrowding due to lack of continuing care beds, increases in the cost of chemotherapy, and increased volume at the lab and medical imaging, to name but a few sources of cost pressure. In the spring, the Premier told us that they would provide the hospital more funding if it was needed.

My question for the Premier is this: Is there an increase in O&M money for the Yukon Hospital Corporation in the supplementary budget and, if so, how much?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. With respect to the Hospital Corporation's supports, we are working diligently with the Hospital Corporation and the chair of the hospital board to ensure that all of the services are provided, as needed, at the hospital.

In fact, the hospital board itself, in conjunction with the CEO of the hospital, is working to ensure that we have maximized all of the resources that we have available to support measures that are needed for service delivery at the hospital. The services are there. We worked within the budget — within our means — last fiscal year, and amendments and

long-term projections are coming forward. You will see that in the coming weeks and coming months in a longer term strategic plan that best aligns with a collaborative care health model across the Yukon. We will not enter into a situation where we have infrastructure without proper O&M expenditures associated with infrastructure built. We have a new Emergency unit coming on at the hospital that we need to accommodate, so we will certainly see an increase in support at the hospital in the coming months.

Mr. Cathers: The government isn't taking this seriously enough. The Premier refused to answer the question and the minister provided a non-answer. The Official Opposition appreciates the important work done by the board and staff of the Hospital Corporation and all of the health professionals who work there, but they need adequate resources to meet the needs of Yukoners.

Here is a direct quote from the chief of medical staff's annual report: "WGH continues to experience very significant pressure on bed use. This becomes a patient care problem as WGH is the only acute referral centre for higher levels of care in Yukon. Bed occupancy was 97% for the past year. About 60% of day bed occupancy was equal to or greater than 100% and sometimes as high as 118%. These pressures are a result of an increasing population, changing patient demographics and inadequate long term care facilities."

The government needs to support the hospital. Will the government agree to provide adequate resources to the hospital and increase the funding?

Hon. Ms. Frost: In response, we will ensure that the hospital receives adequate funding for the services, and we are most certainly addressing the pressures at the hospital and working in collaboration with the hospital board and the chief operating officer.

Mr. Cathers: We hear the minister say that they will provide adequate resources, but so far they have absolutely failed to do so. Again, neither the Premier nor the minister seems to be taking the question seriously.

I will again quote the chief of medical staff's annual report. "The WGH Visiting Specialist Clinic now has 45 active visiting specialists, covering 14 specialty areas for a total of 113 clinics per year. These clinics range from two days to one week in length."

I won't read the list of specialist services from the report but will quote key parts from the next paragraph. "The YHC, in conjunction with HSS, continues to look for opportunities to improve visiting specialty services and reduce wait times. Some of the barriers to adding more visiting specialist services are budgetary constraints, available space at WGH, availability of OR time... and extra resources needed... to support the activities of the visiting specialist."

Why is the Premier not taking Yukon's health care needs seriously, and will he agree to revisit the hospital's funding situation and come back with an increase to their budget?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Just to respond directly to the question on whether we take the health and well-being of Yukoners seriously, most definitely we do. We strive to ensure that access to and delivery of health services are available to all

Yukoners in a timely and effective fashion. I highlighted that yesterday, and I'll keep reiterating it. Officials are always working and looking for new ways for promising practices to offer health services in a way that best meets the needs of patients, clients and their families, and working with Yukoners. We are changing.

What we have historically seen is expansion and growth. We've seen infrastructure being built and the O&M expenditures associated with operation and maintenance affects the service delivery. The bottom line is we cannot keep building and not align ourselves with effective service delivery. Collaborative care means that we need to look at the services that are provided in rural Yukon and every Yukoner in rural Yukon should have that direct access. We are working toward efficiencies and effectiveness of operations. Building our fiscal budget this year, you will see better alignments to that effect. That will come directly with a strategic discussion and conversation with Yukoners.

Question re: Oil and gas development

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, after the Texas-based EFLO went bankrupt in 2015, three of their four gas wells in the Kotaneelee region became the property of oil and gas giant Apache. The fourth became the responsibility of the Yukon government.

The four wells had to be abandoned according to certain standards as part of the remediation process. The three wells abandoned by Apache were done according to industry standards, which are higher standards than is required by Yukon regulation. These standards allow further monitoring and make it easier to handle complications that often arise over time with abandoned wells; yet the one well that is the Yukon government's responsibility was abandoned to a lower standard, despite a recommendation by YESAB to use the higher industry standard.

Why did the Yukon government reject the YESAB recommendation and allow the abandonment of the Kotaneelee well below the industry standard?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to thank the Leader of the Third Party for the question. We find ourselves in a unique position to take these great comments that she has put on the table and look at how we can potentially implement some of these suggestions. Over the last year, we have had the opportunity to work with Apache on looking at some of the wells that were in place and making sure the reclamation was taken care of.

We find ourselves in a situation now where some of that work — the last well — still needs to be done, and part of that is because of challenges with ensuring that we have the infrastructure in place to do that work within the season that was in front of us. That's still work that needs to be completed on that last well.

I would like to take her comments back to my officials. We still will be working with the company to complete that work, but also taking into consideration moving the barges in and all the work that had to be done took longer than we had planned. Maybe we have an opportunity now for me to work

with our officials on just what the most optimal way is to look at doing the reclamation on this well.

Ms. Hanson: Last spring, the minister indicated it would cost \$2.4 million to abandon that one Kotaneelee gas well, not to industry standards but to Yukon standards — the well that has become Yukon's responsibility. The security the company left was only \$600,000, leaving Yukoners on the hook, as he said before, for \$1.8 million. Again, last spring, the minister indicated that his government has a security of only \$1.1 million from Chance Oil, formerly Northern Cross, for its operation in Eagle Plains. The minister did say that amount was being reviewed.

Can the minister tell this House if the review of Chance Oil security is complete and whether or not the security remains at \$1.1 million, or, if not, will the minister inform this House what new security level has been set to safeguard Yukoners from having to foot the bill for yet another expensive cleanup?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: This is a bit of a different question on the line of security — I am sure it is consistent.

Our approach to oil and gas in general is that we are looking at a reset. On the particular case of Chance Oil, I won't get into the legal piece that most would have seen in the media, but what I will say is that we have made a commitment with the northern chiefs to set a new table in place and to have that discussion with the First Nations that are affected. We have also been in discussion with the Gwich'in Tribal Council. I want to commend them, while I have the opportunity, for their support this year as we had an opportunity to work through a process.

I am happy to say that the rent that was owed when we came into government has now been paid. I think that is key. Previously, we saw monies flow back, under the other government, to Northern Cross/Chance Oil at a time when they still owed the Yukon government money.

I take your comments seriously. I want to be working with our First Nation partners on how we look at security. That work with our partners and that commitment just took place in mid-summer, and certainly we are going to continue that work.

Ms. Hanson: It is unclear then. It sounds like the \$1.1 million in security from Chance Oil has been paid. I will ask the minister to confirm that. That represents less than half of the cost of abandoning a single well in the Kotaneelee region.

Past government ministers have told this House that Yukon follows best practices of other jurisdictions. That is faint comfort to Yukon citizens who do not want to end up in situation like Alberta, where the public is responsible for the cleanup of hundreds of oil and gas wells. Alberta is stuck with liabilities worth over \$30 billion. Saskatchewan and BC have similar problems. Yukon appears to base its cost estimates for oil and gas well remediation on Alberta. However, this approach does not seem to factor in the extra costs of doing remediation work in a region as remote as Eagle Plains where permafrost is an important factor.

How many gas wells will the current \$1.1 million — or whatever figure it is — of security that is in place for Eagle Plains account for it? How did the government determine —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The transaction that I was referring to was for dollars that were owed and calculated previously under the now-Official Opposition. You have made fantastic points.

Do I think that our oil and gas industry and how we define security and how dollars have flowed previously between this government and companies are best practices? Absolutely not. You were here and had an opportunity — excuse me for referring directly — to watch that take place. I think we have a tremendous amount of work to do. I think that there are a lot of bridges to be mended with the northern nations based on past activities. I think that an oil and gas industry, which we have said we will support outside of the Whitehorse Trough — the paramount piece is that we move forward in concert with our First Nation partners. In issues like security, proper reclamation, how we define a process forward, consultation — which I know the money had previously flowed back for consultation and certainly that consultation did not occur.

Those are the key pieces and, as the member opposite touched upon, the Kotaneelee is not a great story either, as we continue to have to fork over dollars to clean up the mess that was left behind.

Question re: Public airports legislation

Mr. Kent: As we have already established yesterday and earlier today, the *Public Airports Act* gives the Liberals the authority to create an airport tax, and they won't be making any amendments to the act to remove that authority. We know the government has not held a public consultation on this piece of legislation despite the fact that many Yukoners use and depend on our airports on a daily basis. Airports and aerodromes are important pieces of infrastructure in many of our communities.

In the minister's news release, he mentioned that the City of Whitehorse was consulted. Has the minister consulted with any other municipalities on this piece of legislation? If so, when did those consultations take place and how were they conducted?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for his question this afternoon. He wants to know who we talked to. We staged targeted consultation on this piece of legislation, this bill. We spoke with the Yukon Aviation Advisory Group, the Northern Air Transport Association, Transport Canada, the City of Whitehorse, local air carriers and the aviation community. We did this through July and August. We held open houses on August 3 and 7. We invited every interested group to one-on-one meetings to discuss the act in detail.

We heard about concerns about what the act means and how stakeholders would be impacted. We heard concerns about the inability of the aviation industry to lease land — a long-standing issue. We heard about the need for clear and fair processes. We heard about the need to protect airport land

from intrusions. The industry wants clear rules, but it doesn't want unnecessary regulations. It doesn't want airport fees raised — I've already spoken to that. We are not imposing airport improvement fees.

We are listening to industry and we shared the draft act. My mandate is clear: I am to enhance economic activities at our airports and improve community safety. This legislation will facilitate both those items.

Mr. Kent: From the minister's response, we can assume that no other communities outside of Whitehorse were consulted in the drafting of this piece of legislation. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, my colleague from Porter Creek North asked some questions about impacts of the airports act on the tourism sector.

As everyone knows, our airports are important gateways for our tourism sector and any piece of legislation that changes the way this sector is regulated will undoubtedly have impacts on this important sector of our economy. Can the minister confirm for us today whether or not he has consulted representatives from the tourism industry, who he consulted, when they were consulted and what was the nature of those consultations?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, I thank the member opposite for his question. I'm enjoying the conversation we're having here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite apparently — I think he seeks some reasons why we need legislation and what problems we're trying to fix. He should know full well. We'll help this afternoon — offer a refresher course and some examples.

When our airport facilities are damaged — say, one of our skyways is damaged by a carrier, such as Delta. Who pays for those repairs? Is it the public or the company that caused the damage? What act do we use to obtain recompense? How do we do it?

Currently, it is not clear. We would be hard-pressed to give an answer because it is buried in a miasma of different acts, procedures and policies cobbled together over the decades. The members opposite were apparently okay flying by the seat of their pants. They were okay with it for 14 years. I'm not, this Liberal government is not and the industry is not. It has said it is frustrated with ad hoc rules and enforcement. Its members have said that to me personally, so we are putting in place long-needed legislation. We are putting an end to the duct-tape-and-binder-twine approach to our airports.

Mr. Kent: Unfortunately there is a disturbing trend that is emerging on the consultations for this piece of legislation. The minister has just confirmed for the House with that response that there have been no consultations with the tourism industry on this legislation. We know that there has been no consultation with the public on this piece of legislation and we know that outside of the City of Whitehorse there were no consultations with all the other municipalities that rely on their airports or aerodromes for economic activity and important medevac activity in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I know the minister, in his first response, outlined the individuals who were consulted according to the news release he put out. Can he confirm for us that he's

confident that everyone he mentioned in that news release was consulted?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am confident that we spoke to the people listed in the news release about the act and had targeted conversations with these individuals and organizations. We have spoken to the people of Carcross and the community of Carcross and we have also spoken to Alkan Air, which is responsible for medevacs.

I would like to continue on the reasons for legislation, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk signs. When the airport was improved and the huge fee increase was levied on Yukoners by the previous government at the parking lot, signs had to be erected. Did the airport branch staff have authority to put the signs up? Nope. The member opposite knows full well they did not. He had to go begging to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to put up his signs. Why? Because he didn't have the responsibility. He couldn't do it under the current mess of acts and policies and whatnot. The member opposite was okay with this. Members opposite were apparently okay with flying by the seats of their pants. They were okay with it for 14 years. I'm not, this Liberal government is not and industry is not. We're going to put in place a piece of long-needed legislation.

Question re: Wi-Fi access at community hospitals

Ms. McLeod: Now as you know, at the Whitehorse General Hospital, patients are able to access free Wi-Fi service. The service is not offered in our community hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City and providing this would go a long way to improving the quality of the stay for patients at our hospitals.

On June 5, I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services whether or not she would commit to providing free wireless Internet to patients and visitors at our community hospitals. At the time, she and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources indicated that this sounded like a good initiative.

After hearing nothing over the course of the summer, I sent a letter in August following up on this and unfortunately the response I got back was that the Liberals will not provide Wi-Fi to patients in our community hospitals.

Can the minister tell us why the government is refusing to provide this service to the patients at our community hospitals?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would be happy to respond to the question as to why there are no Wi-Fi services available for use by patients in either Dawson City or Watson Lake community hospitals. We have been advised by the Hospital Corporation that adding Wi-Fi to either of these hospitals is not possible at this time and the question is asked: Why is that? When the hospitals were built, Wi-Fi was not part of the design or the scope of the original construction. That is why they were not, and they are not, part of the services that are offered in the communities.

Ms. McLeod: I find that response somewhat shocking.

Mr. Speaker, during last year's election, the minister sat at a table with the Premier and announced that all

communities matter. Well, actions speak louder than words and clearly the Premier has referenced that.

The minister has had an opportunity to provide the same services at the Watson Lake and Dawson City community hospitals as she provides in Whitehorse. Instead, she is choosing to do nothing. During the spring, we brought forward some suggestions that the government could look at to resolve this issue. We also suggested that perhaps the government reach out to the private sector to see if there were opportunities for partnerships. At the time, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said that he would explore options such as these.

Can the minister update us on what they did to follow up on these questions?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Frankly, I am a bit shocked myself. I think that, most definitely, the members on this side of the House are quite concerned about the services that we provide to our clients in rural Yukon and Wi-Fi is not high on the priority list, given the financial pressures we are under. We have an obligation to ensure a collaborative care model health care is delivered at the highest standard possible to all of the clients. Recognizing that, Wi-Fi, when installed at the Whitehorse General Hospital a few years ago, cost \$250,000. At the time, that was supposed to be \$50,000, but it cost \$250,000. Capital costs to install a range of service that is being proposed could exceed, not \$10,000, not \$20,000, but in excess of \$100,000. Is that what we want to spend our limited resources on?

We can go on about service delivery. We can go on about health care delivery. It was not something that was in our priority. It came up previously in the design and the installation. It was not a part of the design and installation, so it's kind of hard to come back after the fact and install a process that was not —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. McLeod: This government might think that this is a trivial issue, but when a patient is sick and lying in bed, they appreciate being able to access the Internet to connect with their friends and family. Our goal here in this Legislature should be how we improve the lives of our patients. Patient-centred care — this should sound familiar to the members opposite. This isn't difficult. If the government wants to do this, they can make it happen. They found \$250,000 for the Financial Advisory Panel.

Will the minister please reconsider and commit to providing access to Wi-Fi for our patients at our community hospitals?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'll just go back to the point that the previous government, the Yukon Party, was in power for 14 years. They designed the hospital. They had an opportunity to deliver the services and to install the support and resources — the infrastructure — to allow that essential service. Did they do that? No, they didn't.

At this point, any discretionary financial resources that we have will go to patient care, and that's our priority. Telehealth is another priority. If we're going to provide services to our hospitals, we are looking at expanded

telehealth services so that patients in rural Yukon and physicians in rural Yukon can access in-time supports that are needed through external specialized supports, through telehealth, in the three hospitals. Options are there at some point in the future — I'm certain of that — but at this point in time, given our financial challenges and our support for patient care, that's where our resources will go.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 137

Clerk: Motion No. 137, standing in the name of Mr. Istchenko.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Kluane:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to re-profile unspent funds budgeted for projects in the 2017-18 fiscal year toward initiatives to address public safety throughout Yukon.

Mr. Istchenko: It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Motion No. 137, which I put forward, that this House urges the Government of Yukon to re-profile unspent funds budgeted for projects in the 2017-18 fiscal year toward initiatives to address public safety throughout Yukon.

Before we get into the public safety things I would like to speak about, I just want to give a little bit of background and a bit of information about contracts and the tendering process.

I know, Mr. Speaker, we've spoken at length about the importance of having contracts out the door early in the season to ensure contractors have a sufficient amount of time to prepare, especially for major projects. I can tell you, when I was first elected, Mr. Speaker, how important it was for me to take my job seriously as the Highways and Public Works minister who had every contract running through me, and to work with my colleagues to make sure the contracts were out as early as possible. That meant making sure we scheduled Management Board during session and making sure that we listened to our staff to prioritize stuff. It was a challenge; it was hard work, but I put my nose to the grindstone. I believe we did a good job of that.

Tendering and awarding contracts early guarantees the contractor has the ability to find a sufficient number of employees for the job, such as foremen, equipment operators, labourers and painters, as well as some of the subtrades that are needed.

This also allows them the time to gather the equipment and arrange for supplies. A good example would be a contractor who is supplying on a road job. He has a Cat. Does the Cat need a new engine? Well, if I don't have work for the Cat, why would I put money into it? But if I have work for the

Cat, I can keep an employee on, fixing my Cat so I am ready to go when the season starts. You need to arrange for materials — such as concrete and asphalt that you need to order — and supplies. Further, a project needs to go through the necessary environmental processes, such as YESAB. It is probably a little-known fact that if you want to replace a culvert on a highway, you have to go through YESAB. There are processes that the department staff have to do up-front to be ready for it. You can't be waiting throughout the summer because there is no budget allowance for that employee to go ahead and work on some of these YESAA permitting issues.

All of this takes time to organize, and when we have a construction season up here of four months — and in my riding, the spring wasn't that great. We had a lot of rain, and we were a little bit behind schedule. When you tender these and they are posted late, it just creates a domino effect. I think the domino effect that I spoke to earlier started this motion. "Posted later" means that it will be awarded later, which means that the employees are notified later — if they are available, if they haven't gone out of the territory to find work elsewhere while they are waiting to go to work, or contractors will run short-staffed. They will be scrambling to find employees. Being short-staffed means longer hours with fewer results, and that is fatigue on employees. Our employees are who are putting in long hours because everything was tendered late and it is a short season and we are trying to catch up.

All of these are factors that can certainly result in the inability to complete the project before there is snow on the ground. I have put siding on in snow. I have dug holes in snow. I have worked on campgrounds in snow, and I can tell you I would have rather done it on a nice, sunny day. Not completing a project means there is the potential to be overbudget and certainly not on time, which we know never ends well for the government that put the contract out.

Those are only a few examples of why punctuality in the tendering process is so important. We have heard from contractors time and time again that they rely heavily on the government's capital budget. That is their work for the year. They watch the tender management system like hawks, and if contracts aren't coming up, it only creates uncertainty. That is why we on this side of the House take it so seriously and have brought it up so often.

The capital budget every year for Highways and Public Works — I was just looking through previous years — is tens of millions. This year a number of contracts went out the door and a few were fortunately completed, despite some being tendered way later than initially promised by the government. Some, however, we have not heard about since the budget was tabled in the spring — contracts that have no chance of being completed by the end of fiscal year. However, there is still hope that these funds can be used to knock items off the list of the other departments.

We on this side of the House all sat in the same chairs — many of us did — that the ministers do over there. Every department has a long list of to-dos that they have been waiting to include in their budget. They put it forward, they

put out a long to-do list and then, of course, the ministers — well, what we did is we looked at the list and, of course, we just heard it from one of the members opposite during Question Period: "There is only so much money". This list could be addressed with the money that could be reallocated from these projects that won't go forward in this calendar year — Highways and Public Works, Education, Community Services, including a number of community safety-related projects — all containing a number of projects that have been waiting to be included in the budget.

I want to talk a little bit about the riding of Kluane, and I'm sure members on this side want to speak a little bit about some of the things that could be accomplished.

I will talk about the Alaska Highway. I don't know if any of you or any of your constituents have gone to the wonderful campground of Pine Lake. The campground of Pine Lake is three miles out of town, and when you turn into the campground of Pine Lake, there is a huge dip. Right now, with a little bit of coal mix and gravel, fill it in and it's fixed. No, we're going to drive over that all winter probably. That's something, I'm sure, that the local highways crew had put forward in their ask, like other departments do.

Brushing — I drive back and forth from Whitehorse to Haines Junction on a regular basis, as does the Member for Watson Lake on her way home to Watson Lake and the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin on his way to Teslin. The Third Party, during the last legislative Sitting, brought up quite often the caribou issue. You want to talk about brushing — I can speak to the elk issue. I can speak to the deer issue. When the brush on the shoulder of the road is higher than an elk when it steps on the road, you don't see that. We have great headlights, we have great driving lights and great road conditions, but when the brush is along the shoulder of the road, you can't see those animals — somebody driving their kid into hockey practice because they want to play on the Mustang team, and it is dark all winter long.

I know of a few constituents who have hit an elk and it cost them — damage to their vehicles, insurance and everything else. Now, what a prime opportunity to go and brush. Sometimes the Department of Highways and Public Works doesn't like to brush first thing in the spring because there is a problem, if you look at YESAA, with the birds nesting. Well, the birds are done nesting — in mid-August they are about done — and so it is a great time to get out and do brushing. The government of the day, right now, cut the brushing budget in half. There are funds available. I'm pretty sure someone in the department somewhere knows what needs to be brushed and they can put a quick tender out and get some brushing done.

Our rural roads — when I was the minister, we had a long list of rural road upgrades through the rural road upgrade program. I was contacted by many people and I said, "You're on the list but there are a 100 on the list and we only have enough money for the top 50." I doubled the budget. There was some free money about this time of the year, and we doubled the budget and we knocked some of that off the list. By upgrading those rural roads, it meant it was easier for the

ambulance, easier for the RCMP, easier for our emergency services — fire — to get down those roads. Yukoners like to live out of town and in the rural subdivisions, and we have a program — a great program — and then they can get themselves put on the rural roads maintenance program and it's just better and safer for all Yukoners.

Signage — in the spring I talked to one of the Highways and Public Works employees on the road on the 75th anniversary of the Alaska Highway — the veterans sign just north of Haines Junction, the wind was blowing it over with the sign so the sign crew was going to come put some four-by-fours or six-by-sixes and put it up. Apparently all summer went by and the signs weren't put up. They're put up now because the local foreman went and put them up. I sure thank the local crews for their hard work and seeing how important it was to get them put up. There's probably some other signage that could be done. I'm sure there's a list.

Crosswalks — I was lobbied and bothered by the school in Haines Junction, the school council — I didn't get one letter, I got many letters. We need a crosswalk here, we need a crosswalk there, and we need a crosswalk here. There are three crosswalks, and that was something we looked at and did a little later in the fall with some extra money.

We talk about cell coverage and the safety on the roads around the Kluane Lake area, which is the area where, every time we get big rains, the road washes out. The MDMRS system doesn't work well for highways and cellphones don't work. Maybe there's an opportunity to put a little money into that.

Our campgrounds — speaking about campgrounds, I'll talk a little bit about departments working together. Wildland Fire has a host of employees. I can tell you that the work they do is incredible. We tributed them on many occasions; I know all the young fellows and I was so glad to see that Kluane First Nation had a team together. Toward the end of the season, we need them. Fires don't go away; they happen at all times. They're there. In our campgrounds, we have beetle-kill forest and, in many of our campgrounds, dead trees. They're a safety issue. A few years ago, money popped up toward the end because of some of the reasons why we discussed this — bang. They went in there and did some firesmarming in the campgrounds — public safety.

Building retrofits — I'm sure there's a long list. I'm sure there's probably a window somewhere in a government building that might be leaking. There's no mould in that government building right now, but if it doesn't get fixed, eventually we'll be tearing walls apart and costing the government a whole bunch more money.

Runway upgrades — our rural aerodromes. I have quite a few in my neck of the woods. One of the ones that comes to mind is the one in Silver City. That's a busy hub. They have two planes there and they fly on a regular basis. It's a tourism opportunity — people going into Kluane National Park. Because of the kindness of the local operator there, we had the opportunity to get in there this year with our ceremonial axe the Canadian Rangers had that we were taking across Canada. We flew right in and landed on the big glacier up there and

had a look at Mount Logan. It was incredible, but the runway is dusty. I know the local operators there have been asking to get some dust suppression put on it, like they did in Burwash. There's an opportunity to do that; it's a good time of the year.

I spoke a little bit about campground upgrades. I almost guarantee that every one of our marinas or boat launches that the government own could probably use a little bit of work. The water is low toward the end of the season; a great opportunity to get that work done.

Those are all safety issues, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to speak too much at length about this. I wanted to just get it on the record. I think it's important that we reappropriate these funds, especially if we're sitting on them. There's going to be a large capital budget again next year in Highways and Public Works and I'm sure there will probably be some things that are budgeted for because, you know, we listened to the Minister of Education speak to environmental remediation and things that pop up that leave extra money in the budget. I think it's important.

We have great public servants who have a to-do list and local Yukoners who have issues. This is a good way — by reappropriating these funds in the fall.

We've had a great fall and we could have been doing some work already and get out there — something that is going to benefit safety, the tourism industry, safety for the travelling public, and safety for those government employees who drive back and forth to work every day or who go out on our highways.

In conclusion, I'm just looking forward to seeing the members from the government side and what their thoughts are on this and my fellow colleagues on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for this opportunity today.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you to the member opposite — the Member for Kluane — for presenting Motion No. 137 today.

I just want to start off by saying that the member opposite did a great job of showcasing some of the needs of his community and I applaud his efforts in that pursuit. I encourage all MLAs from across the way to make sure that their community's needs are represented, so that their communities can be heard and we can go about the evidence-based decision-making that we promised Yukoners to do when we are talking about the way that we spend taxpayers' money.

I rise on this motion today speaking from my perspective as the Minister of Finance. This motion does concern me and we will not be supporting it. At the very basic level, this motion ignores the process of how budgeting works. A budget is a commitment. It is a commitment that we, as a government, make to Yukoners about how we will spend taxpayers' money each fiscal year. Granted, there can be changes within a fiscal year, as outlined by our recently tabled supplementary estimates. However, these changes are within the scope of the original intentions for funds budgeted, so any changes made do not interfere with that initial commitment.

This is a good thing, Mr. Speaker, because we made the commitment to Yukoners and they expect us to honour it and our position demands that we honour those commitments. It is our duty as elected representatives of the Yukon to stay true to our budgetary commitments and practise strong fiscal management at the same time.

This motion urges us to shirk this duty by asking us to take money that we have committed for capital projects and spend it instead on unrelated O&M costs. Strong financial management does not allow for careless movement of money. A responsible government makes decisions based upon evidence, is open and accountable and — perhaps more importantly — understands the process of fiscal management.

Now, with all due respect, that is not to say that the items mentioned by the Member for Kluane are not important. That is not what we're saying, but commitments are made on a budgetary process and we are obligated to make good on those commitments. A responsible government makes those decisions based upon that evidence and is open and accountable and, again, understands that process. The budget that our government passed is our commitment to Yukoners. Repurposing the money without debate and without consideration — that just wouldn't be appropriate. Yukoners expect better and they deserve better.

I guess, perhaps, with all due respect to the member opposite, we might at this point require a brief explanation of the budgetary process, but I don't think I have to do that. I think the member opposite knows very clearly the budgetary process.

It is possible to move or revote funds. A revote is that reallocation of funds for a project between fiscal years. This takes place if funds are not available to be used within a fiscal year but are still required for their intended purpose. That is the most important piece here — that intended purpose is still there. A true revote does not change the original scope or the cost of the project — it is still there. A true revote does not change the intended use of the funds originally budgeted. A revote of funds requires an equal lapse for the intended funding from one year to the next. Ultimately, it is up to the Legislative Assembly to approve a revote, which is included in those supplementary estimates. Because the supplementary estimates are tabled, they receive attention and debate in the House just like a budget. This is a crucial part of open and accountable financial management.

One concrete example of a type of a revote process involved Tourism and Culture's archives vault expansion where the funds lapsed in 2016-17 as that work was not completed. The funds are included in the current supplementary estimates before the Legislative Assembly as the money is still required to complete that project. This particular example represents \$785,000 in total money lapsed in 2016-17 and a \$785,000 increase in this fiscal year — checks and balances. The overall project costs still remain the same. The only thing that has changed is the timing. If we use the \$785,000 from last year and allocated it to a different project, this would affect the overall financial position of a

government as we would still need to find those funds for the completion of this archives project.

To lapse the funds from an area or project and reallocate them toward a new project or area is unusual and it requires careful consideration of Yukon's priorities. Any decision around a non-standard revote would need to consider the context of our priorities as well. We are confident in our priorities that we have budgeted for. In fact, we don't feel that any should have funds taken away from them. Any unspent money will be spent. Our plans have not changed. Our government has confidence in the budget that we passed, and funds are being revoted to the next fiscal year in order to allow for the completion of those projects. We are not interested in changing the course. We will not respond with haphazard and irresponsible financial management. Yukoners deserve better and they expect better.

I should note that the funds that the Yukon Party is targeting in this motion are predominately funds allocated toward the new French language high school. The Yukon Party government fought the French community tooth and nail and spent millions of taxpayers' dollars in legal fees over this high school. Then the highest court in the land ruled in favour of the Yukon francophone community. Now the Yukon Party is putting forward a motion asking for the government to take away millions of dollars committed to addressing the Supreme Court decision and fixing the broken relationship between Yukon government and the francophone community. I will leave it to them to explain that proposal at the next AGM of the Association franco-yukonnaise. Our government is working to build that relationship to ensure that the Yukon's francophone community is supported and has the educational resources to ensure that their children thrive. We committed money to ensure the new French language high school and we will honour that commitment.

To be honest, Mr. Speaker, it's hard to take advice from the Yukon Party after we have seen how they mismanaged the creation of the new F.H. Collins school, for example. From a \$6 million design that was never used to the use of Outside labour for a building that was well behind schedule, the new F.H. Collins school was not properly managed. The members opposite would probably like to forget projects like this one, but that is important to remember because we want to learn from past mistakes.

Along with confusion about the budgetary process, perhaps there is confusion in regard to the government's commitment to public safety. I would like to pivot to the public safety part of this motion.

Let me be very clear, this government is committed to the safety of all Yukoners. My colleagues have plenty of examples to share of government initiatives to enhance public safety. One example is the changes to the intersection of the south Klondike Highway, which are being made in order to improve safety.

Another example is the government partnering with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and providing funding for the implementation of their community safety officer program. The program launched in June of this year promotes public

safety through community engagement and relationship building between service providers, law enforcement agencies and community members.

In addition to these examples, we continue to support a variety of public safety initiatives and we will continue to practise strong financial management. The Government of Yukon is accountable by Yukoners. Our citizens should have confidence in the government making sound decisions resulting in strong financial management.

Since taking office, the Liberal government has worked hard to ensure that we have earned the trust of Yukoners. We have actively engaged with First Nations, with other governments, with non-government organizations and with individuals to address concerns, to respond to questions and to gratefully receive their feedback.

Yukon government is facing financial challenges. Over the past 10 years, the Yukon government's revenue has grown at 1.7 percent per year while spending has grown at 2.5 percent per year. This grim situation is why our government is in the fiscal situation it is in, and it's what we inherited last year. This spending could no longer go on. It was irresponsible.

In an effort to hear Yukoners' opinions about potential change, the independent Financial Advisory Panel was assembled. This independent panel will present a report containing options that will be supported by independent research, extensive knowledge and also, most importantly, feedback by Yukoners.

It is one of the best examples illustrating how our government's approach to being open and accountable is unique, it's positive and it is forward-thinking. It's also a prime example in terms of strong financial management as we are acknowledging a long-standing issue that we inherited and we are working hard to change that picture for Yukon.

Yukoners deserve to have their voices heard. They also deserve a responsible government that understands the budgetary process. The Yukon Financial Advisory Panel offers Yukoners the opportunity to actively participate in shaping the future of Yukon's finances. Already the panel has held roughly 60 meetings in communities throughout the Yukon.

The bottom line is that this government is not willing to make rash decisions that will gravely affect Yukoners. Instead, our government is committed to making Yukoners' lives better, and strong financial management is an important component in doing so.

This might be quite a change. We're looking forward to resolving the issues of overspending that were prevalent in the previous administration. We are confident that this will be a welcome change and one that Yukoners will embrace.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the Member for Kluane for bringing this motion forward. I think I do understand the positive intention of the member for bringing this motion forward and the genuine desire to see good things happen in his riding and throughout the Yukon with the resources that are entrusted to the Yukon Legislative Assembly to steward.

However, the member's motion speaks to a continuation of, perhaps, a misunderstanding of the purpose of us coming together in the Legislative Assembly to effect the stewardship of those financial resources on behalf of all Yukoners. The Minister of Finance has outlined some of the processes and concerns from a government perspective.

In thinking about the debate this afternoon, I actually was reminded that we attempted to have a debate in this Legislative Assembly in March 2013 because, at that time, as Member for Whitehorse Centre, I brought forward a motion that would seek to have the Government of Yukon increase legislative oversight — not decrease it, as this member's motion would suggest here today.

We had based that on the experience at the time, in 2013, of 10 years of Yukon Party government, where we already had ample evidence of decision-making and spending of Yukoners' resources without evidence. We attempted at that time to have the Government of Yukon agree that there should be increased legislative oversight, with a goal of ensuring that any monies that are spent, any projects that are funded and any new initiatives that come along, are undertaken only when there was evidence that they served the demonstrated needs in the most appropriate and cost-effective way, that they were planned to manage risks, to anticipate risks, not because an idea came along, or something ad hoc, that they were delivered on time and on budget, that they were developed with public transparency and accountability.

One of the key areas that we focused on was the importance of managing our resources in ways that reflect the best practices outlined in numerous reports prepared for the Government of Yukon over the years by its own internal auditor and by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

There are members of the Official Opposition who sit and chair the Public Accounts Committee. The Public Accounts Committee is chaired by the Official Opposition now. They know that the Auditor General this spring raised serious concerns about the fact that, when you make ad hoc decisions, they do have impacts when you don't set in place mechanisms that say that we will do this and make sure that it gets done.

We don't have measures of accountability. So when the Auditor General comes back in 2017 and says, "Gee, you know what? In 2007, we recommended this, we pointed this out. This is costing Yukoners money. It's causing ineffective delivery of programs and services. It's causing material risk and nothing happens" — that's what happens when you don't follow the established procedures in a parliamentary democracy. Accountability and responsibility are key to that.

So we have seen over the last 16 years a repeated emphasis on spending money, whether it was for energy or schools, as the Minister of Finance pointed out, or activities related to highways, telecommunications — including community infrastructure — new subdivisions, rec centres that didn't reflect public needs and values, weren't based on the evidence of appropriate and effective ways to meet Yukoners' needs, weren't properly built with sound planning principles that identified and then managed the risks that were associated with building, and that didn't include fair rules for

contractors with a focus on using local labour, because decisions were apparently made — observation — on the fly.

What happens when we do these kinds of decisions that are apparently, from the public's perspective, are ad hoc, they can seem to be decided for short-term political gain. There can be a perception of questionable decision-making in the awarding of contracts. We have all lived through this. We have seen ribbon-cutting for schools that weren't built. We have seen announcements and openings of sewage projects in communities like Dawson that we have continued to pay for and that weren't appropriately designed for the environment that they are in.

When we don't make decisions based on sound evidence and if we allow our system of parliamentary oversight to slide into that area where projects can be approved without the oversight of this Legislative Assembly, then we will continue to see the kinds of problems that we are still trying to address in this territory and that we're paying for in — I guess it's decreases — the accumulation of expenditures in this territory for questionable projects.

There are many, many examples that we debated that afternoon, but the reality is that, at the end of the day, the Yukon Party government of the day wasn't interested in an approach that was respectful of the responsibilities and roles of the Legislative Assembly in ensuring effective and adequate oversight of our financial resources and they watered the motion down to be meaningless.

I understand the intentions of the member of the Official Opposition who brought this forward. I would just say that we need to ensure that we hold the government to account for reflecting the true needs of Yukoners throughout this territory. In fact, the public safety issues that we are talking about are not just the highways and roads that we drive on, but one would also think that, as the government across the way is planning for its budget for the new fiscal year, they will be ensuring that we are providing adequate and improved funding for women's shelters and homes for the homeless — those are public safety issues. They need to be debated in this Legislative Assembly and they need to be vigorously debated. It is that debate that will give them some credibility.

We may ultimately disagree with the government about their decisions — and we have the democratic right to express that disagreement — but I certainly do not want to be part of a system that has some sort of a lottery system at the end of the year that says, "Well, a little bit more here and a little bit there." That leads to nepotism, that leads to patronage, and that is not sound democratic government. I cannot speak in support of this motion.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the Member for Kluane for bringing this motion forward. Public safety — I don't think it was a matter of the Member for Kluane's misunderstanding of public financing because he has been around this block a few times. I think it does everyone a disservice to even suggest that. The government has been very clear that emerging public safety concerns are not a priority.

The Leader of the NDP seems to think that we can plan emerging public safety issues — and good on her if she can manage that — but I can tell you there are trees falling down in campgrounds this year. There are trees falling down in campgrounds that are crushing vehicles this year. I have brought this forward to the minister and do not have a resolution to that problem. But as a matter of fact, public safety and the lives of Yukoners are at risk. Unless this money that is being revoted or re-profiled or whatever adjective you care to use is being immediately voted into a new savings account with a label for the French high school, then that money is going into general revenues. It might look like a surplus at the end of the year, and I guess that looks good for the government, but yes, indeed, that money gets spent the following year on any number of things.

The government talks about making sound decisions on how money is spent in government and I think we are all on board with that. We all like to see our money spent wisely, but I wonder how much public consultation and thought went into cutting the money spent on brushing on Yukon highways that promotes driver safety. I wonder how much thought was put into cutting that budget in half. I wonder where the discussion and the thought went to find money to weld the garbage containers at the side of the highway pullouts closed so you can't put garbage in them.

I didn't see that come across any newspaper or social media as a consultation point. I can tell you that it's causing a bit of grief for tourists and for locals who go by and see this mess because, I have to tell you, the garbage is still being deposited there. It's attracting wildlife, which is a major public safety concern.

It's all well and good if we can plan our crisis — if we can determine that, two years down the road, we're going to have a public concern — but the truth is that things come up all the time and they come up without notice. They come up as a result of bad decisions like — I'll say it right here — welding garbage containers closed.

There are some longer term public safety issues that have been brought forward. I really resent that the government seems to think that we're just trying to look after our ridings and look after things that are of importance to us, because I have to tell you that, the issues I bring forward are brought forward by Yukoners, not by me.

Some time ago, almost a year ago, I brought forward an issue of streetlights to be installed on the Robert Campbell Highway, and this was brought forward as a public safety concern by constituents, by the RCMP and by the Town of Watson Lake itself. I understand there was some —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please. Member for Watson Lake, sorry. There was a bit of disruption in the House. I just wanted to give you an opportunity to speak uninterrupted.

Member for Watson Lake, you can continue. Thank you.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you.

The minister responded to the request to look at this with a statement that they would count the number of pedestrians on that road over the course of the winter, and that's what they would base their decision on. So I got back to the minister and asked if that is that the way all streetlights are determined. Is that how you figure it out everywhere? You sit down and you count the number of pedestrians? Inquiring minds want to know; I don't know what constitutes a public safety concern, but what I do know is that people have died by walking on that road — that's what I do know.

I gather the government is not going to be supporting this motion. That's becoming somewhat clear, but I do hope that, in spite of that, they can wrap their heads around supporting emerging public safety concerns that are being brought forward by Yukoners.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for bringing this motion forward this afternoon. It was great to hear his reflections on his time in the job that I now hold. I can totally appreciate — I am, like him, living this department and its responsibilities, deadlines and timelines, trying to understand how to get contracts out the door as fast as possible to help the contracting community. I have heard loud and clear from contractors that we need to get our contracts out earlier and make sure that they can get more information earlier so they can plan forward into the future and get their employees and all their equipment in place — it's all very important. I appreciate those remarks.

But we are currently living the Yukon's version of *The Big Short*, and this fascinating motion provides valuable insight as to why. This motion has a remarkable structure. The member opposite has asked us to re-profile unspent funds budgeted for projects. The very words lull one to sleep: re-profile unspent funds; re-profile unspent funds. It's a baffling turn of phrase and it requires a little deciphering, so let's delve into it for a moment. Let's break it down to everyday language.

It is to some simply a switcheroo, a change from one identified need to something else on the fly. Project X is delayed because of a flood, so let's use the money to build Y, and next year we'll build X — simple. Except you've just spent \$20 instead of the \$10 you budgeted — \$10 this year, \$10 next year — \$20. So at its heart, this re-profile of unspent funds is simply spending — spending double immediately. It's remarkable really, and revealing. Free money — the member opposite spoke about free money; well, there is no free money, Mr. Speaker. All the money we receive comes from some sort of taxpayer somewhere. This sleight-of-hand financial management cuts to the very heart of the mandate of our Financial Advisory Panel.

The independent panel was struck to provide expert advice on how to improve the government's financial outlook. We struck for good reason, because when this Liberal government took office, it found a problem. The problem is clear. The problem is well-defined. For the last 10 years, the Yukon government excelled at spending. It spent a lot and it collected a lot less. Indeed, it spent \$1.50 for every new buck

it collected — one loonie in, one loonie and four bits out. It's that four bits that's the problem. That's the deficit.

Fifty cents on every new dollar for 10 years — that's what ground down the collected wealth, the Yukon's reserves. That spending ground our collective wealth to dust. It was once called “a rainy day fund” for a reason. Such a reserve can get you past a hardship, a downturn, a crash. You can draw on it for a year to weather a storm. You can draw on it for two years, or three or four or five or six or seven or eight, or, heck, you can even draw it down for nine years. There is historical precedence for such priming the pump of programs. You can even do it for 10 years. Of course, at 10 years, you've equalled the length of the Great Depression — curious, that.

The bottom line is: spend it down long enough without changing things, collect one buck, spend four bits more, and you will eventually run out of money. Your spending will have to change. You are going to have to do things differently. Well, Mr. Speaker, welcome to wherever you are. This, apparently, is bewildering for some — a difficult adjustment — because things have changed. We have to change the way we handle public finances in this territory. We either have to raise more money or we have to spend less money, or we have to blend the solution.

The bottom line is: we have to reconsider the free money, the re-profiling of unspent funds. We can't budget \$10 and spend \$20 when something goes awry. That's the old days. That's — dare I say it — fast and loose. We can't afford it anymore and, I suspect, in its heart, the Official Opposition knows this because the motion doesn't ask us to re-profile unspent funds willy-nilly. It encourages us to put the cost toward something important — to safety. Who can deny safety, Mr. Speaker? Safety is grave. Safety is serious. Who can deny safety? This motion cloaks the spending of free money in a bright yellow vest and a pink hardhat.

Safety is a laudable goal. I studied it. I worked in the field for many years. For quite a few years, I championed it in the newspaper, but this afternoon I have to ask: At what cost, safety? At any cost? When you are borrowing against our shared future? Because in doing so, you are probably rendering the territory less secure — certainly less financially secure — and less safe, depending on your definition. There is, after all, no more rainy day fund, no more buffer, no more emergency cash.

Let's explore safety for a minute. The members opposite have asked for brush-clearing on several stretches of highway. They've brought it up quite often. Brush-clearing improves visibility. It reveals wildlife lurking or grazing in the gullies. Visibility makes our roads more comfortable to drive at speed. It's good work. This year, there was more rain and the clover started to grow like a weed, adding to the vegetation on the sides of our roads. Not surprisingly, there were calls for brush-clearing. It would have been nice to have a rainy day fund to deal with this. Alas, no such fund exists anymore. For a full 10 years, our predecessors earned a new buck and then spent \$1.50, so there was less money for stuff this year — stuff like brush-clearing.

I'm sure the department put the resources to the best use it could, prioritizing the worst area. They did great work. Clearly it wasn't enough, and that is the real-world effect of continually spending more than you are raising. Eventually you run out of money. Something has to give and services begin to suffer — services like brush-clearing. You may land literally in the weeds.

It's not all bad news, however. Ottawa is still transferring money to us. We have money, just not a lot of wiggle room.

Employing strong financial management, we are improving safety in the Yukon methodically. We are currently paving the intersection of the south Klondike Highway.

As the Member for Copperbelt South surely knows, the work is being done for safety. There have been too many accidents at that intersection over the years, so we're cleaning it up quite a bit and, with much dynamite, we have shaved the crown off the approach to the intersection from the north, providing better visibility to the cars coming from Whitehorse.

We also continued with improvements to the Robert Campbell Highway. It is now safer than it has ever been in the past.

The Carmacks bridge is also improved — it is safer — and so is the Klondike River bridge. The Nares bridge has been tendered and should be soon awarded. Once that bridge is replaced, weight restrictions should be lifted, which will come as a relief to freight companies. We will be able to secure our fuel to the territory. That makes us safer too.

We're building water treatment plants. My friend, the Minister of Community Services, to my right is doing an awful lot of work on water treatment and sewage treatment facilities across the territory. That work, as well, improves our water quality, makes us safer and protects us from bacteria and all sorts of things. It's good work and it's important work. He is doing a lot of other things besides. There is the Ross River bridge and all sorts of things that will improve the quality of life and make things a little safer for people.

It's not all about spending money, Mr. Speaker. Similar to other jurisdictions, Yukon has established a number of opioid response, surveillance, clinical safety working groups, which involve the full spectrum of law enforcement, the chief and deputy medical health officers, health agencies and NGOs to deal with the fentanyl crisis. Yukon's chief medical officer of health has also spearheaded a program to make naloxone kits more available to drug users to reduce harms in the community. Yukon is also working to ensure that first responders — people like my brother — are equipped to respond to potential overdoses with naloxone kits. The RCMP has been communicating with its front-line members to be aware of the potential for fentanyl-related incidents as they investigate sudden deaths or reported potential overdoses — safety, Mr. Speaker.

We have a Crime Stoppers association, which includes corporate members representing the Association of Yukon Communities, City of Whitehorse, RCMP Veterans' Association and Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. These corporate partners support sustainable association. They

provide cash for information that leads to an arrest or recovery of stolen property or seizure of illegal drugs — again, safety, Mr. Speaker.

There is more. The Government of Yukon provides funding and is a partner with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation on the implementation of the community safety officer program, which was officially launched in June of this year. Community safety officers provide early warning and detection of conflict in the community. It builds relationships with different service providers and liaises with law enforcement agencies while engaging in a variety of crime prevention initiatives in partnership with the Justice Institute of British Columbia and Kwanlin Dün First Nation justice department to develop a unique curriculum for the training of community safety officers. Safety, Mr. Speaker, is right in the title.

There is a lot to be done for safety. A lot is being done by this government on safety. Safety is a very serious issue. There is money going out the door to contractors and First Nations to improve our territory — to make it more efficient and safer. Some projects will get snarled in problems, both natural and man-made. That will delay the inevitable, but it won't necessarily free money for an inevitable spend this year. That is the difference. We have to walk a fine line. We have to plan and prioritize. We will use strong financial management. We will do more with less — about two bits less for every dollar we raise. It's a lot — it really is — but Yukoners are a resourceful lot and they will adapt. Through the diligent consultation efforts of the independent Financial Advisory Panel, they will understand the legacy of the last 10 years. They will now understand why we are living Yukon's version of *The Big Short*. It came about partly through the re-profiling of unspent funds.

Mr. Cathers: Well, first of all, in rising in support of the motion brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Kluane, I would like to just briefly note that there was a very interesting use of time that we heard by the Minister of Highways and Public Works. The minister, in claiming to list actions of how the Liberal government is responding to safety issues, just finished reading through a long list of projects and initiatives that actually began under the Yukon Party government, including the Crime Stoppers initiative that was a request that we heard from the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and acted on proactively by funding the administrative costs so they could re-establish that Crime Stoppers program. The community safety officer program, as the minister should know, was an initiative of the Yukon Party government, because not only did I announce it, but the Minister of Tourism and Culture, in her former work capacity, was a part of that announcement, as was the Chief of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, through their good work in bringing forward that idea to us.

I think what is really unfortunate in the response that the government has taken to this motion is that, particularly for a government that claimed — the Premier claimed during the

election and afterward that they were going to take a more collaborative approach and raise the bar of debate in the Legislative Assembly and those types of grand statements — that we have seen a very reasonable suggestion brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Kluane, based on the concerns and suggestions that he has heard from his constituents and other Yukoners. The response from the government has been extremely partisan, filled with platitudes, revisionist history and a lot of rhetoric. They have made a number of statements that simply do not line up with the facts.

The Premier claimed in his comments — he talked about making government open, accountable and more transparent. Again, I have to remind Yukoners of the fact — as we debated in the spring — that this is the same Premier and Finance minister who chose to reduce the information contained in the budget from 11 pages of budget highlights to a mere four pages of budget highlights, complete with more pictures and infographics, that really told Yukoners very little detail and were very heavy on platitudes.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of areas that we've seen in this budget and included in the supplementary where there has been a failure to get both capital and O&M funding out the door by this current government. Again, for a government that claimed that they were going to be more collaborative and raise the bar on debate and engage the Legislative Assembly, the response to a sincere and reasonable request by my colleague, the Member for Kluane, is unfortunate, to say the least.

We have also seen very clearly — any Yukoner who has an understanding of financial management who listened to both the Premier and, most especially the Minister for Highways and Public Works, would clearly gain the sense that neither of those individuals understand cash management or where the issues of budgetary pressure are. We have seen the Financial Advisory Panel that is, as we've noted before — based on the panel's statement about the level of detail they're receiving, we believe there is, in fact, very little point in having a panel that is supposed to provide advice on the finances but is not, in fact, even given access to the books in detail or the same level of information provided to ministers about finances, financial pressures, variances and so on. With all due respect to the individuals on that panel, perhaps, had they been given access to that level of detail, they could have helped the Liberal Cabinet understand the cost pressures, which they do not seem to have done so to date, based on their statements.

The Premier acknowledged in the spring that, by his own admission, 202 new government employee positions were added to government this fiscal year. That included substantially increasing the size of the Department of Finance. We still have not heard an answer from the government on whether that 202 figure includes the new French language teachers who are being hired, or whether those teachers are, in fact, on top of that 202 number.

We have seen, as well, cost increases in a number of areas, including \$600,000 more in spending for the technical

education wing at F.H. Collins, due to mismanagement by the Liberal government. We have seen cost overruns as well on the Salvation Army project and on the Ross River bridge. All of those funds have consumed money that could be better spent in areas such as operation and maintenance funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, in the areas where we have seen lapses, there is money that is lapsing from this fiscal year, but we believe — my colleague, the Member for Kluane, is not even suggesting spending all of the money on safety projects, but simply pointing to some urgent needs, such as brushing. The fact that this current government, by the Minister of Highways and Public Works' own admission during the spring, reduced the budget for brushing and vegetation control along our highways from \$800,000 to \$300,000 — a cut of \$500,000.

I do appreciate that, in response to pressure brought forward by me and constituents related to the situation along the Mayo Road, in fact they did respond to that urgent safety need, but there are other vegetation control issues causing safety issues in other areas of my riding across the territory, including in the ridings of my colleagues the Member for Kluane, the Member for Watson Lake and the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. They have all heard those concerns from constituents.

We have also identified issues such as turning lanes, which are safety issues where those improvements could in fact improve highway safety. I would note that in one case, the request that I brought forward to the Minister of Highways and Public Works, based on what I had heard after polling constituents for feedback, was simply to repaint the highway lines to recreate the turning lanes in Hidden Valley at Couch Road and McPherson back to what they were before they were repainted in September 2016. Unfortunately, the minister didn't choose to take those public concerns seriously. We received a very dismissive response and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, my constituents were not happy with the response from this government.

What the government seems to be forgetting is that when we bring forward concerns, these are concerns we hear from Yukon citizens. Those Yukon citizens in our ridings — whether they voted for us or voted for another candidate or another party — are all citizens to whom the Liberal government owes a responsibility to take their concerns seriously and respond in a reasonable manner. Again, my colleague, the Member for Kluane, when he brought forward this motion, was simply urging government to take a look at some of the unspent funds in this fiscal year and redirect some of them toward public safety initiatives.

There are a number of areas where the current government — we hear the trite and inaccurate characterizations from the Liberal members, including the Minister of Highways and Public Works, about the history of revenue collection and spending, while they fail to acknowledge the fact that in fact revenue growth was reduced by a very deliberate decision by the Yukon Party while in government to cut taxes multiple times, which reduced own-source revenue but provided benefit to Yukon citizens. It

certainly appears to us that the Financial Advisory Panel, the new *Public Airports Act* and the rhetoric around the carbon tax all appear to us to be excuses to try to come up with a reason to impose new taxes.

There are a number of areas where through delays that hang directly around the Premier's neck in indecision in hiring DMs — this has caused challenges within departments that cause delays and, in some cases, cost overruns as a result of those delays.

We have also heard complaints from Yukoners about cost increases that they believe are due to delays by ministers and Cabinet in approving projects and a failure to recognize that, particularly for seasonally sensitive construction projects, if those projects get out the door late in the fiscal year and run into fall, there is often increased costs for completing those projects.

Again we see, unfortunately, that the Liberal government is not keeping their commitment to being open, accountable and transparent. We have seen in response to a very sincere and reasonable proposal by my colleague, the Member for Kluane, a very rhetoric-heavy response and a failure to recognize the reasonable nature of the proposal.

I have to again point out to the Minister of Highways and Public Works — you might want to read my remarks yesterday. I will just give him a short excerpt from the highlights. I would remind the government that despite their attempts to claim that the cupboard was bare when they took office, according to their own budget documents, according to the Auditor General and according to Standard & Poor's, we left them with a very healthy financial situation. They had roughly \$100 million in net financial assets upon taking office and, even after they had half a year in government and spent that down, there was still over \$93 million in net financial assets at the start of the fiscal year.

By the Premier's own press release issued last week — and I quote from that release: "... the 2017–18 Main Estimates indicate that the Government of Yukon held \$93.4 million in net financial assets at the start of the fiscal year..."

The Premier's October 2 press release also acknowledges several other important facts — again quoting from the release: "Yukon has maintained a 'AA' credit rating for eight consecutive years. Yukon has the second highest credit rating in the country, tied with Saskatchewan."

Again, in quoting from the Premier's own press release: "In assigning its ratings, Standard & Poor's considers private sector economic performance, demographic trends and government finances. As in previous years, strengths highlighted in the report for Yukon include good financial management, low debt levels and strong liquidity."

Again, we can spend a lot more time debating this, but the fact is that at a certain point, the government is going to need to live up to their words and stop playing the blame game, get down to work in detail, stop trying to blame the previous government or Ottawa, or perhaps someone else for decisions that they have made or decisions they have failed to make.

I will point out to members that when government talks about being open and transparent, that whether they like questions about funding for the Hospital Corporation or not, when a member of this Assembly stands up on behalf of constituents and concerned Yukoners, asking whether there has been an increase or not, and the Premier refuses to rise and the Minister of Health and Social Services refuses to provide an answer, that is not being transparent. That is not being open and accountable. Yukoners have a right to that information and they should not have to file an ATIPP request to hopefully — maybe — get an answer out of the government if they don't refuse to respond or redact the information.

Last but not least, again the Minister of Highways and Public Works claimed the previous government was spending down to dust. Clearly the Minister of Highways and Public Works thinks \$100 million in net financial assets is dust and that explains the fiscal mismanagement by the current government and the fact that in this fiscal year alone — by the admission of their own budget documents — they are planning to blow through over \$80 million in net financial assets, basically blowing \$80 million of Yukoners' cash because of the fact that they have tabled the largest budget in Yukon history. They have increased it over previous years, but they refuse to be accountable to Yukoners for that.

In conclusion, I will be voting in favour of this motion brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Kluane. Issues such as brushing, turning lanes, funding for the RCMP, funding for Victim Services, funding for the coroner's office, funding for health care and funding for the fentanyl crisis are all things that Yukoners are asking us to bring forward to this Assembly.

They are priorities and needs that do matter and it is unfortunate that this Liberal government is being so dismissive of the views of Yukoners, especially after running on an election slogan of "be heard".

Mr. Adel: I welcome the opportunity to speak to this motion put forward by the member opposite. It touches on two important issues for Yukoners: financial management and public safety. In this House, I believe we all share an interest in ensuring a high level of public safety throughout the Yukon. My colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, has detailed some of the work the Yukon government has done during this fiscal year to enhance public safety. In reply to some of the remarks from the member opposite, turning lanes have been there for a long time. It's interesting they're coming forward now.

The suggested course of action on this motion is not the appropriate way to achieve public safety. It has to do with sound financial management. It seems that this motion is basically asking the government to borrow from Peter to pay Paul. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that would be irresponsible but, as the elected representatives of the Yukon, we have a duty to manage taxpayers' money responsibly. That's what Yukoners expect of us and for good reason. Over the last decade under the Yukon Party government, spending

increased 2.5 percent while revenue only increased 1.7 percent. Cash management — money in, money out — eventually, the pot goes dry and we have to make other arrangements. At this rate, for every new dollar the government brings in, it's spending \$1.50. Yukoners understand, as you do at home, that this type of financial planning is not sustainable. After 10 years of Yukon Party overspending, Yukoners want some strong financial management.

Borrowing from Peter to pay Paul is poor financial management and results in unsustainable budgeting. We've seen where that approach leads and we respectfully decline an invitation to continue down that path. We on this side of the House are committed to strong financial management and responsible budgeting. Responsible budgeting is a road map for this government's financial success and for the success of the Yukon as a whole when it comes to managing our finances and having the money available for public safety projects.

If you have determined that X number of dollars is needed for an available project, you arrange finances for this project and, just because there's a delay in starting the project for whatever reason, the project does not go away. Nor does the need for the funds. Take the new Salvation Army Centre of Hope. The project was delayed considerably as a result of contaminated soil on the building site. Had the government used the \$10.2 million allocated for this project on some other initiative, however important and pressing, there would have been no money to build the Centre of Hope.

In light of these kinds of setbacks, Mr. Speaker, we don't reallocate funds. You carry that budget item forward until the project is complete or cancelled. To move the unspent budgeted funds to other projects does not make the need go away, nor does it eliminate the commitment that we as a government made to Yukoners. Instead, it creates a disjointed financial plan where you are forced to seek funds to complete projects in an environment that is not favourable to your needs, which leads to increased carrying charges or interest rates. It doesn't lead to responsible budgeting.

Mr. Speaker, think about it: if your roof needs to be repaired, let's assume that you have enough money to fix it — and you would be the first one to know if it needed repairing — but then you decide to spend the money on installing new lights outside so that it is safer for your family and visitors to access your house. While the increased safety is surely important, your roof still needs to be fixed and now you need to find the money to fix it elsewhere. This kind of well-meaning but short-sighted budgeting is not sustainable in the long term.

Perhaps this proposal sheds light on how the Yukon Party chose to budget and manage the territory's finances when it was in office. As Yukoners are learning, Mr. Speaker, that method has not served the territory well.

Let me repeat: over the last decade under the Yukon Party, government spending increased 2.5 percent while revenue only increased 1.7 percent. That has caused the territory's financial position to deteriorate. It is important that Yukoners understand this reality so that we can come together

as a territory to correct our course. Our government has established the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel, an independent body tasked with assessing the territory's financial position and laying out options for getting us back on track. They were also tasked with engaging Yukoners so that we can have an informed discussion about the Yukon's financial future — over 60 meetings. That is really connecting with Yukoners.

The Financial Advisory Panel has done an excellent job of engaging Yukoners across the territory, helping them understand the position we are in, how we got there and hearing their ideas on how to fix it as we move forward. The Financial Advisory Panel visited municipalities and held public meetings in communities throughout the territory. It also met with First Nation governments, key stakeholders, organizations and NGOs as well as the opposition parties here in the House. It has been a fantastic example of extensive and accessible public engagement. It was critical for ensuring that Yukoners come to understand the true cost of government and the challenges that we face moving forward.

All Yukoners are affected by the territory's financial position and all Yukoners have a stake in the territory's financial future. Rather than avoiding these realities or trying to keep them out of sight and out of mind, we are committed to being open, transparent and accountable to Yukoners about the territory's finances. This is absolutely essential, Mr. Speaker. It is important to Yukoners to understand where we are and why we are here. I have already noted that spending increased 2.5 percent while revenues only increased 1.7 percent for the past decade under the Yukon Party. The Yukon Party also failed to include the future O&M costs while making new capital investments.

Now they are suggesting we use committed but unspent capital investment on unrelated O&M expenditures. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but we will not be robbing Peter to pay Paul. Yukoners expect better and they deserve better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I rise today to speak to this motion. I find it quite ironic that we have the previous government bringing forward a motion that sheds light on lack of planning on public safety.

I myself, as well as many members on this side of the House, have dedicated probably our whole working career to public safety in the Yukon. I'm certainly one of them. This is exactly one of the reasons why I ran in the election last year. I spent years and years of my life in rooms advising the Yukon Party government on just exactly where we are in terms of public safety in the Yukon. I would like to just focus on that because we've had a lack of planning in Yukon for a very, very long time. I'm going to point out a few specific examples of that.

This territory has faced public safety issues for probably at least a couple of decades but in the last five to 10 years, we were at a tipping point. Sitting at those tables, advising the government that this is where we're going, these are the issues we're facing as Yukoners, and that we're going to see a trend

in increased violence, increased drug trafficking, we're going to see trends change in the Yukon and we're going to see results that we've never seen before in the Yukon — that is, in fact, what we're seeing now.

The Yukon Party entered into a 40-year policing agreement. That is what we are now in. At that time — sorry; maybe I misspoke: it's a long, long term. It is decades — we're in decades of a policing agreement within Yukon.

That was a time when we could then put forward with really good insight what we would need in Yukon. During that period when Yukon government was negotiating that contract, that was the time for us to put forward the trends that we saw then. You can't tell me that the government wasn't aware. First Nation governments were trying to get to those tables to be part of the negotiations. The self-governing First Nations of this territory were trying to get to that table to be part of those discussions and they were not allowed to do that because the Government of Yukon had made that decision on their behalf.

Now, within the next couple of years, we will actually be at the 10-year anniversary of the policing review in Yukon. That resulted in the report, *Sharing Common Ground*. *Sharing Common Ground* was an extensive review of policing in the Yukon. That review shed light on the trends within the Yukon. It shed light from Yukoners' perspective of what would be needed to change the policing services in the Yukon. There were a number of those recommendations that the Yukon Party government took a very conservative approach on and did not fully implement in the way we had intended them to be.

There are lots of tools. There's a tremendous amount of tools that the Yukon Party government could have used to help advance public safety in the Yukon and they chose not to do it. One of them is the administration of justice agreements. That is a provision under our self-governing agreements in the Yukon that allows Yukon First Nations to draw down authority in all of these various areas, including policing, including public safety areas. The Yukon Party government chose not to give a solid mandate to the negotiating teams.

Well, thankfully, we have a new government that recognizes that these are modern treaties. They can change the makeup of our communities. They can absolutely change the public safety in our communities in a positive way. We've given a strong mandate to our negotiating teams to negotiate with our Yukon First Nation governments who are ready to negotiate those agreements.

We also have the First Nation policing policy, which is a federal policy that will be sunseting soon. This is our opportunity, from the north, to bring forward a strong voice, to bring a voice that has not been there, that will allow for tripartite types of policing agreements to exist north of 60.

Again, I find it very ironic that the previous Yukon Party government has brought forward a motion talking about the repurposing of funds. I'm not going to go into the financial aspects of it because I feel my colleagues have done a very good job of outlining all of those processes. My focus was on this particularly. I want to make the record clear about the Kwanlin Dün community safety officer program. That was the

work of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. That was their hard work. They committed themselves to that. They made a difference, and that is what those administration of justice agreements are all about: empowering our communities, empowering our Yukon First Nation governments to make a difference for themselves, instead of taking a paternalistic approach. That's a very good example of what can happen when a government decides to partner in the true sense of partnership with Yukon First Nation governments. We are so fortunate in the Yukon to have them. That's essentially what I wanted to say today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion today. I do thank the Member for Kluane for bringing it forward. I think that no one questions the sincerity of the motion, although the Member for Lake Laberge has made reference to that, and I will get to that in a few minutes.

When the Member for Kluane was speaking — let me start here: I think the motion is referencing some funding set aside in the 2017-18 budget for the French first language secondary school. I think it would be important to remind the Members of the Legislative Assembly during this debate of that commitment and a little bit of background about how it came about.

The Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon challenged a number of years ago various aspects of the Government of Yukon's approach to francophone education. At that time, the issues were complex and certainly not easily resolved. After years of litigation that cost Yukoners a significant amount of money, some of the issues were resolved in the Supreme Court of Canada which clarified the questions of law and affirmed at that time that the trial judge who had been assigned to the matter was biased and nullified his decision.

The CSFY later reactivated the case in 2015 and the government and the CSFY have been at the table to try to resolve the details outstanding as a result of that court case. The attempts to do that are for the purposes of not spending funds on litigation but, in fact, spending them on education.

The government and the CSFY continue to try to resolve these matters and the two parties have been negotiating proactively with a view to resolving them without having to go back to court.

One of the issues in that lawsuit is a separate secondary school for French first language students. That shouldn't surprise anyone here in the Legislative Assembly, but it is important to remind ourselves of that because the concept of having the 2017-18 budget reflect a commitment to proceed with the building of that school was significant for the CSFY, significant for the government and significant for this community. As a result of that commitment in this budget and what will presumably, when the matter proceeds to the Legislative Assembly, be lapsed into next year's budget for reasons that we have already discussed in answers to questions last week and this week here in this Legislative

Assembly, it is critical that this commitment be maintained and properly reflected in the budget.

I want to return for a second to the Member for Kluane. I certainly agree, as he mentioned, that it takes planning. He had many good points about the kinds of work and how important it is to get materials and to signal to contractors that there's work to be done but, in my view — and I'm suggesting to this Legislative Assembly today and I'm focusing on the funds that will lapse from the school that will be built next year — the focus there is simply that this is too significant a project for us to somehow say those funds can be used for something else. That commitment is made. Whether it's built in 2017-18 or 2018-19, those funds are going to be required. It would be irresponsible to take those funds and use them on something else, and then be standing here in six months, in the middle of 2018, or some version of a number of months, and say, "Well, we need money to build that school." It just doesn't compute with me. I'm no budget expert but I'm a fast learner and I certainly understand the commitments made in a budget.

In my view, the budget is a commitment. It's a statement of intentions. It's also an indication of what will be done by this government. I take no issue whatsoever with the projects that have been suggested by the Member for Kluane. Those are all valuable undertakings and things that his constituents will know about and will be aware of and that all Yukoners will benefit from.

My colleagues and others have already spoken about the concepts of capital versus O&M costs and moving one to the other. Money cannot be carelessly moved despite the fact that the suggestions from the Member for Kluane are solid and strong.

The budget process requires a presentation here in this Legislative Assembly. It requires debate; it requires a vote on how the money will be spent or how it will be used. That process is open and accountable. I think we've heard some other Members of the Legislative Assembly say today that simply changing those decisions behind closed doors is, in fact, not open and accountable and will be of significant concern to this government and should be of significant concern to Yukoners.

As I've noted, the money for, let's say, the French first language school — if that's what is being targeted or suggested here — can't be spent on something else because we'll need it to complete the project. We'll need it to complete this project in a later time period. We will need it to complete the significant commitment that is here. It will be moved to the next fiscal year. Again, I approach these things from a rather practical point of view and, in my view, the money that is dedicated to complete that project has to stay available.

I completely understand what the Member for Watson Lake says about the concept of it going into general revenue and those kinds of things, but the Member for Watson Lake commented that the money doesn't sit in a separate bank account, it will go into general revenues, and I think her words were: "... and it will be spent on any number of things". It won't be spent on any number of things. It will be spent on the

project that it is dedicated to in the budget because that's the promise we've made. It's the promise we made in the circumstances of a legal case, and it's the promise we have made in many other circumstances on many other budget items. In this case, it will be spent on the building of a French first language school, which is, in fact, a commitment.

The Member for Watson Lake also indicated that she was somehow concerned that speaking on behalf of her constituents was somehow not appreciated or not appropriate. In fact, we all should speak on behalf of our constituents. That's why we're here. We should be speaking on behalf of all Yukoners as well, and those of us on this side of the House who have the responsibility of a department speak on behalf of the departments. We speak on behalf of a number of constituents but there is certainly no issue whatsoever that speaking on behalf of your constituents isn't in fact our job. The Member for Kluane spoke very eloquently on behalf of his constituents.

Planning requires the anticipation of risks, it requires responsible decisions, and it requires making the best plans possible, and those are best plans that are not only valuable and meaningful — they only become valuable and meaningful if they are respected as plans. Failing to do that — failing to plan, and we've heard other examples here in the House today. Wi-Fi in the community hospitals wasn't in the plan. Doing so later is a problem. We've heard other examples — the planning about F.H. Collins. There are many examples that cause us to be concerned with respect to deviating from that plan, if I can say it that way.

In fact, another example that causes me great concern is the fact that what is sometimes known as the "sport school", or the "sport program portable", was completely left out of the planning for F.H. Collins school. It's a significant space. It supports a very successful program — a sport program. It currently takes place in a very old building that is a set of portables put together — some 30-plus years old and falling down. The space for that program, which is going to be continued and is going to be maintained and which is very successful and has been an educational opportunity for many students — some of them quite vulnerable students — wasn't even included in the F.H. Collins space for the school. It wasn't included in any space for the tech wing. There were actually no plans whatsoever to rebuild that space. It sits in a portable that you can drive by on the property now and see from the road. There was no plan whatsoever for those students to be accommodated.

In fact, when that portable came to my attention, it had been some number of months without electricity because the electricity was cut off when the demolition of the old F.H. Collins school started and it had never been hooked up again. Students weren't even allowed to go in until late in the day because it was heated with a generator, and the vice-principal came and started the generator at 7:00 in the morning. It is poor planning. These kids needed a space and they still need a space. Part of the money that will lapse will go next year — as soon as possible — to completing an appropriate space for them. This is something that should have been in the original

plan at F.H. Collins and I am completely bewildered as to how that didn't happen.

That's not my opinion about whether or not that was poor planning — these are the facts. It's not my opinion about whether or not Wi-Fi was not provided for in the hospitals or the F.H. Collins planning process took a ridiculous amount of time and money — way overbudget. Those are facts.

The Member for Lake Laberge indicated a number of things in his submissions here today. The Member for Lake Laberge named a number of public safety programs, public safety initiatives. We have heard from the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate to clarify some of that. To be clear, the RCMP fentanyl programs, Health and Social Services' programs, the coroner's office, and Victim Services programs are all currently funded. Funding, and the programs that they deliver, are ongoing concerns for this government and for these ministers.

The basic foundation of the Legislative Assembly is the opportunity to debate, to respectfully disagree with one another. We all have the best interests of Yukoners in mind. We just have different ideas about how to get there. I respect that process. I believe in that process — I know our colleagues do — my colleagues here do. What I do not respect is that some members of the opposition have the approach that because we don't agree with their approach, we are somehow less caring, less dedicated or less committed to Yukoners or to our work. Such an approach is simply wrong. It is in my view unprofessional. It is less than Yukoners deserve.

Feel free to disagree with my decisions. Feel free to question the evidence upon which they are made. That is my job — to explain those, to support those. To make those decisions plainly is all of our jobs, but it is simply unacceptable to question our dedication to Yukoners or our integrity to this work.

We will not be supporting this motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the basis that, while the mover of the motion, the Member for Kluane, indicated a number of very valuable projects, worthy projects, and spoke eloquently on behalf of his constituents, as he should, that money has been dedicated. It is a commitment in the budget; it is a commitment to the CSFY community; it is a commitment to Yukoners generally in a broader community that these projects will go ahead. Changing that decision without proper planning would simply be irresponsible.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Istchenko: I do want to thank everyone who spoke to this motion today. I think the spirit and intent for me of this motion, and for my colleagues, was a little bit of a test. It was a pretty vague motion. I was warmed by the comments from the Premier after the last Sitting about it being time to quit playing the blame game and get on with stuff. Apparently

today was all about the blame game and not getting on with stuff.

It disappoints me a little bit. The spirit and intent of this motion for me was what I spoke so — and what I heard from members opposite — eloquently for. I'm not taking away at all from the lack of planning by any government on public safety. That's why we have a Department of Justice; that's why we have a Department of Highways and Public Works, Health and Social Services and very large budgets that the ministers spend a lot of time on.

Public safety is of the utmost concern of every government — it doesn't matter what political stripe — but when you get new and emerging public issues, sometimes it's good to address them.

I wanted to bring forward the fact that there are funds — and not just the Minister of Education spoke. Nowhere in my motion does it talk about the French school. I just talked about unspent budget for projects in the fiscal year.

There were thousands of dollars of hours of equipment time to be spent on the Destruction Bay streets that got cancelled. There are Building Canada projects that are way behind schedule and that were supposed to be started in the spring that haven't started. There are lots of opportunities.

I wanted to get out and across how important it is — and we've had this before and I said it in my initial comments — to get contracts out. There were contractors this year who were looking to leave the Yukon and bid on projects elsewhere because they were waiting — how important that is. If there is an opportunity and an emerging issue happens, like a road washes out, something happens to a school, an earthquake — they went to Blanchard camp and they worked on that camp. They spent money on the camp; it wasn't in the budget; it was an emerging issue. It moved a grader six inches in there; the beams twisted. They were down there fixing it. We never debated that.

In my five years of government, we've appropriated funds toward things sometimes that weren't debated in this House that were public safety issues — fire or whatever. I've never had the opposition come and complain to us and ask the question: "Why did you fix this road?" Well, because it was an emergency and it was an issue.

On a kind of funny note, I want to mention something about Wi-Fi. This building was built in 1974, and planning or no planning, there was no Wi-Fi in 1974, but we have Wi-Fi here. I think most of you are probably looking on it right now, so things can be done.

In short, I am disappointed, of course. We are supposed to be disappointed in the opposition that the government is not supporting our motion. It's politics, ladies and gentlemen; that is how it works. But for me, bringing this motion forward was for us to address some up and coming concerns.

I watched a video on Sunday on Facebook from a friend of mine, who used to live in the Kluane riding, of elk crossing the road. I looked at the sweet clover, and the sweet clover probably needs to be mowed every year. It is an issue.

In closing, I guess what I will say is — and the Minister of Highways and Public Works always says things and then I

think, “How can I repeat them to him?” He is in a Great Depression, and I guess the thing that I can say is I also see a problem. I see a problem in contracts being tendered late and things not getting done. It is clear by the actions and words of the members opposite that they are not really interested in trying to fix that.

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: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Disagree.

Mr. Gallina: Disagree.

Mr. Adel: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Mr. Hutton: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are six yea, 12 nay.

Speaker: The nays have it. I declare the motion defeated.

Motion No. 137 negatived

Motion No. 130

Clerk: Motion No. 130, standing in the name of Ms. White.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop and introduce homeowner protection legislation that includes mandatory licensing for home builders and contractors and an effective warranty program for new home construction and home renovations.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly.

This motion is not new. We debated it from the other side of this side in 2012. My hope is that it is not going to be as contentious. I believe, at that point in time, I called six points of order because it got a little heated.

What I’m looking for is to start a dialogue. What I would like to do is start a dialogue about home warranty programs and the construction industry. It’s really important that I start with this: All contractors are not created equal. There are fantastic home builders in the territory and there are some who are less fantastic. This is not meant to be a punishment to those who build really quality buildings and stand behind their products. This is more to make sure that if you were unfortunate and hired someone who you thought was building your home, you have the ability to address those issues.

It was first brought forward by Todd Hardy in 2006, and he said that he spent most of his professional career fixing buildings that had been done by someone improperly and that a lot of his work as a carpenter was to fix mistakes. When we brought this forward in 2012, we were at kind of like the pinnacle of the housing crisis. People’s rents had doubled, house prices had jumped. If you look at the statistical information, houses prior to 2011 were \$80,000 to \$100,000 less than they were in 2011-12. That’s a huge difference.

One thing that it is important to take note of is that, typically, unless you have a really fancy car or a really big boat, the major purchase of your entire life would be your house. You will invest more money into that house, you will spend more time paying that house off than any other single item that you will own.

Part of the reason why we decided to bring this forward again, other than the obvious, which is that we are also again in a bit of a construction boom — is that the construction that we saw in 2010 to 2013 — unfortunately, what we saw was that there were some really irresponsible contractors in the territory. It’s kind of hard to say out loud, because it sounds like I’m making accusations, but the reality is that there are people who bought homes or condominium units under the pretence that they were buying what they saw. They had them inspected by home inspectors; they were sold to them by realtors; and they bought these places.

There are some fairly serious things happening to different places in town. The unfortunate thing is there is no consumer protection for these homeowners. It’s great that a number of years ago, we changed the *Condominium Act* and we talked about things like the contingency fund. A contingency fund is designed for a condominium to cover the commons. If we all lived in one house, which would be incredible — a 19-unit house — it would cover the siding, it would cover the roof, it would cover everything that we share. It would cover the plumbing underneath, and each individual house inside would be different. That would be covered by our own rent, but the condominium corporation itself would cover the outside envelope. When we collect our condo fees, they get built up into a bank account and they are referred to as a contingency fund. When we passed the *Condominium Act*, part of what we said was that if you had a certain number of units, you were going to have to figure out what that contingency fund needed to be in case of emergency repairs.

Mr. Speaker, the reason why this is relevant is that we have seen catastrophic things happen across Canada to large-scale building projects. I’m mostly referring — when I say

catastrophic, I'm talking about the leaky condo issue that happened in Vancouver, British Columbia, where hundreds of owners were hit with contingency funds of tens of thousands of dollars. So if your condominium corporation doesn't have enough money to make those repairs — if we all lived in the same condominium and we got hit with a \$1-million repair and our contingency fund didn't have \$1 million, that would get divided among us and you could either pay it outright, or you might have to get it refinanced into your mortgage, or whatever it was.

The reason I'm using condos as a focus is because we saw what happened up in the Falcon Ridge development. The developer started to build buildings that hadn't been cleared by the owners of the property — that it was different from what the intended use was. It involved those condo owners going to court to say, "Look, this is not what we were told we were getting, and this is not what we want." The end result was that the condo owners — because the contractor left town — and the condominium corporate had to then pay to dismantle what the contractor had been told that they had to do. They had to pay for that, so that was out of their contingency fund. As a unit, they had to pay for that.

If you were a homeowner — I live in a Takhini duplex built in 1958, so I feel like, at this point in time, it's pretty bomber. It has gone through many earthquakes, many changes and things, but I had \$40,000 worth of renovation work done when I got it insulated. I hired someone who is a carpenter. We discussed what I wanted done, and I'm not a construction expert so I assumed by paying that money and our discussion and our contract that what I was asking for would get done.

I am very happy to tell you that my house is well-insulated, that the work was very well done, and I didn't have to worry about that. But what would have happened if I had spent \$40,000 on a home renovation when I hired a builder under the assumption that they were what they were saying they were, and that I had been left without insulation or that I had been left with a house that then had a water-leakage problem that led to mould, and that I was then caught on how I was going to pay for those renovations to the renovations?

When we bring this motion forward, part of it is that we want to have this conversation because we know right now — in the City of Whitehorse, for example — that there are people who are in new construction, that there are issues in that new construction, and that they have been told that the only means that they have to deal with this is to take this to court because the building that they purchased does not meet what it is supposed to. We are talking about cracked foundations. We are talking about leaking foundations. We're talking about all sorts of different things.

The reason I bring the home warranty program is that there are other jurisdictions — and this is just about starting the conversation. In British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, builders must provide homebuyers with a third-party warranty. BC and Alberta are viewed as having the strongest and most effective home warranty standards in Canada.

The reason for that is that, in British Columbia, they have something called the *Homeowner Protection Act* of BC. New homes built in BC are protected by a 2-5-10 warranty insurance. The reason why it's called 2-5-10 — and I am going to use this again when I talk about Alberta — is that there are two years' coverage for defects on labour and material, and that includes 12 months' coverage for defects in material and labour and 24 months' coverage for defects in material and labour for major systems. Those could be the heating system, the electrical system, the plumbing system — systems within the envelope. The "5" talks about the five-year coverage on the building envelope, including coverage on unintended water penetration.

If I built a house in 2012 and, by 2017, that building envelope was no longer protecting me from the weather, that is problematic. Five years' time — your house should not leak within five years. That should be something that, once it is identified, it shouldn't be my — I just spent \$375,000 on a house that leaks.

Whose responsibility is it? Is it my responsibility because I hired a home inspector who did the inspection and they could not tell that there was a mistake made during the construction period? Is it the fault of the inspectors who did the inspections throughout the process? I would suggest that the responsibility lies with the builder. The person who constructed the building should be responsible for that. Then there is the 10 years of coverage on major structural items. Again, it is important to know that both BC and Alberta are viewed as having the strongest protection for homebuyers because of the 2-5-10-year home warranty.

It is interesting, because when we talked about this in 2012, Alberta wasn't involved in this yet. They did not have a guaranteed home warranty. In May 2017, a bill was introduced in Alberta — Bill No. 12 — and it was called the *New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2017*. It was going to require that builders maintain an active licence to build new homes and secure home warranty coverage in Alberta. It also created the requirement for an online registry of licensed builders to help homebuyers select a reputable builder. They talked about having a separate registry where you would need to have a licence. You would go through whatever office decided that your licence would meet those requirements. But in Alberta, when you buy a home, you are also the same as British Columbia — you have the 2-5-10-year home warranty. It means you should have confidence that when you are buying a new home — like a build in Alberta — that you are covered for that two-year span for smaller things, five-year span for the outside envelope and 10 years for structural damage. Alberta's and British Columbia's are the highest, and Alberta's is just new. I believe it actually comes into effect in January of 2018, but I can maybe confirm that.

Then we can look to Manitoba. Manitoba has the new home warranty program of Manitoba, and it has been running as a non-profit since 1975. They recognized in the 1970s that they needed to take a closer look at protecting people when they made the single largest purchase of their life. I am going to correct myself, Mr. Speaker. It turns out that actually

Alberta was 2017 because starting on January 1, 2018, in Manitoba, *The New Home Warranty Act* will come into effect. This is really exciting because all of a sudden Manitoba has homebuyer protection.

We can look far to the east and we can talk about Quebec. Quebec has la Régie du bâtiment du Québec, and it is a guarantee plan. Upon the purchase of a new house, or a co-ownership that is covered, the guarantee plan for new residential buildings automatically applies. This plan guarantees the fulfillment of certain legal obligations of the contractor, and the plan is mandatory and it is not possible to waive it even if your builder asks you to sign a document. There is no slipping out of this, because obviously people tried in Quebec by asking you to sign a document. No matter what is signed in Quebec, you are still protected under the Régie du bâtiment du Québec. So you can rest easy in Quebec if you buy a new house. That is very exciting.

Ontario has the new *Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act*. It is interesting because Ontario started originally and had a not-for-profit called the Tarion Warranty Corporation. It used to be in charge of all of that, but it has changed a little bit. Now the act is under government and it is still run by this not-for-profit. In Ontario, they have a 1-2-7 warranty — so one year, two years and seven years — for similar things that I talked about before.

Then there are interesting things, because in several provinces, home warranty is mandatory for all new home builds, but this is not the case in Saskatchewan. This means that the choice to include warranty is up to the builder and there are home warranty options available in Saskatchewan for builders that they can take advantage of. So in Saskatchewan, it is optional coverage. Now if I were going to be purchasing a home and I had the option between a builder who offered the home warranty program and one who did not, that would really make me consider my options. In Saskatchewan, it's a home warranty that is based on a broad coverage plan passed on to the homeowner by the builder and it starts the moment of move-in. It has different things. It's interesting because you can look at it, and it tells you the different things that are optional.

Then we can look farther — we can look to the Atlantic provinces and it's interesting because new home warranties are optional in the Atlantic provinces. Interestingly enough, they are all managed by the Atlantic Home Warranty and it's interesting because if you pull it up, it gives you a whole bunch of different options. The fascinating thing is that if you were a builder and you belonged to certain organizations, the expectation is that as a member of that organization, you will offer a home warranty for new construction. You cannot become a member of those organizations — reputable organizations; you can't have it on your business card, you can't use it as a form of promotion — if you do not offer the home warranty. We looked at the Atlantic things and the Atlantic Home Warranty. If anyone is curious, you can Google it and it has lots of information.

In Nova Scotia, in 2008, they actually did a report on Nova Scotia new homeowner protection and they tabled that

to government. It's interesting because they said they thought that they had some other options that were pretty good, but recommendation 6 said: "There should be mandatory warranty, at least for all Condominium Buildings. This warranty should include water penetration protection for a period of at least 5 years..." so that was the 2-5-10 so they're talking about that five-year span, and: "Warranty should be provided by companies at arms length from the building industry, and by companies with sound financial reserves, risk management experience, and adjudication procedures."

So they're saying if we don't look at single-family homes, we at least need to look at the bigger ones, the condominiums where you can have multiple people invested, to protect those people.

I'm not going to talk about the ones in town — there are issues in town — there are issues. I spent the first three years of my political career trying to make sure that there was insulation in one construction because things had happened. Then I had to support people who approached the contractor at the time and the contractor said, "If you continue to complain, then I'll just leave the territory." What do you do then?

Then, luckily enough, they hired a management company who dealt with the drainage issues — because this complex was built with very little thought to drainage, so when the snow melted, it flooded peoples' crawl spaces. I have seen units — they were multi-units — and the water turnoff was in one unit and it controlled multiple other units, but you could only get it through one access — one access — and you had to go in the house and into the crawl space to access that turnoff for every other unit. That passed here and there was no recourse for those owners. They had to pay for that out of their contingency fund because they couldn't go back to their builder, even though it was new construction.

Mr. Speaker, in 2012, when we brought this forward — and I'm sure it was really exciting reading, if anyone read it — we were told things like, well, you know, I know contractors, I have friends who are contractors, and I would just call them up to fix it. Our response at the time was, that's really fantastic and we wish everyone had the ability to call a contractor to fix someone else's mistake and not have to pay for it.

I appreciate, especially after I read the previous debate — I actually put a subamendment into an amendment and I wish I had looked at it before, because I put in the exact same — this is the same motion that we put in in 2012. I still stand behind it, because I really think that government has a role in making this a legislative thing. I think it should be law. The reason I think it should be law is we can look at what has happened in other jurisdictions.

Legislation is a really scary thing to talk about on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, and I appreciate that. I am looking forward to having an engaged conversation with my colleagues, although my engagement won't happen again until the end. I am looking forward, if there are suggestions on how we could do it. Ultimately what I would like to do is to open this up to the general public. I would love to see a consultation on it. I would love to see government talk to realtors and

contractors and builders. I would really love government to talk to condominium corporations that are in front of the courts, to say hey, if you had this insurance, would you be here now?

I would love it if we would talk to people who had bad experiences, so we could see the worst-case scenario to see what we're trying to protect against. I would like us to talk to builders we know go above and beyond and see how this would affect them. Would this affect them adversely or would they happily sign on because they already stand behind their product?

What I ultimately want to make sure of is that when we know that people are going to buy the single largest asset in their lives, the second they sign that cheque, they don't lose everything they put into it. When you're going to pay something — I'm paying for my house until I'm 65; I was a late homeowner. I didn't buy a house until 2012. I will be 65 by the time I finally own my house. The good news is that it will be almost 100 years old by that point. It will be a very old house by that point, but my hope is that government considers having this conversation with the broader public because I appreciate that, right now, this can't pass this way, and that's okay.

I'm looking forward to amendments; I'm looking forward to conversation; I'm looking forward to hearing from other members, because I know other members have had conversations with homeowners and are trying to support them through this. Mr. Speaker, I don't know exactly what the answer is to the problem, but I can tell you I've identified a problem and I believe that, within this room, we can take the steps forward to address it. I know the public service definitely has the answers, so maybe we just have to look outside this Chamber.

I'm happy to be here today to have this conversation. There are many jurisdictions we could look at to see what they did. I'm not a builder, but I would suggest that 2-5-10 looks really good, being the fact that it's like the gold star in the country, and I would like to see what we could do. It would be fantastic if we knew that new homebuyers in 2020 could rest easy when they were purchasing houses. It would be good to know at one point in time that you wouldn't have to have worries about settling in a large scale, or about water leaking down between your walls.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the comments and I look forward to having a final talk about it at the end.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to thank the member opposite for the motion. I appreciate hearing her words and opening a dialogue. I think that is how she referred to it.

The Government of Yukon does not currently have a new home warranty program, and I think that it's something that warrants further investigation and conversation.

To begin, the Department of Community Services is confident that we currently operate a robust building inspection process for new buildings and renovations. That does not mean that we can't look to other jurisdictions for lessons on best practices and learn from others across Canada.

I would like to first talk about the current building inspection process here in the Yukon.

In Yukon, all new homes are required to conform to a regulatory framework designed to ensure that the work is done by qualified professionals. We also work to ensure that the quality is appropriate to protect the investment of buyers and the safety of the people who live in homes in the Yukon. We do our best to encourage the training and retention of first-class tradespeople and construction companies in the Yukon construction industry. We recognize the significance of the investment that Yukoners make in their homes. I think that is something that we need to emphasize.

As the member opposite noted, it is in all likelihood, for most citizens, the single largest investment that we make in our lives. This is why, through the Department of Community Services, we work diligently to ensure that we permit work to build new homes or renovate existing homes in accordance with the National Building Code. Homes that are built from the ground up must meet minimum safety standards through application of the National Building Code and also of Yukon's own laws for electricity and heating, regardless of size. For prefabricated or mobile homes, Canadian Standards Association's safety code standards are applied during their factory construction.

Before it is deemed to meet the National Building Code, every new home in Yukon receives between five and eight inspections by qualified building inspectors from either the Yukon government or the City of Whitehorse. When existing homes undergo renovations or repairs, this work also requires inspection by either Yukon government or City of Whitehorse to make sure that the work is compliant with the National Building Code.

The regulatory framework in place in the Yukon, along with the staff of the Building Safety and Standards branch in the Department of Community Services, is there to make sure that the structures in which Yukoners live, work and play are well and safely constructed. In 2016, the Building Safety and Standards branch conducted 5,308 inspections. Just shy of 1,000 of those — 943 — were building inspections to assess the quality of the construction of each building. In addition, staff conducted system-specific inspections to make sure that the components of Yukon buildings are safe and effective. These included 2,800 electrical inspections, 219 plumbing inspections, 460 oil-heating inspections, 2,400 boiler inspection, 78 elevator inspections and 684 gas inspections — lots of inspections.

The Building Safety and Standards branch develops, interprets, administers and enforces building, plumbing, electrical and mechanical standards and facilitates the administration of area development regulations outside the City of Whitehorse for the Land Planning branch of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Within the City of Whitehorse, where municipal government building requirements meet and sometimes exceed those of the National Building Code, the Building Safety and Standards branch serves Yukoners by inspecting electrical, gas, elevators and large boiler installations. For all

other permits and inspections within city boundaries, the Building Safety and Standards branch collaborates with the City of Whitehorse.

In addition to developing common inspection standards for Yukon government building inspectors, the branch works with the City of Whitehorse to develop shared inspection standards. The Building Safety and Standards branch also contributes to national and regional conversations on emerging issues in building safety and standards, such as tiny homes, the effects of permafrost on building foundations and amendments to the national building, plumbing and electrical codes.

I have personal experience with that, having worked with several of the folks from the Building Safety and Standards branch here on national guidelines for the north on permafrost.

In Yukon, we are fortunate in that we have a top-notch building industry. Our tradespeople and home builders are some of the most qualified and experienced in Canada. Notwithstanding, the member opposite has noted that there are times when there will be deficiencies, and this is why we have inspections and laws in place.

It is important to note that it is common practice for some Yukon builders to provide an individual one-year home warranty. That happens now — not 2-5-10, as the member opposite noted as her gold standard, but a one-year warranty. What I'm noting, Mr. Speaker, is that we're not starting from nothing.

This government recognized that Yukoners need options for home ownership that are affordable. In addition to offering a regulatory framework that is intended to maximize the skills of our local building professionals, we're also taking steps to increase the availability of land in support of the objectives of both Yukon builders and its homebuyers. One of this government's highest priorities is to provide an adequate supply and range of land options, and we work in partnership with our municipal and First Nation governments.

This is an important factor in overcoming challenges related to affordable housing in the Yukon. I know that my colleague, the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, will likely speak to some of this.

This government knows that, for many Yukoners, being able to build their own home is synonymous with the notion of northern living. The current regulatory framework provides for an inspection regime that allows this as long as the work is done in accordance with permitting and National Safety Code requirements.

Yukon's Building Inspections services support a robust regulatory framework that works best when we work together. This is why Yukon government and the City of Whitehorse work collaboratively to support homeowners undertaking home construction and renovations when the required permits are in place. We are aware that there are regulatory frameworks in other jurisdictions to provide homeowner protection. In fact, most of the provinces, as the member opposite noted, now have homeowner protection in place.

Currently, British Columbia, as noted, mandates that, in order to offer homes for sale, those homes must be registered

for coverage by home warranty insurance supplied by a third-party warranty provider. That's an example. They range across the country.

It is important to keep in mind that the programs operating in other jurisdictions are not without their problems. New home warranty programs in place in some jurisdictions can add significantly to the cost of construction. They sometimes require homebuyers to waive their right to sue the builder directly, and they can place a regulatory burden on home builders to certify and, with all that, they do not always cover the entire value of the home. We need to balance the risks to our citizens. It is a good conversation to have.

That being said, we also recognize the potential benefits to a home warranty program. Warranties can provide peace of mind to new homeowners or to homeowners who undertake significant renovations. They can help protect from unforeseen costs that can possibly occur or if the citizens don't know the maintenance history of their homes. I believe that the implementation of a homeowner warranty program is something that could be examined further by this government, recognizing that we must take a balanced approach to that investigation.

In light of this, I would like to propose an amendment, and I had a conversation with the member opposite earlier today to discuss this amendment.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move:

THAT Motion No. 130 be amended by deleting the phrase “develop and introduce homeowner protection legislation that includes mandatory licensing for home builders and contractors and” and replacing it with the word “explore”.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes:

THAT Motion No. 130 be amended by deleting the phrase “develop and introduce homeowner protection legislation that includes mandatory licensing for home builders and contractors and” and replacing it with the word “explore”.

I think what you end up with is: It is moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to explore an effective warranty program for new home construction and home renovations.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for clarifying the wording.

What we are proposing here with this amendment is to explore an effective warranty program for new home construction and home renovations. Before opening up the floor to colleagues here in the Legislature to comment on this amendment, I have just a couple of concluding remarks.

First, I think it's important — and as we've already noted here — to look across Canada for best practices and to

compare those, and especially to consider how they will play out for smaller jurisdictions like our own.

Second, we need to make sure that any home warranty program that we would introduce here would fit in with ongoing and existing programs — for example, the housing action plan, and just wanting to make sure that it works well with existing initiatives that we have.

Finally, in examining whether or not a home warranty program might work here in the Yukon, I think we should emphasize that it's important to engage with local contractors on this issue so that we can ensure that both the homeowners and local industry are protected and heard. I think with that we might be able to find a positive solution for the territory.

With that, I look forward to hearing from colleagues on this issue.

Mr. Cathers: I will rise in support of the amendment brought forward by the Minister of Community Services.

I would like to just begin by acknowledging — I know the Member for Takhini-Kopper King is bringing forward a concern that is very important to her constituents and that she is, I know, bringing it forward out of sincerity and a desire to improve the structure, but I'm actually in agreement with most of what the Minister of Community Services said in his remarks about it. That's why I will be supporting this amendment.

What I would like to note is what I have heard from constituents and other Yukoners is that people — especially in small businesses and including people in the home construction business, especially those who are in the log-home construction business — are concerned about the red tape that they are already dealing with — the amount of paperwork, the amount of time they have to take, the cost of the regulatory burden. As I believe the Minister of Community Services noted, consideration of the regulatory burden has to be a factor. I believe that it's important, if government is looking at a home warranty program, that this be explored, that it be costed out and that there be sincere consultations with those who might be affected by it, including people who are in the home construction industry.

One thing I would like to note is that I have some constituents — and I know there are others across the territory — who are very small homebuilders, for lack of a better characterization — people who might build one log home a year or maybe not even every year. But for them, when they are doing it, it is an important source of income for themselves and their family. If there are additional requirements that require too much licensing or paperwork burden, I know that for some of those people it would simply make it cost-prohibitive. Some of them do high quality work, and I don't think that it's in the interest of society to see them excluded from engaging in that and putting food on their table and helping someone else build a home.

One thing I would note as well — we have previously expressed concerns about building inspections to the Minister of Community Services. I did receive his reply and won't spend a lot of time talking about that because that might be

straying a bit from speaking to the amendment, but I would note that concerns about building inspections and the lack of an effective appeal process and inconsistency of interpretation by different inspectors continue to be issues that I hear frequently from constituents. In fact, last night, I attended the annual general meeting of the Hootalinqua Fire Protection Society, which is the NGO organization that supports the volunteer fire hall that serves most of my riding of Lake Laberge — of course, Ibex Valley being the other one. In the case of Hootalinqua, the area they serve is roughly 900 adults, according to Elections Yukon and the voters list.

In talking to members of the society, including firefighters at the meeting and afterward, there were two issues that came up and, coincidentally, both of them fall within the Minister of Community Services department. One was concern —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King, on a point of order.

Ms. White: I'm going to call up Standing Order 19(b), which speaks to matters other than the question under discussion. I appreciate where the Member for Lake Laberge is coming from but he could speak to all of this once we pass the amendment.

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

Mr. Cathers: My remarks actually were very directly related to the amendment. I'll connect them in a moment if given the opportunity to do so.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: What I heard from the Member for Lake Laberge prior to the point of order being raised was that you were cognizant of the fact that you are speaking to the amendment to the motion and that there is importance in having relevance to the amendment, but what you're saying is that you're going to get to the relevance in an expeditious fashion. I'll allow you to continue for a brief additional period of time.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate that, again recognizing and speaking to the amendment, the importance of exploring potentially developing a new warranty program. The issue I'm speaking to is directly relevant to the minister's own remarks about considering the regulatory burden. The issues I heard from constituents is they're concerned about the current regulatory burden of building inspections. That again was one of the two top issues I heard from people last night. The other issue, by the way, is the wish to see civic addressing in that area.

What I would note is that people were already hearing from home builders, small contractors and individuals that they're finding the current regulatory structure an additional cost and burden and very frustrating when they're doing home construction. So if I may, if the amendment to the motion

passes, and if the motion subsequently passes, I would encourage the government, while looking at home warranties, to also take a look and seek feedback on how to make the current structure work better.

I'm not going to spend a lot of time in my remarks here. I want to note that when they're examining it, it's important to acknowledge, as the Minister of Community Services did, that people choose to build their own homes. Especially in the case of log cabins, that has been a Yukon tradition going back for over 100 years that should be — I firmly believe, and I know a number of my colleagues in the Official Opposition share that view — an option that Yukoners can do in a way that allows them to put their own labour, efforts and materials into building a home for their families.

In looking at things like implementing a warranty system or mandatory licensing, another point I would strongly encourage the government to do, if the motion passes, or in the exploration of this or part of that exploration, is to fully cost out and understand what the impact will be, including if there's an additional government investment required of either new staff or software, to look into that before stepping forward. I know with some other recent examples, like the residential landlord tenancy office, the concept is hard to argue with, but the cost of both staff and software is not insignificant. Even if the decision is ultimately made after examining the warranty program to proceed with it, it's very important that the cost be fully understood by everyone up-front.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks. I'll just make one final point — the minister made reference to Saskatchewan, I believe, having an optional situation. I think it's also important in examining it to consider whether it's mandatory or optional for Yukon citizens, and whether it's run by government or run by perhaps the private market.

Ms. Hanson: I just want to speak briefly to this proposed amendment to this motion. I understand the intent. I have to express a couple of concerns.

One is that the Minister of Community Services is suggesting that we “explore”, and usually when we engage in an exploration, we are going somewhere. We have the view that we are going to get to an end point. The Member for Takhini-Kopper King started off her debate points in this afternoon's discussion on this idea of a homeowner protection warranty system in the Yukon with the view that we have an open conversation, but it wasn't a vacuous conversation. It was with the view that we would come to an agreement on getting somewhere. My concern with an open-ended exploration is that we will see an open-ended going to nowhere. It is either an exploration with a view to considering, implementing or doing something — I do not want to engage in vacuous discussions about an issue that is of much importance to many people. The Minister of Community Services said that we have to be mindful that we are a small jurisdiction. Well, we are a small jurisdiction in terms of numbers, but if you look at the prices of homes here compared to other small jurisdictions like the Maritimes where you can

buy a big house — a good house — for \$150,000 — the average price for a house in the Yukon is \$434,000 — almost half a million dollars.

We have seen construction work where, after inspection — inspection that is at point in time — somebody has removed insulation and moved it to the wall in the unit next to them. That is an issue, Mr. Speaker. I am looking for some assurance from the member opposite when he puts this amendment forward that his intention is not to put it over into file 13 and we are going to explore this at some future date. I expect that when I go on an exploratory mission, I am going to get someplace — get to an end point. What is the end point of this exploration?

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the amendment?

Amendment to Motion No. 130 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion as amended?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for raising this issue. She has put a lot of thought and research into it. The spirit behind it is laudable. The member opposite has championed homeowners — people who have scrimped and saved to buy a home, which is, for the most part, the largest and most involved purchase they are likely to make. The Member for Takhini-Kopper King seeks consumer protection to help people. I understand that compulsion, as do many of my colleagues on this bench. I have, as always, admired and enjoyed the personable approach the Member for Takhini-Kopper King has honed in speaking to this House. The member opposite is a talented wordsmith and storyteller. She makes it look easy; it is not.

The amended motion we are now discussing is important. In the original motion, we were looking at another request for legislation. The list is already long and growing — the need is great. Faced with cannabis, legal professions, hospital and health act amendments, workers' compensation and occupational health and safety act amendments, missing persons and airports and a host of other critical pieces of legislation to deliver, our civil service is already at capacity. Our policy shops are hammering away probing the issues and pitfalls of a host of upcoming initiatives — access to information and protection of privacy among them.

There is, in short, a lot of very good, very important work going on and so we face choices. Resources are tight. We have to consider where we focus and where we put our efforts. Our legislative agenda is already full. Nevertheless, warranty programs for new home construction and home renovations are worth exploring.

Our territory is growing. The demand for housing is growing. We are witnessing an explosion of new home construction in our territory as evidenced by the development of Whistle Bend and of the Whistle Bend neighbourhood. Additionally, Yukoners are looking at ways to add rental suites to their houses and working diligently to increase the

energy efficiency of their homes through retrofits and other adjustments. There are many home renovations happening across the territory and so much construction happening at a rapid pace.

As the member opposite has noted, it seems appropriate to explore ways to protect homebuyers through some sort of warranty program. These programs are available in many other jurisdictions across the country and we've heard a fairly complete and detailed recitation of those programs. They are not available here.

We are fortunate to have many talented, conscientious contractors in this territory, but as we heard from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, not all are created equal. Some are masters, some are not masters and there are plenty of contractors in between.

In my years here, I have heard very few complaints about shoddy home construction, but I have heard a few. It is not unheard of. We have heard a few of them this afternoon. These things — thoughtless construction, hastily put together — it's going to happen. This motion acknowledges that and seeks to address that.

There is certainly more information needed as my colleague has noted. As my colleague noted, we have to hear from contractors. I want to hear what the impact of this will be on them. We need more information. As I have noted, I'm unsure of the thoughts of the local contractors on such a warranty proposal and I would be interested to hear the industry's perspective about what the impacts might be on their livelihood and about what the benefits and liabilities of such a plan might be. I'm also interested in the financial implications to homeowners, builders and the territory as a whole. So we do need more information.

I do know there are ways for consumers to protect themselves today. As the member opposite has noted, some people have discovered flaws in the construction of their homes and they were not protected, but they could protect themselves and I do believe there is a responsibility and a necessity to do so.

There are plenty of contractors in town who have registered with the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. That registration in itself reveals much about a company. It says it takes its responsibility to its workers' health and safety seriously. At the very least, it is a marker and something that a homeowner should insist on seeing when they are hiring a contractor. They should also ask for references from their contractor and they should touch base with other homeowners to see what their experience was. A reputable contractor will be more than willing to provide such references to a potential client. Homeowners should also ask to talk to their contractor and find out what warranty they do provide.

While we're currently talking about exploring a warranty program in the territory, some contractors — the good ones — already stand by their work and they may already offer a warranty themselves.

As well, there are important rules surrounding the scheduling of contractors on your work site, rules that make

the homeowner responsible if there is more than one contractor working on the site at any one time. Please reach out to the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board if you are doing any work on your home or are building one and want information on the rules you may face regarding workplace safety. I know the people at WCB are more than willing to help.

I am not saying that you take your own personal responsibility to take away from the fact that we need more controls for individuals, but there are things that people should be doing now on their own.

In closing, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King has brought before us a heartfelt request designed to protect Yukoners. It warrants further exploration, and I'm prepared to support the motion as amended.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion as amended?

If the Member for Takhini-Kopper King now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. White: I thank the Minister of Community Services and the Premier for the assurance that this is not an exploration to nowhere, that this will be going someplace, that we will be having a greater conversation. What that looks like right now, they can't say, but I do appreciate the assurance that this is not an exploration to nowhere. Hopefully, Mr. Speaker, in three or four years' time, I don't need to quote myself talking about the assurance that I was given from across the way.

I appreciate that, when we talked about the 5,000-plus inspections that were done by the City of Whitehorse and municipalities and the territorial government — and this is not an attack on inspectors, by any stretch of the imagination. From my point of view, an inspector has a point-in-time look. The inspector goes and looks at it and sees the work that has been done, and they say, yes and they put a check mark next to it and they leave. When they leave is when the issues arise.

I was listening to the Minister of Highways and Public Works, and I have some concerns when we say that it's the responsibility of the person building the house to do the research, because you can ask for references but there's no guarantee that the reference isn't a brother-in-law or a cousin. There's no guarantee that, when you see the paperwork that one has WCB coverage, this actually means that this person hasn't built something previously that doesn't live up to snuff.

I'm always concerned when we talk about putting the onus of responsibility on the person. I raised that same concern when we had a debate here about oil-fired-appliance mechanics and how I am not qualified to inspect my furnace, nor have I ever been qualified to inspect my furnace, and to say that it was my responsibility was irresponsible, because that is something that could kill you. A home is a pretty big deal with a lot of complicated systems in it. I think what I'm asking for is a bigger thing.

I did hear the Member for Lake Laberge talking about very small builders, and I absolutely don't want them to be excluded. I believe that, a lot of times, if I were to get someone who built one house a year, the quality of the workmanship would be stunning because this person specializes in individual homes.

I absolutely don't want them to be brought down with paperwork. I appreciate that this was brought up. An important thing is that when we talk about the cost for contractors, let's also take into account the cost for homeowners if something goes terribly wrong. That's what this motion was about.

I appreciated all the opinions; I appreciated the points of view; I look forward to seeing how government does this conversation. More importantly, I look forward to when Yukon homeowners who are buying new homes or doing large-scale renovations can rest easy — that what they have gotten is supported.

Thanks to everyone in the Chamber for the conversation, the assurances from government, and the opinion of the Member for Lake Laberge because I do appreciate it. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the vote.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the motion as amended?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

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

Motion No. 130, as amended, agreed to

Motion No. 140

Clerk: Motion No. 140, standing in the name of Mr. Cathers.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Lake Laberge: THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that the RCMP have appropriate resources.

Mr. Cathers: Considering the amount of time remaining in the afternoon, I will shorten my remarks from what I had originally planned in the hopes that this motion will also pass with unanimous support of the Assembly. In bringing forward this motion, as both my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, and I have raised with the Minister of Justice and with the government as a whole, we are concerned by the pressure that is on the RCMP.

The RCMP have themselves spoken about it publicly and they, as most members will know — because of their working relationship with the government — cannot be too explicit in what they say. Considering the nature of that relationship, the superintendent who spoken to the issue made it quite clear that resources are strained and that they have put in a request for additional resources.

Background on this for members who may not be familiar with it — the RCMP resources, as set out in the territorial policing agreement, covers 20 years. Based on comments from one member, I think there may be a misunderstanding about the nature of how that relationship works. On top of the 20-year policing agreement between the Yukon and Canada, there have been a number of increases that fall under the same formula for funding those new positions — that 70/30 split between the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada. There have been a number of resource increases since that time including, most recently, during the last year that we were in government when there was the addition of 10 new positions for the RCMP. Five of those positions were related to the public safety answering point, commonly called the 911 call centre. Based on the RCMP's resource assessment for running that facility for meeting already existing pressures on call volume, as well as taking on calls for the entire Yukon, instead of simply 911 calls for Whitehorse, the determination was made jointly between the Government of Yukon and the RCMP that five was the appropriate number of new positions needed to staff that facility. The request was then made, which required federal approval before we could create those positions and have them federally supported. The federal government did step in to assist with a portion of the cost of those new positions, based on the 70/30 formula.

As well, we saw the addition in 2016 of five new positions for the Whitehorse RCMP on top of the ones dedicated to the 911 call centre, and those were four front-line auxiliary positions and one administrative position to help free up those new constables and other members so they could spend more time out on the street and in the community rather than in the office filling out paperwork.

It's important to note for members that this resource assessment was based on the current assessment of the needs of the RCMP, and the RCMP prior to us approving and the

federal government approving the creation of those 10 new positions. All of those were based on a very sound business case and presentation made by the RCMP.

What I know from my background at the time as the Minister of Justice and what my colleagues who were in Cabinet and caucus at the time are aware of, is that those needs and those resources were based on the RCMP's assessment of their needs at that point in time. With the increase in crime, including crime related to drug trafficking and the unfortunate spike in homicides that have occurred recently, that places a very heavy strain on the RCMP because, especially in those cases where they were known or suspected to be a homicide, the amount of investigative resources that the RCMP has to dedicate to those cases strains their ability to provide other policing services. It does create a situation — I've heard concerns from my constituents as I know others have heard on the south side of town about challenges in getting the RCMP to be able to respond to things like property crime because of the sheer amount of resources that the RCMP are having to dedicate to major crime files.

We have raised this concern — I believe I may have made mention of it during the Spring Sitting. I know I wrote to the minister in the summer asking him again to look at the needs within government and the RCMP, expressing our view that the RCMP, Victim Services and the coroner's office were all in need of additional resources because of the increase in homicides as well as the increase in fentanyl-related problems including fentanyl-related deaths that have been found to have occurred in the territory.

I am not going to spend a lot of time waxing eloquent on those points. We have raised our concerns. We have explained our concerns via not only the letter that I wrote, but questions my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, raised that we do believe that the RCMP are in need of additional resources. Whether those resources need to be permanent increases to the budget or more temporary in nature is something that the RCMP is best placed to be able to answer. We understand from the minister's statement that the RCMP has made a resource request. They have not shared the details of that, but I just want to note that, based on our past dealings with the RCMP, I believe that when the RCMP makes a resource request — certainly the ones that I saw were all reasonable requests. I would encourage the minister and her colleagues to give favourable consideration to that request and to have officials work with senior officers of the RCMP M Division in assessing those needs. We are encouraging through this motion, which I hope they will support, to determine what those needs are and to respond to them in an expeditious manner as is possible to ensure that while those major crimes are being dealt with, other issues such as investigation of less serious, but also important offences of a domestic nature or of a property crime nature — and of course providing traffic services — also continue to be responded to and addressed in an appropriate manner by the RCMP.

We also know that we've heard and we're aware that for a number of members and their families they have to work long hours and not get much time with their families due to

the pressure of the current workload. As the RCMP CrOps officer noted in referring to the situation that they have is, in their view and in ours, not a sustainable situation.

I will wrap up my remarks considering the time and would hope that the government, as well as the Third Party, will support this motion urging the Government of Yukon to ensure that the RCMP has appropriate resources.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to be able to speak to this motion today, although I am somewhat puzzled by it.

I was asked this question — or one virtually exactly like it, as the member opposite has noted — both by the Member for Lake Laberge and the Member for Watson Lake last week, and I thought I assured them that in fact what they are asking for primarily in this motion was in fact being done. I guess I am somewhat puzzled that wasn't satisfactory. I will speak to this motion today in response to that.

The RCMP remains a top priority. I have worked with the RCMP my entire career. Public safety has been a focus of my career for the last 25 years here in the Yukon and, before that, elsewhere. I have a close relationship — because of the nature of the work that I did — with various RCMP officers over the years and I say this on the basis of supporting the idea, that not only am I aware of the kind of work they do, I am intimately aware of what kinds of resources it takes to do that work.

It is obviously a question that is on the minds of many Yukoners as we address the multiple pressures on our policing system and certainly are top of mind for me as Minister of Justice. In fact I met yesterday with the RCMP to discuss this very topic. Those discussions have been ongoing for a considerable amount of time now, far before I received the letter from the Member for Lake Laberge and far before I received any letters from the RCMP. Those discussions take place at the very highest level. I speak on a regular basis and meet personally on a regular basis with the chief superintendent.

We're taking the issue very seriously and it has been hard work for some period of time because there are various and complex issues involved. I also mentioned that these discussions are confidential, as I mentioned last week, and they're not going to be detailed in public. They must, at least initially, be confidential in order to allow frank, open and imaginative discussions between the Department of Justice and the RCMP and ultimately for those solutions to be the same.

It is unfortunate that this matter has come before the House today because there are a number of critical and important motions that we could be debating, but nonetheless apparently my assurances were not satisfactory.

The Department of Justice works closely with the RCMP to ensure a professional, efficient and effective territorial policing service that represents good value for money and promotes the principles of public trust, transparency and accountability. This process includes undertaking regular and ongoing assessments of staffing levels and examining future resource requirements.

In 2015-16, the Government of Yukon approved a four-year resource plan for the RCMP to try to ensure appropriate police capacity. We can debate all day long about whether or not the amount was adequate, but the resource plan did recognize the need for new front-line police members in Whitehorse and administrative support to enable police operations that responded to the increases in population and the corresponding increase in calls for service. The additional capacity will also help increase community patrols and support crime-reduction initiatives. It failed to address the new pressures associated with our drug problem here in the territory.

The Department of Justice will continue to work with the RCMP through established processes to ensure that resourcing pressures are understood and that opportunities to address these pressures are realized in light of emerging issues. Yukon's complement of officers is one of the highest police per capita ratios in Canada. The costs of policing in the north are demonstrably higher than policing in the south. It won't surprise anyone here to know that.

In partnership with the RCMP M Division, Yukon continues to examine where efficiencies can be achieved in territorial policing and alternative service division models could be implemented. The work of the department in this area supports the government's commitment to working with the RCMP, First Nations, the Yukon Police Council and communities to identify ongoing policing priorities and the funding required to implement them.

Owing to the vast geography of the Yukon and the number of small isolated communities here, maintaining a policing presence requires a higher number of police officers per population than in many provinces — or in the provinces generally.

The government has approved a significant number of front-line and specialized police resources within the RCMP M Division. Some of these resources were approved following changes in federal legislation and revisions to the national RCMP policy. Other resources were supported in connection with the implementation of recommendations from *Sharing Common Ground* and other resources were based on requests from the RCMP for additional resources following unique developments and other operational demands.

The RCMP M Division is comprised of 135 regular and civilian police members connecting with front-line policing, along with 23 support staff who are public service employees. Outside of the *Territorial Police Service Agreement*, 13 officers are assigned to federal policing duties, which include drug investigations, enforcing federal statutes, protective policing, commercial crime investigations, integrated border enforcement and intelligence functions. These occur across the territory.

Following the signing of the new *Territorial Police Service Agreement*, the Yukon RCMP and the Department of Justice put in place a joint planning model, referred to as the strategic policing partnership. This was critical because new elements of the *Territorial Police Service Agreement* require ongoing consultation and agreement between the RCMP and

the Department of Justice on many aspects of police service delivery.

There was a need to create joint planning and approval mechanisms to ensure better communication and to facilitate agreement on initiatives as they move forward. We are working together. The Department of Justice has, in the past, utilized resource reviews to assess the utilization of territorial police resources and provide some determination of how those resources are meeting the potential of the service delivery model — so are the service delivery models meeting the needs?

Unsolved homicides and major crimes, such as those involving violence against women, remain a concern to us all. The Department of Justice officials meet regularly with the RCMP to ensure that police resources and funding are in place to resolve these crimes. As I noted, I met yesterday with the RCMP, and the RCMP have communicated that they are diligently pursuing all investigations to the best of their ability so that families who have lost loved ones can find closure and that perpetrators can be brought to justice.

The Major Crime Unit within the RCMP M Division has a primary responsibility to conduct criminal investigations into all suspicious human deaths. Major crimes investigations vary in complexity, depending on the crime type, the number of suspects, the number of witnesses and the quantity, value and type of physical evidence that is available. These variables all dictate the direction of an investigation and overall demand on human and financial resources.

The Department of Justice is aware of the pressure of the RCMP and other service providers and the pressures that they face due to the unusually high number of homicides that have occurred recently. Through existing processes, we will continue to work with the RCMP to understand and identify ways to address these resource pressures. The RCMP have submitted an incremental funding request to the Department of Justice, which is in the process of being analyzed, and will be moved through the appropriate channels.

There have been an unprecedented number of homicides in the territory in the last year, six of which remain under investigation. In 2016, there were four; to date in 2017, there have been seven homicides. The RCMP M Division criminal operations officer has stated openly to the public and partners, through media and meetings with the RCMP M Division, that they are under-resourced and that there is need to expand their capabilities to investigate unsolved homicides. In order to assist in investigations, RCMP requested and received assistance from RCMP in Alberta and British Columbia.

The Major Crime Unit has the primary responsibility of investigating serious or high-profile incidents in M Division, which is the entire territory. The unit cost of eight FTEs, including one public service employee, is the unit. All human deaths and serious persons crimes, including missing persons and found human remains, fall within the unit's responsibilities. Major crime investigators on average work a minimum of 54 hours per week, balancing their time between current and historic homicide investigations.

In the 2016-17 reporting period, major crime investigators assisted or consulted on 64 occurrences, 19 of which required additional investigative activity. Some further background that may be of assistance — in 2011-12, one-time funding in the amount of \$235,000 was provided to the Major Crime Unit to aid in a number of cases that were being investigated at that time. The Major Crime Unit increased from six to seven members in 2012-13 after \$175,000 in funding was provided for an additional corporal position. The Major Crime Unit does extraordinary work, and our senior officers with respect to dealing with these matters have extensive experience with this type of investigation and earlier in their careers with community policing.

In 2014-15, the Department of Justice provided \$111,000 in supplemental one-time funding to support the investigation of unsolved homicides. While at the moment this feels like a brand new problem, it has been increasing over the last number of years. There are currently 18 unsolved homicides or suspected homicides within the Yukon occurring between 1980 and 2017. Of those unsolved homicides or suspected homicides, 12 occurred prior to 2017. There are currently five unsolved homicides from 2017 that are currently being worked on by the Major Crime Unit here in the territory, assisted on occasion by Outside officers.

The Department of Justice works closely with the RCMP to ensure a professional, efficient and effective territorial police service and continues to review resource requirements on an ongoing basis. This is not something that the department needs to be prompted to do. It is an ongoing conversation that happens every year all year through various means. An official request or letter has been requested by me at this time and is now being analyzed, as I noted earlier. That was with respect to some specific conversations that I have had with the RCMP.

We all know at the department and here in this Legislative Assembly that police work is unpredictable, that crime is on most occasions unpredictable, that the RCMP need to have the resources to respond appropriately and that community safety is key. The request for Outside support to supplement major incidents is not unusual within the policing context. In fact, while I was criticized for it, it is in fact a point that I made in a letter that I wrote to the Member for Lake Laberge, indicating that it is one of the benefits of us having the RCMP service here in the territory because, when needed, there is access to expertise that we may not have right here at our fingertips all of the time. One of the benefits of having the RCMP as the territorial policing service is that, when additional resources are in fact required for major incidents or unprecedented events, the wider resources of the RCMP can be drawn upon.

I have noted this before, but I will emphasize that, while the most recent request from the RCMP that I am currently assessing and analyzing with the department was sent to me at my request, I have been working on this issue since long before the letters arrived that were noted here in the House.

Prior to that, I had already been working with the RCMP since the first day I became responsible for the Department of

Justice. The government supports the RCMP having the resources that it needs in order to protect our community to serve Yukoners in the very best possible way. I fully intend to analyze the request properly and to make the fiscal decision that is appropriate in all of the circumstances.

To recap: absolutely, we are committed to reviewing those resources. It is an ongoing issue that the Department of Justice works very closely with the RCMP. I believe I have said this and maybe I can say it a bit more clearly: I hope the emphasis here is appropriate and has been heard.

We need to ensure professional, efficient and effective territorial policing service. The process includes undertaking regular assessments of staffing levels and examining future resource requirements, not just a knee-jerk reaction, but what is going to be the future requirements. The Department of Justice will continue to work with the RCMP through established processes, not through the media, to ensure that resourcing pressures are understood and that opportunities to address these pressures are realized in light of emerging issues.

In order to have appropriate, meaningful conversations with respect to these matters, we need to do so confidentially so that determinations can be made that address the issues that have been raised by both the department and the RCMP.

With regard to the motion that is on the floor today, I have established the fact that we are already working with the RCMP to ensure proper resources are available. With that in mind, I would like to propose an amendment.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT Motion No. 140 be amended by inserting the words “continue to” after the word “to”.

I have a copy of the motion signed — appropriate copies.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT Motion No. 140 be amended by inserting the words “continue to” after the word “to”, which then leaves us with, I believe, a potentially amended motion of:

It is moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to ensure that the RCMP have appropriate resources.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will be decidedly short. You have heard all of the comments I have had to make this afternoon with respect to the original motion, but the amendment recognizes that we, or the Department of Justice and the government, are already working with the RCMP, and I hope the opposition is able to support the change, because it is a clarification that I think is appropriate.

Speaker: Is there further debate on the amendment?

Mr. Cathers: First of all, it's interesting that the Minister of Justice and Government House Leader first began speaking to the motion before proposing this amendment and indicated she thought debating the motion was not a good use

of the Assembly's time, and then we see a long introduction based on the remarks that I had in my book before from the department, listing all of government's investments in supporting the RCMP — then this amendment being proposed.

We see this as being something that takes away from the motion as it was worded, because the motion was intended to bring attention to the fact that more needs to be done. I can't support the amendment to the motion, because the amendment to the motion seems to be intended to give the sense that it's business as usual, everything has been wonderful, the resources the RCMP have are currently adequate and no further action is necessary. In fact, we don't believe that to be an accurate indication of the situation.

We know the RCMP has spoken more publicly, using strong language for them, about the adequacy of the resources. The RCMP very rarely even speaks about resource needs in a public forum. They make those requests to the government. Based on my experience, when the RCMP was satisfied with the response by the government and by the Minister of Justice at the time, they didn't feel the need to make what, for them, count as fairly strong statements in a public forum about the pressure on the resources.

I understand that, as the minister stated prior to proposing this amendment, the minister referred to the ability to draw down on resources in BC and Alberta for the RCMP. That's telling us something we already knew. We're well aware of that, but also aware that it places a strain on RCMP M Division, or RCMP Yukon.

As I noted — and unfortunately the minister's remarks prior to proposing this amendment didn't seem to give any acknowledgement of the fact that we're hearing from senior officers of the RCMP speaking to the media about the pressure on the resources. We're hearing from Yukoners who are members of the force, or who have family members who are members of the RCMP, telling us that the pressure right now is unsustainable. I think many of the people we have heard from would not agree with a motion saying to just continue to provide the RCMP with appropriate resources, which appears to be intended to give the indication to the reader of the motion, should this amendment pass, that everything is just fine in terms of the RCMP resources.

With this issue, the minister, in making her remarks before proposing the amendment, made reference to debating these matters in the media. I agree — it shouldn't be the case where it gets to the situation where RCMP senior officers in the Yukon are feeling the pressure to the stage where they make what, for them, are very strong remarks in a media environment about the pressure on their resources.

Based on past experience, when the RCMP were satisfied that they had the ear of the minister, that the government appreciated and understood the pressure they were under, to the best of my recollection, I can't recall any statement of a similar nature in 14 years of the Yukon Party being in office.

Again, concern by the comments of the RCMP about this — I'm very concerned about what we're hearing from members, from families and — as I mentioned — I've heard

from my constituents and other Yukoners, who are noticing that the RCMP's resources are being taken up with major crime investigations, not allowing them to respond to more mundane, but still very important, calls, like when someone has something stolen from their property.

Again, I can't support the amendment to this motion, because it gives the impression that things are just fine as they are. In fact, I believe that the minister and the government have been slow in responding to the RCMP's cost pressure. In fact, I haven't seen the details of their resource request for this year. I suspect, but I have not seen, because understandably — and I appreciate the minister's point about why the details of the RCMP resource request are not made public — but based on what was occurring late last year, I do expect the RCMP probably requested resources this year that were not approved by the government.

It appears to me, at this point, that I know the government and the Minister of Justice and Government House Leader, who proposed the amendment, may feel they're still a very new government, but it's over 11 months since the last election. The reference, as proposed by the minister, would suggest continuing to ensure the RCMP have appropriate resources. Of course, we agree that government should continue to do that, but it does appear to me that the current government has, in fact, dropped the ball and has not been taking action early enough to respond to cost pressures of the RCMP.

I also point out to the minister, who took issue with this motion even being debated in the House and referred, in her preamble, before proposing the amendment, to her assurances that everything would be handled appropriately, the reason my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, asked questions in the Assembly and the reason I brought this motion forward today — or rather that our caucus chose this motion to bring forward as the Official Opposition's private member business for today — is that we believe the government has not been continuing to adequately resource the RCMP, as we believe did occur during the time that we were in office. It appears there has not been a serious enough response to the request that we made.

I first wrote to the minister in the summer and did not share that letter in a public forum or stand on a street corner or contact reporters about the issue. I wrote the letter in a very respectful and constructive manner and, unfortunately, the response to it was filled with what appeared to be platitudes without any confirmation in tangible terms that government was in fact, (a) responding to the RCMP request, and (b) ensuring that government was continuing to appropriately provide resources to the RCMP, as had been the practice.

Again, as I noted in my first remarks on this motion, we recognized that there have been increases to the RCMP agreements over the years. The current resources provided the RCMP were based on their assessment of their future needs prior to the spike in homicides and in fentanyl-related deaths and in drug-related crime. At that point, when the current resources were implemented, those were responding to concerns, as well, that we had heard from the local business

community about downtown property crime and that was an important factor in determining what resources we were providing the RCMP at that point in time.

Speaker: Order, please. Thank you.

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

Debate on Motion No. 140, and amendment, accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.