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HANSARD

Monday, November 6, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, November 6, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Speakers statement

Speaker: Prior to proceeding to the Order Paper, I have two matters. The first, I didn't note that it was in the Tributes but, just perhaps for the record — you have probably been seeing it on the news this morning: today is the 150th anniversary of the First Sitting of the federal House of Commons after Confederation. Representatives of all parties federally were giving their tributes to that this afternoon in Ottawa. Of course, Yukon joined Confederation on June 13, 1898. Today was day 1 at the House of Commons.

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes which have been made to the Order Paper. On November 1, 2017, the Member for Lake Laberge moved an amendment to Motion No. 174, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre. The amendment contained a number of propositions, some of which were also contained in other motions then on the Order Paper.

It is a principle of parliamentary procedure that “a decision once made must stand”. The basic idea is that once that House has reached a definitive decision on a proposition, either in favour or against, the House will not further debate the same proposition during the same session of a legislative assembly.

This is the case whether the proposition is contained in a stand-alone motion or in an amendment to another motion. As the proposed amendment to Motion No. 174 was negatived, the House has now decided on the proposals put to it in the amendment and in the other motions that contained those propositions.

In consequence of that, Motion No. 140, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge, Motion No. 147, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition, Motion No. 153, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek North, Motion No. 155, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake, and Motion No. 156, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane, have been removed from the Order Paper.

We will now proceed at this time with the Order Paper.
Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of 2017 Yukon Farmer of the Year

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I speak on behalf of the Yukon Liberal Party government as well as the Third Party and our tribute today is for the 2017 Yukon Farmer of the Year.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to Yukon Farmer of the Year for 2017. This year's recipients are Mike and Sylvia Blumenschein. Mike and Sylvia began farming in the Yukon in 1986, when they developed an 18-acre farm on the Takhini River Road north of Whitehorse. In 1994, Mike started custom farming and helping others develop or improve their agricultural properties. He has custom farmed on properties from Tagish to Braeburn to Mendenhall and was active in clearing land, breaking, seeding, fertilizing, and cutting and baling hay as well.

In the words of one of his nominators, Mike helped take a piece of forested hinterland and turn it into productive farm land that was smooth, that maintained the soil and that was very productive — actually a work of art. Mike has been involved in agriculture from the time he was able to lift an oat bale on to the wagon back in his youth in Alberta.

Mike served on the Yukon Agricultural Association for over 20 years, working to improve the industry and opportunities for farmers in the territory.

During his time on the Yukon Agricultural Association, there were a number of incentives and opportunities developed for farmers to access. He has always been a staunch supporter of Yukon agriculture. One wonders where it would be without him. Mike's seeding, fertilizing and mechanical skills are well-known in the agricultural community and he has been generous with his advice. Many people new to farming in the Yukon have benefited greatly over the years from his guidance. He continues to support the industry, sharing invaluable information with the farm community, the Agriculture branch and representing all farmers on the elk management committee.

Mike and Sylvia's dedication to agriculture and mentorship to Yukon farmers for over 40 years, and counting, certainly deserves recognition. We congratulate Mike and Sylvia Blumenschein on their award for Yukon Farmer of the Year Award for 2017. I know they are not here today. They caught a plane to some warmer weather after he received the award on Friday night. I would just share with the House — and some of our colleagues were there as well — that the words of wisdom from Mike and Sylvia were: Look at where we have come over the last 10 years and, although it gets hard in the agricultural sector in the Yukon, just keep moving forward and not give up — based on what the sector has been able to achieve already.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased today to rise on behalf of both the Official Opposition and as MLA for Mike and Sylvia Blumenschein, who live in the riding of Lake Laberge, to congratulate them on receiving the Yukon Farmer of the Year award. It is certainly a well-deserved honour, as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources noted. The contribution that Mike and Sylvia have made over the years to Yukon agriculture is quite significant.

Mike's work in developing not only his own property, but in developing other farmland and doing farming work for other farmers has been a big part of the growth of the Yukon's agriculture sector.

It should also be noted that Mike's volunteer contributions include as president of the Yukon Agricultural Association and as a long-time board member. His work on the agriculture industry advisory committee and continuing work on the elk management committee are but a few of the examples of the contributions that he has made throughout the years. I should note as well that he was honoured by Yukon Commissioner Doug Phillips at the beginning of this year at the Commissioner's Levee with the receipt of a presentation for the Governor General's award for his years of volunteer service to Yukon agriculture.

As the minister referenced, the work that Mike and Sylvia have put into this sector of the Yukon economy over the years makes one wonder where we would be today if it wasn't for those efforts. Their ongoing advice to others, Mike's work on funding agreements and the design of Growing Forward 2, for example, are areas where they have made a significant contribution. Also as the minister referenced, on the elk management committee, Mike continues to be a strong advocate for government taking additional steps to properly manage the wild elk problem and ensure that Yukon farming remains a priority for the government and for the territory as a whole — again, my congratulations to Mike and Sylvia.

In recognition of 50th anniversary of first woman elected to Yukon Territorial Council, Jean Gordon

Mr. Hutton: It's an honour and a privilege for me to rise in this House today to pay tribute to a true Yukon pioneer, Gertrude Jean Gordon. Jean was born in Vancouver, BC on March 6, 1918 to Scottish parents, George and Christina Matheson. At the age of 19, she married Wilf Gordon in 1937. They spent the next 56 years together. Their daughter, Betty, was born in August 1939 in the Dawson hospital. In 1945, Jean and Wilf made the decision to move to Mayo and enrolled their daughter in school, and the community was better for it. I'm proud to say that Jean was a friend and mentor of mine for many years when she and Wilf lived in Mayo.

Jean remembered fondly the early years when she and Wilf lived a very independent life, hunting, trapping, fishing and cutting wood. One day when Wilf and Jean's brother, George, were out hunting moose in January, they came across a bear den. They had to kill the bear, only to discover it had three cubs. The cubs were so small that all three of them would fit into a cigar box. They brought the cubs home, and Wilf and Jean's dog raised the cubs as her own until they were grown and able to look after themselves, at which point they returned to the wild.

Another time, Wilf came home with a wolf and her two pups with plans to have some part wolves for his dog team. The female never did produce pups for the dog team as she never came into heat. Jean was particularly proud of both these stories because they were published in the *Alaska Magazine*.

Jean's life and the Yukon Territory would forever change on September 11, 1967, the year of Canada's centennial. That day, almost 50 years from the day women gained the right to

vote and to run as candidates in Yukon territorial elections, which was in 1919, Jean Gordon became the first woman to be elected to the Yukon Territorial Council since it was created in 1898 — the Member for Mayo.

Jean brought a down-to-earth rural perspective to her work as one of seven members of the Yukon Territorial Council. It meant long hours travelling to council sessions in Whitehorse in her battered Volkswagen Beetle, often in winter. In 1969, Jean travelled to Ottawa with the other council members and Commissioner James Smith to lobby Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau for more autonomy for the Yukon. As a result of these efforts, the federal government created an executive committee for the territory, the first step toward self-government in the territory. As Jean said — and I quote: "We became sort of a cabinet or the forerunner to a cabinet."

Jean Gordon was a trailblazer and really led the way for women in Yukon politics. Female candidates have run and won in every territorial election since Jean was elected in 1967. Sadly, Jean passed away in Mayo in 2008. Over the past 50 years since Jean was first elected, Yukon women have been Premier, Speaker, Cabinet minister, Leader of the Official Opposition, Leader of the Third Party, and the federal Member of Parliament.

Jean was a passionate, well-read and eloquent community activist, Mr. Speaker, and I am proud to have called her a friend. As I look around this House today, I see the seven strong female representatives who each bring their own passion, dedication and eloquence to this Legislative Assembly. I believe, Mr. Speaker, we all owe a huge debt to Jean Gordon, who didn't just hit the glass ceiling; she shattered it for all those who came after.

Thank you, Jean, from all of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to the first Yukon woman to be elected to the Yukon Territorial Council. Gertrude Jean Gordon was born March 6, 1918 in Vancouver, BC. Her family lived in Stewart, BC where she met her husband Wilfred Gordon. They married in 1937 and a year later moved to Dawson City, Yukon. They eventually settled in Mayo with their daughter, Betty. Jean was very involved in her community working a number of jobs and volunteering for the women's auxiliary, the Mayo Community Club and the Anglican Church. She sold insurance, was a bookkeeper and also wrote a column for the *Whitehorse Star*. As Wilf worked his various ventures, such as mining and as a big game guide, Jean supported him, but also found issues and a passion to become involved in the events around her. She was outspoken, firm and down to earth, and I too, knew Jean Gordon.

1967 marked Canada's centennial year and a historic time in Yukon as Ms. Gordon became the territory's first female member of our Yukon Territorial Council for the region of Mayo. Jean's historic victory happened only 48 years after the *Yukon Act* was amended to allow women to vote in the

Yukon. At the time, the territorial council were advisors to the Commissioner. The Commissioner was appointed by the federal government and ran the territory. Jean was in that delegation to Ottawa in 1969 to lobby Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau with a recommendation that three members be elected to a Cabinet and to give the territory more autonomy.

After that election in 1967, women have put their name forward and women have won in every territorial election. But after serving three years, she did not win the next election, but the responsible government and female leadership we know today was because of people like Jean Gordon.

In 2017, as we mark 50 years of women in territorial politics, it is an honour to give Jean Gordon the credit that is her due as a political trailblazer.

Applause

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to add our voice to the accomplishments of Jean Gordon and her role in changing the face of territorial politics.

I thank the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for sharing his memories of this Yukon icon. My mother also grew up in the Mayo area and remembers Jean as a force to be reckoned with.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon has a history of strong women in politics. While Yukoner Martha Black in 1935 was the second woman elected to the House of Commons, it wasn't until 32 years later that a woman was elected to the Yukon Territorial Council, the pre-cursor to our territorial legislature.

In 1925, Marie Fotheringham was the first woman to seek a seat on the Yukon Territorial Council. In 1958, 33 years later, it was Mary Rich who put her name forward, followed by Jan Montgomery in 1961. But it wasn't until nearly 50 years ago that the territorial glass ceiling was finally broken on September 11, 1967, with the election of Mayo's Jean Gordon to the Yukon Territorial Council. At the tender age of 49, Jean not only changed her profession from placer miner to politician, she changed the face of Yukon politics.

During her term from 1967 to 1970, the elected members of the Council put in place the foundation of true, responsible government and laid the groundwork for Yukoners to control their own destiny.

Jean Gordon showed generations of women that our place was at the table and, as was mentioned, Mr. Speaker, female candidates have run and won in every territorial election since 1967. They have been Premier, Speaker, Cabinet ministers and opposition leaders. They have been elected as our federal Member of Parliament and as the first female leader of a federal political party in Canada. Jean showed us that we could enter the political arena as the individuals we are and make very real and meaningful change on the political stage. It is fitting that we celebrate this one success in a long list of achievements in the very colourful, vibrant and full life of Jean Gordon.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Cathers: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming one of my constituents to the gallery, Peter Wojtowicz.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would ask the House to help me welcome Mr. Ranjit Sarin, whom I like to call Ranj, who is here today with his well-known advocate in the community on the Vimy project and many other initiatives.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. White: I have for tabling the *Canadian Housing First Toolkit*.

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling today a letter to the Minister of Education requesting school bus service for the new Grizzly Valley subdivision.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to expand opportunities for e-health, e-commerce and online services for Yukon communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support the resolution of the Association of Yukon Communities that was passed at the 2017 annual general meeting by:

(1) establishing a consultation process to determine if there is a case for removing daylight savings time in the Yukon; and

(2) working with the federal and provincial governments to determine the viability of eliminating daylight savings across Canada.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse and the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 254 in the planning and development of a veterans square.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to transfer or lease to the City of Whitehorse the land currently occupied by the skateboard park.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

National inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls

Hon. Ms. Dendys: The Government of Yukon has received the Interim Report: The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and we appreciate all of the work that has gone into the creation of this document over the past year.

Yukon voices can be seen reflected throughout the report, from the preface where there are quotes from loved ones at the Whitehorse family truth-finding gatherings to recognition of Shaun LaDue's contribution of an oath to listen with an open heart, an open mind and to be free from prejudice. This is now named the "LaDue oath" after Shaun LaDue and in recognition of this contribution.

The commission noted that the family members and survivors who shared in Whitehorse hold a special place in the national inquiry. They went first, which is both an honour and a challenge. We appreciate their acknowledgement of the courage of our Yukon families.

Yukon is also noted as having many best practices. Among them are Jackson Lake land-based healing, indigenous-led child welfare programs in First Nation communities, and a safer communities and neighbourhoods program implemented within the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and other Yukon communities. These programs are strong community examples of how Yukon is taking action on violence against women and children without waiting for the results and recommendations of the inquiry. Yukon First Nations and NGOs are leading the way in terms of community-driven crime prevention and response, and we can learn a lot from them.

I appreciate the hard work of the commission in reviewing the relevant literature. There was a lot of work that came before the national inquiry began, and it is crucial that this work is not lost, but rather serves as building blocks for our continued work toward a solution.

The literature review included reviewing almost 100 previous reports and distilling 1,200 recommendations into 17 overarching themes and 10 recommendations. I am pleased to see the several calls for immediate action that will impact the welfare of indigenous women and children as a key aspect of the interim report. It is also useful to have recommendations to help set a path forward for the urgent work to continue.

We know that it is crucial to continue to move forward, both with the national inquiry and in our own jurisdiction while the inquiry takes place, because this is an issue that can't wait any longer. We also know that recommendations

are a starting point and that Yukon will need to develop its own path forward as we have a different context than the rest of the country. Our Yukon regional advisory committee on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls will be coming together within the next 10 days to discuss the report, the recommendations and how we can use these suggestions within our own context, communities and governments.

We are fortunate to have strong working relationships with Yukon indigenous women's groups, the RCMP, NGOs, other governments and those who have a personal stake in the continuation of the national inquiry. Our collaborative work will continue to be important as we move forward to take action in light of the context the report.

It is our intent to continue to support the mandate of the national inquiry. Throughout the country, we will continue to advocate for Yukon families throughout this process, and we're committed to moving forward together.

Ms. Van Bibber: I thank the minister for her statement today. We are pleased to see the issuing of the interim report and with the voices of Yukoners reflected as such.

I want to begin by thanking the commission for their hard work in developing the interim report during a very emotional and difficult journey for everyone involved. I've stated previously in this House that each missing and murdered indigenous woman or girl is a tragedy that leaves behind a community and a family who truly love them. Over the course of the past few months, these families stood bravely to tell their stories and opened up in hopes that this national inquiry will bring to light more information about their family members and, in turn, help heal their communities. We hope that this can continue and, as we hear the stories from across Canada, that more light is shed on this inquiry.

Further, I would like to commend the many First Nation governments, aboriginal women's organizations, local non-profits and community safety programs across the territory for the work they are already doing in support of women and girls in our communities. We thank you. Your work does make a difference. This work is not easy, but it is necessary and it will ensure that our communities are safer.

I think we can all agree that we need to do more to ensure women and girls have a safe, healthy community. I know all Members of this Legislative Assembly want to ensure this inquiry is successful and will ultimately help the healing process. I again extend our offer to provide any support to the government as it continues its work with the commission and participating organizations. The best approach moving forward must be a collaborative one. If we are working together, we will send a strong and unified message that we, as elected leaders in our community, will not tolerate this violence against our loved ones. Further, I look forward to hearing what comes out of the Yukon regional advisory committee meetings and how the minister will build on the progress our territory has made so far.

We certainly agree that the recommendations can provide a framework for the path forward and we will be happy to participate as needed. Violence against aboriginal women and

girls is a serious problem that affects us all. We must continue to work collaboratively to address these issues within the territory. Holding the first gathering of the national inquiry in Whitehorse was breaking new ground. Perhaps we can continue with initiatives that are Yukon-led and set a standard for other areas that are healing as well.

Ms. White: We thank the Minister of the Women's Directorate and the Official Opposition for their thoughts on the interim report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We acknowledge the incredible hard work by the families who have spoken to the inquiry and thank the commission for the update.

Mr. Speaker, we don't disagree with the statement made by the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate. We appreciate the more global view but have some thoughts to offer up closer to home. I had the good fortune to sit with Doris Anderson at the CYFN General Assembly in Carcross. She is a thoughtful, well-spoken advocate who works to advance the interests of aboriginal women in Yukon and northern British Columbia through her role as the president of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council. It is with the hard work and dedication of the staff and volunteers of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council that the families of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls were supported at the inquiry. It is they who were instrumental in bringing this inquiry to the forefront. It is they who listened to the stories and who wiped the tears and held the hands of the truth-tellers.

It was through Doris that I learned of some of the challenges that the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council faces on a daily basis, from staffing shortages to the inability to meet the rigorous demands of the daytime meeting requests, as most of this organization is run through volunteers. This can be easily reflected by inadequate funding. Without predictable funding, they will always be limited in their staffing numbers and their ability to participate fully in the inquiry and in support of indigenous women and girls in Yukon and northern British Columbia.

The Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council is not part of the special advisory committee on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. This was something that was established to work together for the Yukon roundtable in preparation for the national roundtable. This special advisory group does not speak for the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, whose representation includes all indigenous women in Yukon and northern BC.

Calling for resources for upcoming programs and recommendations from the inquiry should include the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, which has built a relationship with the families and has grassroots understanding of the programs and resources that the families have asked for and that are all to be driven by First Nations.

We believe that the Yukon government has a responsibility to speak to those with feet on the ground to better understand the challenges faced by the organization supporting the families of missing or murdered indigenous

women or girls to better understand government's role in moving forward. It would make sense that this organization would be adequately funded — or make sense that this government would adequately fund the local indigenous women's organizations. As First Nation people, they understand a way to do things that is comfortable and what works for First Nation women and their families. We often hear how this government's door is open, but what is needed is an invitation to sit at the table.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I thank my colleagues for their comments here today, and certainly we will be reaching out as we move forward to have involvement from both parties on ways forward.

I would like to just first lead by just commenting on some of the statements that were made by the Third Party here today in terms of funding issues. Those are certainly areas that we are addressing — to bring core funding to our indigenous women's organizations and to review the prevention of violence against indigenous women in the Yukon. We're doing that as we speak.

In terms of the membership of the advisory committee, there is certainly a seat for the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council. It is their choice to be a part of this group going forward, and we are moving forward — as I said in my opening statements — with a meeting within the next 10 days, which will certainly include the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council as a representative.

I believe that throughout the interim report, the voices of indigenous women and girls were heard.

One of things that I reflect on personally is that, as I read that report, I could really hear the voices of indigenous women from across this country reflected. As an indigenous woman, that brought comfort to me — that we were heard and that the commissioners are taking the work very seriously.

I know that the commissioners have incorporated ceremony, increased supports for families and principles of indigenous law throughout. It is admirable and very challenging for them to do this. There is no absolute, ideal way forward with this. This is the first time it has been done in the country, and the movement is happening across the country as we speak, thanks to the courage and the determination of the grassroots women and their families.

I certainly have worked many years of my career working toward this movement that we see happening in our country. It happened here first, in the Yukon. I'm incredibly proud of that. I look forward, as I said earlier, to connecting with the regional advisory committee to make decisions on items within the sphere of our influence. Working with an advisory committee is very intentional. It speaks to the way we want to work together. Each government, each non-profit organization and each community has a sphere of influence. By working together, we hope to have the greatest possible outreach and impact.

This committee also seeks to ensure that our decisions on behalf of families and communities are as well-integrated as possible so that our resources are effectively managed and our

decisions impact families in a positive way. We continue to commit to work collaboratively with our partners to develop local responses that will make a difference in our community safety, cultural revitalization and the empowerment of indigenous women and girls. We will endeavour to bring this to the next Yukon Forum as an update.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Tire-recycling surcharges

Mr. Hassard: In May of 2016, the previous government proposed the designated materials regulations, which proposed surcharges for tires. These changes causes concern in the territory's business community and that is why the previous government sat down with and listened to industry.

As a result of their feedback, the former government announced it was stopping the implementation of these regulations and would go back to the drawing board to consult and work with the industry to get them right. Since that time, the new government has come in and announced that they are going forward with these regulations. However, we have heard significant concerns about the level of consultation that the new government has conducted on these regulations.

Can the Minister of Environment tell us what consultation she has done regarding her plan to increase tire surcharges from \$5 to \$50?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This file is shared by Community Services and the Department of Environment. As such, either the Minister of Environment or I will try to answer the questions. We appreciate that there is a desire and a need to move forward in promoting environmental stewardship and responsible consumption by encouraging Yukoners to recycle items such as electronics, electrical products and tires at the end of their lives.

I appreciate that the Leader of the Official Opposition is asking: In what way did we go out and talk with the tire industry? We did. We went back out and talked with them. I will also say that we talked also with the Association of Yukon Communities, which asked us to move forward, and a variety of groups.

Just to clear up the record, right now, a large tire has a \$80 surcharge to take to the Whitehorse landfill whereas, in the new methodology, it will be \$50. I will just try to clear that up and I'm sure we'll have more questions going forward. The notion with designated materials is that consumers pay for the items — the surcharge — to recycle and reuse these materials when they purchase them.

Mr. Hassard: As I indicated, the previous government recognized that industry had valid concerns over these regulations and agreed to stop them until industry could be consulted. Last week, owners of a local tire shop came to our offices to raise concerns with these regulations. They have concerns about what the charges could mean for business. It appears the only consultation that took place was a poorly advertised web survey for just 19 days in the middle of

summer. In fact, they only had seven respondents. Over 70 percent of those survey respondents stated they had concerns with the surcharges.

Could the minister please tell us why they decided that they would go through the time and effort to run this so-called consultation and then not use any of those recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for acknowledging that we did go out and engage with the industry. That is what we did. That was the right thing to do. I'm happy to provide some information for the members opposite about what we heard.

Overall, even the industry recognizes that it is the right thing to do to make sure that we are dealing with this in an environmentally responsible fashion. These surcharges are the norm across Canada and Yukoners are already paying them when they purchase these products out of territory or online. By updating the regulations, we make sure these surcharges stay in the Yukon to fund recycling programs here.

I'm happy to go back. It was not just a survey. I know that calls were made to the tire companies. I know that there was an open house. I agree that there were very few responses, but that's not because the industry was not invited to give us responses. The opportunity was there. The responses were extremely mixed. There was no clear direction that came from industry. I appreciate that not everyone will agree on this and I respect that there's a diversity of views out there.

Mr. Hassard: By increasing the tire levy by 900 percent, from \$5 to \$50, this Liberal government will make it uneconomical to purchase medium-sized truck tires in the Yukon. Local businesses are worried that this will send business south. Long-haul trucking companies will now be purchasing their medium truck tires in Alberta or BC. One local company gets 30 percent of their business from trucking companies and they are afraid that this could lead to staff layoffs. At the same time, you will have the increased costs of trucking goods into the Yukon. It was these valid concerns which caused the previous government to hit the "pause" button on these regulations. In contrast, this Liberal government has apparently decided to go full-steam ahead without listening to the industry.

Will the Minister of Environment or Community Services push "pause" on this fee and personally meet with the local tire shop owners and trucking companies to listen to their concerns?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm sure we'll get lots of questions on this and I'll do my best to try to answer each and every one although there's a lot of information. If I can't get it out in this moment, I'll provide it as a legislative return.

Just to follow up on some of the details, currently for a large tire it is \$80 to put that tire into the Whitehorse landfill, whereas we will charge \$50 for that large tire up front and the tipping fee will go. Currently, it's \$5 for a medium tire, whereas we will now be charging \$15. For a regular car-sized tire, it was \$5, now it would be seven dollars.

I appreciate that industry does have valid concerns. I agree with the member opposite and I think it is important to

look at those in the context of making sure that we can have an environmentally responsible system of recycling. I will reach out to the member opposite and see if there are industry members who didn't have a chance to speak with us and see it, although I want to be careful. I'm happy at any time to talk with industry, but I really would like to commend the department for doing the work. They are the people who will do the bulk of this work, but I'm open to listening.

Question re: Tire-recycling surcharges

Mr. Hassard: The Liberals have done little consultation on this proposal to increase tire surcharges. Before I dig in further into the consultation, I would just like to quickly give you a quote from the Premier last July when he referred to the surcharges. He called them — and this is an exact quote from a Liberal press release: "... \$200 tax increase on a set of 4 tires..." — those are the Premier's words.

In that same press release, the Premier said — and I will quote again: "Given the considerable concerns raised by the business community and the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, I am urging the Government of Yukon to delay the implementation of changes to both the Beverage Container Regulation, as well as the Designated Material Regulation."

As you know, the previous government hit the "pause" button so industry could be consulted. I would pose the Premier's statement to the minister: Given the considerable concerns raised by local tire shops, will the minister delay implementation of this tire tax?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am happy to talk about this. We did delay these regulations. If the members opposite did go out — when they delayed these regulations — and talk with the tire industry, by all means please share that information with us. We would love to have it. When we delayed these regulations, we did go out and talk with industry, and though there was an opportunity and an opening for all of the tire companies to respond, we didn't get a big response. The member opposite is correct; it was a modest response. From that, there was no clear direction about which way they wished to go.

I'm happy to educate everyone in the Legislature about what the surcharges will be. For greater than 22 inches, it would be a \$50 surcharge, which would be charged when the tire is purchased, as opposed now to an \$80 surcharge for a larger than 24.5-inch diameter tire, which would be going to the landfill.

I'm sure we have more questions. I'm happy to continue answering them. We care about the industry. We care about our environment.

Mr. Hassard: We have heard from one trucking company in town that it has already spent \$250,000 on tires this year. They have written to the Minister of Environment to indicate that, as much as possible, they buy locally. In fact, they told the minister that they buy about 200 heavy-duty truck tires every year. However, they noted to the minister that the new tire tax that this government is planning on bringing in will make it more difficult for them to afford to buy locally.

As you know, costs are already higher in Yukon as we are so far from the supply centres in the country. As a result, this one trucking company referred to the Liberal fee increase as "punishing" and has asked the Minister of Environment to reconsider these changes.

Can the minister let us know what trucking companies have been consulted on this new proposed tire tax?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will take the question that the Leader of the Official Opposition has posed and go back to the department. Again, this is a joint piece of work by the Department of Environment and the Department of Community Services, and we will endeavour to find out which specific companies were spoken with and come back.

I should note, though, that this proposal has been around since — I think it was 2013. This has been kicked around for quite a long time. We have known all along that the right thing to do is move toward stewardship and how to get those costs right.

We have worked with industry on this and on electronics to ensure that if someone goes and buys online, they would be paying the same thing that they would if they shopped locally, so that doesn't create a competitive disadvantage for our local companies. Of course it is always true that if someone wishes to travel Outside to purchase goods, this is one of the challenges. One of the challenges and beauties of the Yukon, Mr. Speaker, is that we are far away from Outside. I appreciate that it is difficult for industry. We will continue to work with them.

Mr. Hassard: From the industry representatives we have heard from, it is clear that there is a problem with the proposal and that the consultations that the Liberals conducted were not adequate. As I said, one local company has referred to these fee increases as "punishing". We have seen the Premier last summer refer to these fees as — and I quote again: "... \$200 tax increase on a set of 4 tires..."

Could the Minister of Environment or Community Services please let us know how much revenue the government is expecting to collect from this tax increase on tires?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am happy to try to provide those numbers for the member opposite. What I will say, though, is that what we charge will not cover the cost of recycling. I want to try to explain that this issue, electronics and oil — all those materials, which, through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, we have said we should all charge for up front through a stewardship model. By the way, I will have to check, but I am relatively confident that almost all jurisdictions put these charges in place. This is just the Yukon catching up with other jurisdictions. The cost that we will gain will be less than the cost that it will take to recycle these things.

Mr. Speaker, moving toward a stewardship model, rather than paying for it through taxes, which is what is happening now — this is the correct direction. We want to work with industry. We are happy to speak with industry — happy to talk to them — and to get their input. I don't believe that we will ever all agree, but we are happy to work with them.

Question re: Mining royalties

Ms. Hanson: The territory is one of the most charitable places in the world for mining companies. The government's generous deductions on royalties and corporate income taxes, combined with the complexity of policing tax avoidance, have given it one of the lowest shares of mineral profits in the world. Luckily for this government, the territory in question is not Yukon, but our neighbours, the Northwest Territories.

Those are not my words; they are from a recent news article reporting on the release of an independent report commissioned by the Northwest Territories government. The report is critical of the small share of the industry benefits that actually flow to northerners and to their government. This will sound familiar to many Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister believe Yukon is getting a better return than our neighbours in the Northwest Territories when it comes to mining?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Third Party. It certainly has been a hot topic in the Northwest Territories. I had an opportunity on Friday morning to have a conversation with my counterpart, Minister Schumann — just talking about some of the work they're doing right on legislation as well as some of the topics concerning royalties. I believe at this time — and I think to answer to the question of "Do I believe...?" — certainly, right now with just the one mine operating and being in a very special relationship with Selkirk First Nation, I think this is a conversation we will have to have as we look toward new production. I think that we're going to be looking at, first of all, the current royalty regime that is in place for quartz. There is some unfinished work concerning royalty distribution with First Nation governments. That is the second part of the conversation I think we have to have, Mr. Speaker. Thirdly, what are the benefits packages to our communities and to our businesses as we move forward?

I think that it is a broader discussion than just taking one specific calculation, but I think we are in a much better situation in many ways, from past experience — not all of them, but some of them — than what we are seeing in the Northwest Territories, but I am looking forward to the conversation.

Ms. Hanson: I do appreciate the reassurances from the minister, but it is hard to ignore certain facts — facts like Yukon Zinc never paid a penny in royalty before going belly up and leaving many local contractors on the hook, or the fact that Yukon's royalty rate on placer gold is the same today as it was over 100 years ago. The minister will say that these facts don't give the whole picture, and we agree. That is why the Northwest Territories' decision to commission an independent report on their mining regime is laudable. They are doing this just a few years after their devolution agreement and as they draft a mineral resources act that will be tabled in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, devolution in Yukon was nearly 15 years ago. When will this government take a look at the big picture and focus on developing successor mining legislation?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: A couple of different topics rolled into one — but I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Third Party.

Concerning the history of Yukon Zinc and placer royalty, I think there are two different topics. I was focusing on the conversation in the report — I think it was an Ernst & Young report — that really focused on the royalties concerning the quartz industry. But I absolutely understand the facts that, when it comes to Yukon Zinc — not a good story, and not just for the royalty side but for a lot of local businesses that were caught up in that piece. We have had the discussion concerning the placer royalty challenges as well.

At this point in time, the first step for us, as the member opposite talks about successor legislation, is to have our discussion on a number of priority items with Yukon First Nations and that is the work that is being done at our memorandum of understanding table that talks about a series of things, focusing on placer as well as quartz issues.

So from that table, we move into the next bit of work. But at this time, that is what we're focusing on — understanding priorities and working through some of the challenges that we see now under the current legislation regime.

Ms. Hanson: Devolution occurred in the Northwest Territories in 2014. Yukon, on the other hand, committed to developing successor mining legislation in 2003, with the devolution transfer agreement. It's a critical step to bringing our mining regime into the 21st century.

A modern mining regime built in collaboration with First Nation governments, industry and citizens is an opportunity that Yukon can't afford to pass on. The Northwest Territories has seen this opportunity and is losing no time to act on it, yet nearly 15 years after devolution, Yukon is still on the sidelines. Will this government follow the lead of the Northwest Territories and commission an independent report on the mining sector to kick-start — not talk about side tables, but kick-start — the development of successor mining legislation?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question from the Leader of the Third Party. I commend the Government of Northwest Territories for what they're doing to address their particular issues. What I wanted to talk about today is what we're doing specifically when it comes to resource royalty sharing and working with the First Nations.

We're committed to working with the Yukon First Nations to establish fair and effective fiscal relationships. Resource royalty sharing in chapter 23 of the final agreements is a topic identified in joint priorities to the Yukon Forum, so these are the actions that we're doing compared to what our counterparts are doing over in the Northwest Territories.

We are working with First Nations to explore options related to the resource royalty-sharing regimes. These discussions in our government include considering changes to the way that resource royalties are calculated, and the possibility of additional resource royalty-sharing agreements as well. I appreciate the question from the member opposite and I also appreciate the issues that are happening next door in the Northwest Territories. Of course, their economy is pretty

sluggish right now; ours is not. They are two different comparisons. What we are focusing on right now is the joint priorities with the Yukon Forum, working with our First Nation government partners to make sure that the way that we calculate and distribute those royalties is fair and equitable to all Yukoners.

Question re: Salvation Army shelter and Housing First model

Ms. White: I asked the minister last week about the government-funded new housing program at the Salvation Army. In her response, the minister repeated the government's commitment to a Housing First approach. We learned through the media that in fact the Salvation Army transition apartments will be considered "dry" apartments. This is not a Housing First model. The Housing First core principle is immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements. Put simply, individuals are given immediate access to housing without proving that they are ready. A person does not have to be a participant in substance abuse or psychiatric treatment. That may come later, but it might not.

Will the minister agree that the transitional housing that will be available at the Salvation Army is not a Housing First model?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. With respect to the Housing First model — just for clarification, the distinction between a Housing First model and the great work that was done previously by the housing action committee and the poverty reduction committee in our community really looked at the Housing First concept and model.

The question around whether the Salvation Army transition units are a Housing First model — most definitely. What we have done through the Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services, in collaboration with our partners, was to look at operating this facility under the guise and concept of a Housing First model. That means that individuals will not be turned away if they arrive seeking services and are under the influence. The Salvation Army model is really designed in such a way that the concepts associated around the Housing First model — and for reference, Housing First is a concept that recognizes safe and secure housing as a first step to improving an individual's life. That is in collaboration with the partners. That is what we worked on. We worked on a concept with the Salvation Army, Yukon Housing Corporation, Kwanlin Dūn and the City of Whitehorse.

Ms. White: I feel it is important to say right now that emergency shelter and access to a shelter is not Housing First. That is emergency shelter. This government is paying the Salvation Army for the emergency shelter in a new building paid for by this very same government. The transitional units may be helpful for individuals in the community looking for housing as long as they are clean and sober. This may fulfill a need in our community, but it is not a Housing First approach no matter how many times the government or the minister

says it is. It leaves people struggling with addictions on the streets or relying on emergency shelter on a nightly basis.

How can the government continue to talk about a Housing First model when its largest investment to date to address homelessness doesn't even come close to a Housing First approach?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Let's just say that I'm extremely pleased with the progress that we've made in the last 12 months. This government, the Yukon Liberal government, has worked really hard and worked quite diligently with our partners to address a Housing First model, put some action around the mental wellness strategies, as well as look at a Housing First concept. When we went into the discussions 12 months ago with the Salvation Army, there was no plan. There was a plan that we were going to turn over a \$14.7-million facility along with \$3.2 million of funding and we were to walk away from that agreement.

Today, I'm happy to note that is not the case at all. We've gone ahead with what I think is good work and good cooperation, worked with the Salvation Army, with the Housing Corporation, along with the anti-poverty groups and City of Whitehorse and looked at programming and we used the concept of the Housing First. It's not a Housing First model, but the concepts and the design around program service delivery is to ensure that no individual is turned away from shelter and emergency shelter. It's an important part of the housing continuum in the Yukon.

Ms. White: Again, emergency shelter is not Housing First. The government has spent close to \$15 million to build the new shelter and has committed to another \$1.3 million a year in operation and maintenance. The core principles of Housing First are immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements. It is based on the principle that addressing any other issues one faces will be easier if someone has a place to call home and the principle that housing is a human right, no matter their circumstances.

Speaking of the Salvation Army, the minister said last week — and I quote: "What we do control and have control over is the service delivery and the service program out of that facility."

Mr. Speaker, will the minister demand that the Salvation Army review its model for the transitional units and actually adopt a Housing First approach?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I said last week is true. What we negotiated in terms of trying to turn around the direction that we were headed in 12 months ago was to look at diligently negotiating an organizational plan that brings the priorities to the table while ensuring that the facility meets the needs of Yukoners — the vulnerable people who we see on our streets — and to work with our Anti-Poverty Coalition, work with the First Nation communities and the City of Whitehorse, the oversight committee and the management committee, which is something that we have control over. We have committed to reviewing the program in 12 months. That's written into the agreement. If the model does not meet the needs of Yukoners, we will sit down with the organization and review.

It's important here that certainly it's not an ideal location and it's not an ideal situation, but it certainly addresses the demand and the need as we speak in real time today. When you go in there and speak to the individuals, they will be happy to let you know that, as I'm sure you've been in there and we all have. Collaborative nature, collaborative venture, successful model — note that we will be making a further announcement with respect to a Housing First model and that's currently being discussed.

Question re: Hospital bed shortage

Ms. McLeod: Last month, the chair of the Hospital Corporation told this House — and I quote: "... the average occupancy at Whitehorse General this past year was 96 percent. This means that more than half of the time, we did not have beds to meet the demand."

We also saw the president of the Yukon Medical Association say this past weekend that the 150 beds at Whistle Bend place will help, but that alone won't solve the problem. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the previous government had taken actions to help alleviate this issue, such as the opening of Birch Lodge, which created 10 new continuing care beds, the opening of the new McDonald Lodge in Dawson City, which increased the bed count there by four, the reopening of 10 beds at the Thomson Centre and of course Whistle Bend place.

Would the Minister of Health and Social Services be able to update us with any concrete plan she has to alleviate the bed shortage at the Whitehorse Hospital?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to the Whitehorse General Hospital and the continuing care model, you heard quite clearly from our Committee of the Whole and the presentation from the Hospital Corporation CEO and president that the department is working quite closely with the Hospital Corporation to address immediate needs and looking at reducing wait times.

Currently, we certainly acknowledge that pressures at the hospital and bed shortages are not new — it has been there for a lot of years — and the member opposite knows well that the hospitals were built in rural Yukon in an attempt to look at reducing the pressures in the hospital demand. Currently that is what we are doing. We are working with the Hospital Corporation — working and looking at the rural hospitals and trying to maximize the use of those two facilities to reduce some of the pressures that we are confronted with. It has been there a long time — for many, many years — and we are working quite closely with the Hospital Corporation to address the pressures.

Ms. McLeod: The question was to the Minister of Health and Social Services — what she has been doing to forward any concrete plans to reduce the bed shortage.

As I have already indicated, the previous government had been taking action to alleviate the bed shortage and obviously Whistle Bend place was a big part of that, but as you know, Whistle Bend place will have 150 beds, but was designed to be expanded beyond that if the need was there. This government has put forward a motion indicating that they

want to abandon plans to ever expand Whistle Bend place. However, they have not put forward any information indicating what their future plans are.

Aside from Whistle Bend, could the minister let us know how many continuing care beds her government will be building over the next two years and will any of these beds be in communities?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am happy to note that a facility was just built in Carmacks and there is a consideration in working with our partners to address the aging-in-place model and the concepts and looking at services. We took on the Whistle Bend facility as an expenditure and the O&M costs associated with that are \$36 million annually.

So how do you balance that and still try to finance necessary health care costs? It's a complicated process — and certainly taking into consideration all the immediate and necessary health requirements and health needs of Yukoners while still trying to balance a budget and balance the service-delivery models for Yukon.

The mental wellness strategy is a big one. It addresses care through the community hubs. We have a Safe at Home plan, we have aging in place, and we have many opportunities to try to eliminate the health pressures in Yukon.

Ms. McLeod: I guess I need to remind the minister that perhaps the Carmacks project is not a continuing care initiative, and aging in place is not really considered continuing care.

Would the Minister of Health and Social Services be able to let us know what the current wait list is for continuing care services, and could she let us know how many of those individuals are waiting in hospitals?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I think we've responded to this question previously as did the Hospital Corporation. It was identified that there were 16 beds occupied at the hospital and that there was work currently being undertaken by the department to address that pressure. With respect to the specifics, I did provide and table the document previously. I would be happy to provide the member opposite with the specific information she is looking for.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Hutton): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Pounds Act (2017)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 9: Act to Amend the Pounds Act (2017)

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Pounds Act (2017)*.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to begin by thanking the officials for joining me today. I have with me the Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, Mr. Stephen Mills, and also our director of Agriculture, Mr. Matt Ball. I would like to welcome him to the Assembly. It is his first time in the lead role for Agriculture. He certainly has a long history of working with the branch, and we are happy to have him in a leadership role. I would also like to thank the department for working on this. I think it has been a fantastic piece of work to date, and I hope that my colleagues and I can have some good discussions and that I can answer any outstanding queries they may have. I think it has been done in great fashion, and there has been a tremendous amount of work put into by the draftspeople as well who have worked on this piece of legislation.

I move that Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Pounds Act (2017)*, be now considered for Committee of the Whole.

As a quick summary, the *Pounds Act* provides a legislative framework to address the issue of stray livestock in the Yukon.

The *Pounds Act* sets out what responsibilities livestock owners have, what offences livestock owners can face if their animals stray and what processes must be followed when an animal is impounded. The amendments to the *Pounds Act* focus on updating, simplifying and streamlining it with other legislation. In addition, we are ensuring that the people responsible for enforcing the act and issuing tickets are public servants, not contracted workers, which will reduce the risk to the Government of Yukon.

We are expanding the act so that it applies across the territory, which will help us manage the issue of stray livestock and address a gap in service. We are expanding the definition of “animal” to be the same as the *Highways Act* — just some very simple housekeeping that we have to do as well — so there won’t be a gap in service or responsibility.

At this point, I think it is best to just delve in and open it up to the members opposite. We did a good job in second reading of outlining the key points and the key changes. I’m

looking forward to some constructive exchanges. I know there are a couple of sensitive points, which I’m hoping to be able to address with my colleagues across the way. Mr. Chair, I’ll look forward to the rest of the process.

Mr. Cathers: I would like to thank the minister for his introductory remarks, as well as welcome Deputy Minister Stephen Mills and Matt Ball on his first appearance here since becoming director of the Agriculture branch and thank them as well for the information provided at the briefing on this legislation.

I will not take too much of the House’s time this afternoon. I will just simply reiterate very briefly the concern I expressed at second reading and via letter this summer to the minister that I just think the timing of this legislation and — understanding it was undoubtedly out of the control of officials and perhaps not entirely within the minister’s control — the timing of consultation on this was unfortunate in that summer is the busiest season for those most affected by this legislation. I would express disappointment that the government didn’t agree to our request for extending that consultation, but beyond that, in looking at the content — while noting that, when concerned about the possibility that government may be missing a concern and may be unaware of a concern due to simply the speed with which this occurred — I do not have any concerns with the content of this legislation. The only specific feedback that I have heard from stakeholders about this legislation were positive comments about officials from the department being very helpful and informative in meeting with them and discussing the legislation.

I would just note, in concluding my remarks in Committee of the Whole, unless something else is said by the minister or the Third Party that I think requires further comment, I will just wrap up my comments in noting that I think the bigger problem in terms of highway safety and impact on farming is one that the minister is aware of and heard about from farmers at the agriculture dinner on the weekend as well as in talking to people one on one, which is the ongoing issue of the wild elk that are within the purview of the government to manage, and there remains a large number of ongoing concerns about how big the herd has become and its impact on the farming area.

With that, I will wrap up my remarks in Committee.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I appreciate the comments from the Member for Lake Laberge. Upon receiving the letter from the member, which really focused on ensuring that we had an opportunity to hear from all of those affected — but also being a good representative for the many farmers and livestock owners in the Lake Laberge area — we took the correspondence from the member very seriously. It was certainly in no way dismissed.

Throughout the summer, in dialogue with both the deputy minister and the director upon receiving that, we then continued to ensure that our conversations with affected parties were appropriate — not to take away from the fact that, absolutely in this sector, the summertime is the busy season. But in some way — although it is a busy season — it

might be the right time to have these discussions because we know people are here and we can steal a little bit of their time away. I think, from our event the other night that we all attended, a lot of farmers in the Yukon go to Mexico, because I think a lot of the people who were nominated for farmer of the year, and the winners today left this weekend. We did get a chance to catch them because we knew it was their busy season.

I will just add, just for the record, that we did reach out to all 14 Yukon First Nations and the municipalities. We ensured that we spoke with the City of Dawson, the City of Whitehorse, the Village of Carmacks, the Town of Faro, the Town of Watson Lake, the Village of Haines Junction, the Village of Mayo and the Village of Teslin. For the advisory councils: the Hamlet of Ibex Valley, the Hamlet of Mount Lorne, Marsh Lake Local Advisory Council, South Klondike Local Advisory Council, Tagish Local Advisory Council. For other stakeholders: Yukon Agricultural Association, Growers of Organic Food Yukon and the Yukon Outfitters Association — and, of course, the general public.

The discussion document is what we sent to the 14 First Nations, the eight municipalities and the five local advisory councils as well as the stakeholders. Then we did advertising as well, and that was completed through newspaper ads and social media — Facebook — and information was posted on the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources website.

Just for the formal record for this piece of legislation, responses were received from the Yukon Agricultural Association and its members, Growers of Organic Food Yukon and its members, the City of Whitehorse, the Town of Faro, one councillor from the Village of Mayo, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation — and I'm happy to see that the Yukon Wild Sheep Foundation, which would have received the information through the Yukon Outfitters Association, also responded favourably to this work — and two members just of the general public. I won't get into the specifics. I know we did a "what we heard" document and provided that. I think I will leave it at that.

I will say that it was a good opportunity the other evening to have some one-on-one conversations, as the member opposite mentioned, concerning the elk management plan. Certainly there are some farmers who, throughout the evening, I spoke with one on one. Probably you have done a good job of taking those specific concerns forward here to the Assembly. They are passionate about it because it is hitting their budgets and their pocket books immensely. I don't know — I mean, I could get myself in a bit of trouble without having the data from Mr. Ball, but I would think that when you look at some of these cases of the overall impact on a farmer's total budget just by dealing with repairing fences and some of these issues, I made a commitment, especially when the Assembly is done for this term at the end of the month, to spend a bit of time going back out and having more discussions with some of those specific individuals. I think we are coming to a point of having a broader dialogue here among all of us in the Assembly on this important topic.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for Lake Laberge. I would like to take a second just to thank the department for the fantastic agricultural banquet on Friday, and especially mention Brad Barton, who was also highlighted multiple times throughout the evening for his hard work.

The other thing I would really like to thank the department for is the absolute thoroughness of the briefing. It is not often that we go to a briefing where we get the "what we heard" document, copies of the survey, the discussion paper that gets handed out, as well as the legislation printed and then how it will look when it is amended. Just to have that breadth of knowledge shared early on makes it really easy to follow through. As my colleague mentioned, this is not the most contentious legislation we will have to change here, but I really appreciate that. That was probably the briefing where I got the most information without having to ask questions or having it followed up after. I really want to thank the officials for that.

I have very few questions, especially because it sounds like we are just going to sail through this. Someone actually just asked me what would happen to the wild horse population. So if wild horses were picked up on the side of the highway and put out to auction, what happens if the animals aren't sold? If a buyer does not bid on them and the animals aren't sold, what happens to an animal that has been picked up and doesn't sell?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: In response to my colleague for Takhini-Kopper King, thank you for mentioning the event that we all had an opportunity to attend, as well as the work of the department and Mr. Barton, who did a great job pulling it all together. Certainly it was fun to be in a situation with your colleagues — even though sometimes we can have more testy exchanges, it was a great evening. I commend the young members of 4-H who stole the show — three young ladies who did an absolutely amazing job of providing some public speaking and also added to the evening as well as the fundraising that was done for a very great cause. I appreciate that for the department it was fun to be in that scenario with some of our colleagues. I will touch upon that and endeavour to start answering questions here.

The feral horse population is dealt with through the Department of Environment and so we deal more with the stray horses than the feral horses. Just for definition and for the record, a feral horse is defined as a horse without an owner. There are a known number of feral horses roaming in the Yukon and most are concentrated in the Champagne area. Many of us, as you drive to Haines Junction, see them in that particular area.

The animal protection officer in the Department of Environment manages feral horses in Yukon. Feral horse management currently only operates alongside highways with the aim to deter and move them away from the roadway for the safety of motorists.

One thing that has come up and I know it was touched upon — and this really has to do with criteria in the auction process and ensuring that the animals that are auctioned off — ensure that they end up with good owners and that process has

got accountability and integrity. So we want to ensure that people who purchase animals at auction as well have the means to properly care for them. That is, I think, a very important piece.

We will work closely with our colleagues in the animal protection unit in the Department of Environment to ensure animals are sold to those who can properly care for them and who have not committed infractions under the *Animal Protection Act*.

I think one of the questions that might have come up earlier on is concerning those criteria. We will have criteria for buyers of animals sold at auction and that will be included in the operational guidelines that the act speaks to — that we will be preparing guidelines — and it will be developed in coordination with the Department of Environment.

For the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, once again, as I understand it and it has been provided to me, we will make sure that the Department of Environment continues to deal with the feral horse scenario as we build out our criteria for people who will be purchasing horses that have an owner, but have gone astray. We will ensure that this happens through a proper process in our guidelines that we are putting together.

I want to thank and commend the department and the branch because they made life very easy. I know this isn't the stickiest piece of legislation, but it has been done well and I have shared that with my colleagues through the last couple of weeks how happy I am that this process has been quite smooth.

Ms. White: Just to give the minister and the department an opportunity if there are any highlights or high points that the minister would like to touch on because that was it for the questions. It is going to be the shortest first time ever for the official in the Chamber, but in case there are any points that you would like to hit — or the minister himself would like to hit — this is a fantastic opportunity for that.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will just go through some of the key messages to put them on the record and then we can move on from there.

For the record, the *Pounds Act* allows for the capture and impoundment of stray livestock. The *Pounds Act* basically has been outdated and does not align with the updated versions of the *Highways Act* and *Animal Protection Act*. This has made it difficult to enforce the *Pounds Act* and to meet operational requirements for stray livestock management in Yukon. The amendments to the *Pounds Act* focus on updating, simplifying and streamlining it with other legislation. Amendments will harmonize it with the *Highways Act* and the *Animal Protection Act* and reflect current livestock control processes. Amendments will ensure that people responsible for enforcing the *Pounds Act* and issuing tickets are public servants rather than contract workers, which will reduce the risk for Yukon government — and there have been some really tough situations in the past — and will expand the jurisdiction of the *Pounds Act* so it applies across Yukon, which will improve the ability to respond to calls for stray livestock everywhere and not just in certain small areas.

An interesting and important one removes tattooing as a form of identification for impounded animals — now you just can take a photograph, log it — and expands the definition of “animal” to be the same as the *Highways Act* so there won't be a gap in service or responsibility — and modernize, clarify and simplify the language used in the legislation.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, as we said, had done their consultation. I think, at this point, that's it. We will move to try to be the fastest piece of legislation ever through Committee of the Whole, but I will leave that to the Member for Lake Laberge, who may remember — I don't know. I think we will leave it at that. Those are some of the high points, and you have done a great job and that's why this has been so smooth.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Pounds Act (2017)*? Seeing none, we will proceed to clause-by-clause debate.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Pounds Act (2017)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and title of Bill No. 9 read and agreed to

Chair: Ms. White has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Pounds Act (2017)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 23 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Pounds Act (2017)*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Pillai that the Chair report Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Pounds Act (2017)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 203, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2017-18*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 203: *Second Appropriation Act 2017-18* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 203, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2017-18*.

Mr. Cathers: When we were last in general debate on the budget, I did put a number of questions on record that I will allow the Premier to answer, but I am going to give him a couple of specific ones here that are prompted in part by the Public Accounts, now that we have just received the Public Accounts for 2016-17. They were tabled in this House on October 31. I am just going to ask him about the numbers contained in that and the current status at this point in the current fiscal year of where those comparable items would be at.

I will begin on page 33 of the Public Accounts. I note that there was a significant reduction in the amount of government money held in treasury bills and GICs and an increase in term deposits compared to the previous fiscal year. I would ask the Premier, for the record, to note what the numbers were at the end of the last fiscal year and what the current status of those temporary investments is for government. How much money is currently being held in term deposits, treasury bills and GICs respectively?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We will have to get back to the member opposite about that. That is a specific question for the departmental investment folks at Finance, so we will endeavour to get those numbers.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the Premier undertaking to get back with those numbers.

I am going to ask him another one, again prompted by the Public Accounts. I will ask both what the number was at the end of the last fiscal year and what the current status of that is. Again, on page 33 of the consolidated financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, we see that the provincial debenture, which stood at \$607,000 market value as of the previous year, in 2016, being reduced in the current fiscal year. Can the Premier tell me what that amount was at the end of the last fiscal year and what the current status is of that comparable line item at this point in the 2017-18 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, same answer — a current status would necessitate a conversation with that particular department upstairs, so we will endeavour to get those numbers to the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: I would appreciate the Premier getting back either later in debate if he is able to receive those items this afternoon or if he has to take more time than that, at the earliest opportunity.

I get the sense from the Premier's manner of response that he thinks I'm asking a very specific question, but the point I'm asking about is one that I think is very important for the Minister of Finance and this Legislative Assembly to be aware of and to consider, and that is what government is doing as far as its temporary investment portfolio. Those are substantial amounts of the government's resources held in those areas and if the Finance minister is not engaging with

senior officials to debate, develop and understand the investment policy in those areas, it does have the potential of running into problems if there are errors in those areas.

Again, I am going to ask another question about the accounts receivable from Canada that showed at the end of the fiscal year — I believe the number was a little over \$57 million in accounts receivable — almost \$58 million in accounts receivable from Canada — at the end of the 2016-17 fiscal year.

Can the Premier tell me what the current status of that is and what the breakdown is of those accounts receivable from Canada?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We are here prepared to talk about the supplementary budget and we are prepared to speak to the supplementary budget and we do know that there will be some background conversations and questions based upon the Public Accounts for sure — we get that. But specific questions about specific numbers in a current status report is just not something that we are going to be able to deliver here in the Legislative Assembly.

So if the member opposite has a whole list of these as opposed to getting to his feet each time and asking for another thing — if he wants to send a list of the current line items from the Public Accounts information, we would be gladly tasked with responding to that.

To answer his question about the term investment policy, we haven't changed the short-term investment policy from the previous government. It is the same policy as before. I appreciate his warnings, but again we have not changed those principles. The same principle is there to protect our capital and that is the same policy that the government has been using for years, and we haven't changed that policy.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer from the Premier. He seems to think that it's an overly specific question, but I would like to point out that if the amount of money being talked about is very relevant to the supplementary budget — the amount of money at the end of the past fiscal year and the amount of money in the current fiscal year. I note that according to page 33 of the Public Accounts — I am referencing the specific number to aid the minister and staff in finding the right amount — we are talking about significant amounts of money. There is a very significant policy implications to how government handles it and a very significant risk if there are mistakes made in that area.

I would note, for example, for the reference of Hansard and anyone listening on the radio or reading us in Hansard who is wondering why I am asking a question that the Premier has characterized as being a little too specific, if you look at page 33 of the Public Accounts for the last fiscal year, the amount of money being held in term deposits by the government was over \$125 million. That is a pretty significant chunk of the government's reserves. I do think it is reasonable to ask the Premier: Where is the money?

It comes down to the same thing again in the area of treasury bills and GICs. Again, the reference is currently on page 33 of the Public Accounts. There is a reference to \$87 million — almost \$88 million. Again, I do think it is

relevant to this budget and the supplementary to ask what the current status is of a comparable line item at this point in the current fiscal year and also for information on what point in time the numbers that the Premier will hopefully cite relate to — whether they are related as of the current date of November 6 or whether they are based on a period 4 variance report or what the status of that information is based on.

So again, the amount receivable from Canada according to the Public Accounts as of the last fiscal year — again, we would like to know what it is at this current point in the current fiscal year — was showing almost \$58 million due from the Government of Canada. We are wondering what the status of that is and have to ask the question that if this is a level of detail that the Premier isn't going to be bothered with, I just am a little concerned about why the Premier in his capacity as Minister of Finance isn't looking into the \$125 million here and the \$58 million here. Pretty soon, you're starting to talk about real money. I would just again ask if we could get an update on that amount, and I will add one more thing to the list of questions.

It appeared, based on the Public Accounts, that, as of the end of the last fiscal year, the Yukon government actually owed the federal government money for type 2 mine sites, which seemed a tad unusual since, under the devolution transfer agreement, the Yukon government is supposed to have the cost of that funded by the federal government pursuant to their obligations.

So I would ask there: First of all, is that reference in the Public Accounts correct? What is the current status of that amount at this point in the fiscal year, and why are we seeing a situation where the federal government is usually supposed to be funding the territory instead of the other way around for these costs? Is this an adjustment based on a disagreement or an error that was made by the government? What is the explanation for that \$6.6 million line item, and what is the current status at this point in the current fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We will endeavour to get those numbers back to the member opposite. He is asking for how much. When we're talking about Canada, we're talking about money coming in for taxes, we're talking about money from the TFF, we're talking about infrastructure funding, and we're looking to provide him the accurate information that he is asking for. As of now, as of today, we don't have that information here with us today, but we will get back to him with "how much", with "for what" and "for which dates" in order to provide for him the most accurate information that he's looking for.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that undertaking and note, just doing the quick math on that amount, that collectively the amount I asked about from term deposits, treasury bills and GICs — based on the last, most recent information we have as shown in Public Accounts plus the accounts receivable from the federal government — added up to \$125.9 million plus \$87.9 million plus \$58 million — that is \$271.846 million. That's why I do think that this is information that the Premier should look into and provide to the Legislative Assembly.

In the future, I would suggest that it would be a good idea to be regularly apprised on these numbers because, if we're talking about over one-quarter billion dollars and the Finance minister isn't sure where the money is or how it's being held, it does call into question the financial abilities of the Premier in his capacity as Minister of Finance and would beg the question of why he isn't more aware of the current status of that.

I'm going to ask him one question here that is coming directly out of a recent press release that the Premier issued relevant to the Public Accounts and the current fiscal situation. The Premier, in a press release issued on October 31, 2017, made reference to \$8-million worth of money being paid back. I will quote the exact section. There is a section of the press release that says: "In additional efforts to improve the financial future, \$8 million was paid back in 2016-17."

My question for the Premier is: that \$8 million — what was paid back?

Is it a case of loans being retired or paid down? What is the breakdown of that \$8 million? Which loans does it affect? Is it related to Yukon Development Corporation, to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon Housing Corporation or another area? Which specific loans were paid down if indeed this is a loan repayment and what is the breakdown of that \$8-million amount?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I don't balance the chequebook of the government as the Minister of Finance. We do have a department that does that. We have very talented people in the Department of Finance who would endeavour to get those numbers back — those very specific numbers — that the member opposite is speaking to.

With respect to a press release, \$8 million is very vague — he didn't really give me the title or the date — but I assume what he is talking about is the \$8 million that was basically allocated to help pay down the Hospital Corporation's mortgage.

Mr. Cathers: I apologize — I thought by giving the date I was being specific enough on the press release. The press release is dated October 31, 2017. It was the Premier's press release regarding Public Accounts and the \$8 million — again the specific quote from it was: "In additional efforts to improve the financial future, \$8 million was paid back in 2016-17."

I will just give the Premier the opportunity — I understand he was, in his most recent response, not 100-percent clear on the question I was asking. Now that I have clarified it and referenced the press release, can he confirm that \$8 million was then paying down debts held by the Hospital Corporation and can he let me know whether it was one of their loans that was paid back or whether it was payment on more than one of their loans and what the total amount of each respective loan payment was under that \$8 million?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, a very detailed question from the member opposite. He had an opportunity when the officials were here for the corporation — he could have asked — but yes, there were 10 payments made for that amount that

the member opposite cited, the specific details of which we don't have here right now. Again, if this is what he would like us to get back to him, we will get back to him with the specific details of that \$8 million.

Sorry, my mistake — not 10 payments — the debt payments were payments on debt to the tune of \$8 million to the Hospital Corporation. Sorry for the confusion, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the information that was provided by the Premier, but I do find it odd. When I'm asking a question about the supplementary budget and asking for the starting point of the fiscal year and a press release that the Premier issued less than a week ago — when I ask about one of the highlights from that press release that the Premier presumably signed off on — unless someone else signed off in his absence — I am actually quite surprised to hear in a press release that the Premier just issued less than a week ago that he is telling me that not only does he not know what the \$8-million amount referenced in the release he signed off on means, but seems to be a little bit put off by the question.

If I can ask another question — if the Premier doesn't know what the numbers in his press releases mean, I do have to ask: Why sign off on a press release if you can't actually explain it? You are talking about \$8 million, which for most people is quite a bit of money — if you can't actually stand up in the House and say, "This is what the \$8 million was for." I believe the Premier has indicated that it was for hospital loans. Is he able to provide any more detailed information? Was it to one of the hospital's previous loans for construction or building? Was it to more than one of those loans? What is the amount, respectively, for those loans? If the Premier doesn't have that information, perhaps he could indicate why he issued a press release citing specific numbers that he is not in a position to speak to.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, I am not really sure who exactly the member opposite is trying to insult — me or my two officials from the department here. There are three of us here, and we don't want to give false information. We want to make sure that the information that we give to the member opposite is the correct information. He is asking us very specific questions. Yes, \$8 million does seem like a lot of money, but in a \$1.3-billion budget, we don't have the actual information for the member opposite here today to tell him whether or not it was one loan or for a multitude of loans. We will endeavour to get back to him. We will get that information as soon as possible.

Mr. Cathers: I was not intending to be overly insulting to anyone. I want to make it very clear to the officials present as well as to anyone listening that I am certainly not insulting officials. There is only one name on the press release that the Premier signed off on, and that is the Premier's. There is only one person quoted in the press release, and that is the Premier. It is a very relevant budget question for general debate, but also a question of what the Premier is doing in his capacity as Minister of Finance if he is signing off on a press release without understanding it. How can he be confident that the press release is accurate if he hasn't made himself aware of the key details pertaining to it? Wouldn't the Premier expect

of all his ministers — but also of himself — that, before signing off on a release talking about \$8 million here and there, there be due diligence done by the minister, because ultimately the Westminster parliamentary system is based on the principle of ministerial accountability and ministerial responsibility, not on passing the buck or saying that, really, officials are responsible. Ultimately, the buck stops at the minister's desk, and we are talking about the Finance minister. I am not trying to be insulting toward the minister, but I am a little bit horrified that the minister cannot provide a breakdown on a number in a press release that he sent out less than a week ago.

As we established when I asked about areas including where the government's money is being held in terms deposits, treasury bills and GICs, provincial debenture and reference to the accounts receivable from Canada — all in all, totalling over one-quarter billion dollars — the Premier seems not to have a clue about the answer to that question.

If we go back not that many years to 2002 — I guess 15 years and a couple of days ago — when the Yukon Party was first elected to government and I at the time was a backbencher, but when we took office at that point in time the total annual budget of the territory was a little over a half-billion dollars. If the Finance minister lost one-quarter billion dollars, it would have a really big impact on what programs the government could run. I just want to emphasize here that this question is not about whether there are officials in the government who know the answers to these questions. I'm sure there are. The question is both what the content is of that information and the Premier, hopefully being accountable to this Legislative Assembly and being transparent as he indicated during the election campaign he would be — I am asking the Premier, especially in his capacity as Minister of Finance, to be aware of the multi-million-dollar details that make up the budget, including the answer to where the status of over one-quarter billion dollars of the public's money in accounts receivable is and how it has changed at this point in the fiscal year. I do think that these are very relevant questions for Yukoners.

I'm going to ask the Premier again — I would like a breakdown of that \$8-million item cited in his report and which hospital loans were paid down, including which ones were paid down earlier than the government was obliged to pay them down.

I'm also going to ask a specific question related to another government corporation and the status of their borrowings, both the status at the end of the fiscal year and the current status. On page 57 of the Public Accounts for fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, there are references to the Yukon Development Corporation that says — and I quote: "... the Yukon Development Corporation had borrowings of \$137,300,000 (2016 — \$142,400,000)..." — again, that reference is on page 57. I would like to ask the Premier what the current status is of borrowings by Yukon Development Corporation. Is that number still at the \$137,300,000 number referenced in the Public Accounts for the end of the fiscal year

or has it gone either up or down? If so, which? What's the current number?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, we've answered the question as to what the \$8 million was for. Specifically, it was for the Yukon Hospital Corporation and it was used to pay down the debt.

But he's asking some very specific questions and again the Minister of Finance doesn't pay the bills. The Minister of Finance has a different role and we have great people in this department who do pay down those bills. The specifics as to whether it was one debt payment or two or three, we will endeavour to get that information back to the member opposite.

I do appreciate the history lesson from the member opposite as well and his specific question for Yukon Development Corporation — again a great question for the Minister responsible for YDC, or to the department when they appear as a witness. We will endeavour to get that information for him as well.

Mr. Cathers: I would thank the Premier for the answer if I had actually gotten one. The Premier is referring to these as very specific questions, but we're talking again about a change in the last fiscal year of \$5 million, and the borrowings of Yukon Development Corporation are included within the government's total borrowing capacity. Knowing how much room the government has available under its debt cap is a very relevant question in my view. Again, I would ask the Premier about that.

I would also add a couple of specific questions: What was the government's long-term debt — the total borrowings — as of March 31, 2017? Has there been any increase or decrease to that long-term debt at this point in the current fiscal year? Again, I would ask him to note, if there has been a change, whether that number is based on a current date — i.e. this point in November — or based on an earlier period, such as the period 4 variance report.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, being prepared for the supplementary budget debate — it would be great to finally get into that — and hearing some questions that are based on Public Accounts, we are kind of scrambling here a bit to answer Public Accounts questions.

I wanted to do two things right now. I will beg the forgiveness of the member opposite and ask him to re-ask that last question. I would ask him a question back as well. When he is asking us for the specific breakdown of the \$8 million, is he asking for more information than is in the Public Accounts already? If he turns to page 51, he might get the answers that he is looking for already. I know he is asking questions from page 20 or something in the Public Accounts, but I believe the information that he is looking for, if he just read the rest of the report, is available for him on page 51. If he can take a look at that, the full consolidated entities are all listed there — if that is the information he needs. Also, can he actually ask that question he just asked again?

Mr. Cathers: I believe in my last question, I was just asking about what the long-term debt, the borrowings — and I will just reference page 51 of the Public Accounts, so that we

are comparing apples to apples. The amount that shows up under total debt of the Government of Yukon as of the end of the 2016-17 fiscal year — that current amount as listed on page 51 shows as \$193,522,000.

I would just ask the Premier as well if there has been any increase or reduction to that total debt amount since the end of the fiscal year. What is its current status at this point in time?

I will add one more question, which is just to ask the Premier if he can confirm whether the difference between \$193,522,000 in total debt shown on page 51 of the Public Accounts as of March 31, 2017 is a reduction from the total debt as of the end of March 31, 2016, which at that point showed it at \$201.558 million. I would ask if that \$8 million that we are talking about in the Premier's press release is responsible for that change in those total debt numbers as shown on page 51 of the Public Accounts. Just to recap, I would ask the Premier: Has there been any change since March 31, either increasing or decreasing that amount of total debt on the government's books?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, asking for current status is going to take some work for sure, but to answer his question as far as the differential between the two numbers on page 51 — between the \$193.522 million figure and the \$201.558-million figure — yes, that is the \$8 million we speak of. This is debt paid back. The lion's share, of course, is the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The breakdown is there for him to take a look at. If he is asking questions more specific than that, we would have to endeavour to get back to him.

Again, we do not want to give misinformation now. If the member opposite is asking for current status updates as of today, that information would not be readily available at any time for a minister sitting here. It is something that we would have to look into and get back to him. But to answer his question: Yes, that is the \$8 million that we speak of.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that answer from the minister. I think the Premier may have misunderstood me when I was asking about the current status of the debt numbers. I did ask what the current status was, but I also acknowledged that it is possible that the Premier would have to be relying on something like the period 4 variance report. It is my understanding — and I would appreciate it if the Premier could clarify if something has changed — that before entering into long-term debt, there is usually a requirement for a Management Board submission. So anything other than a reduction in that long-term debt, I would think, should be something that would require a Management Board submission, and hence the Premier should be aware of whether or not that debt had been increased.

To drill right down to the nub of it again, I would appreciate the detail on that \$8 million, including whether any of it was paid back earlier than the notes required them being paid back. If so, what was the total amount of that?

I would also just ask the Premier, if he could, to provide us with the information. We have seen within this supplementary budget — and were advised by officials that there had been adjustment to the amount booked for pensions for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We were advised at two

briefings — one at the Finance briefing and one at the Hospital Corporation briefing — of the reduction for the Hospital Corporation, which, based on what officials indicated, I understood to be a reduction of \$1.22 million. Could the Premier confirm that number and indicate whether there has been any adjustment downward or upward to the amount booked for the college pension plan as a result of the changes made due to the federal order-in-council that was registered in June of this year and that allowed for a larger amount to be booked by a letter of credit, requiring less cash to be allocated toward the solvency situation of pension plans?

Hon. Mr. Silver: In answer to the member opposite's question, we'll go with Education first. The pension solvency in Education was a reduction of \$1,127,000 and for Health and Social Services pension solvency, there was a further reduction of \$1,222,000.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer from the minister. That was a full answer to the question and appreciated.

I would just note again that the issue of the Stewart-Keno transmission line was one that there has been some discussion of moving forward with. I understand it is, as the Premier might say, a question for YDC. But my question was with that project: Is the government still committed to moving forward with the Stewart-Keno transmission line project? If so, have they determined what the total cost will be? How much of that cost will be covered through any of the possible ways of financing it — either through cash by the government, a loan by the government to the corporation, the corporation itself borrowing money, or the corporation through YEC seeking to put it into the rate base? Can the Premier or perhaps the Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation provide me with the information on what the current status of that picture is, including whether government has borrowed any money for it, loaned any money to the Yukon Development Corporation, or is planning on doing any one of those things?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, a very specific question here in general debate on a supplementary budget — I don't recall ever seeing a capital line for Keno in the supplementary budget, unless the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources knows something that I don't.

Of course, the last question — we gave him answers because it was pertinent to the information that we're trying to debate here today, which is general debate of the supplementary budget.

To answer the question in general about capital projects, whether it be in EMR or capital projects in Highways and Public Works or in Community Services, all of these capital plans are being considered but, in light of fiscal challenges, we are taking a look at these as a whole-of-government approach and taking a look at current pressures, things that weren't committed from the last government, projects that were raring to go but didn't go, or maybe the previous government really wanted to get done but didn't get past the mark — there's a lot of that.

If we had a conversation about the net financial assets, we could talk about specifically the pressures on the government

on projects that weren't done by the previous government. But again, all capital plans are being considered in light of the fiscal challenges that we find ourselves in.

If the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources wants to talk specifically about this transmission line, then he can speak now if that's okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Concerning the Stewart-Keno line at this particular time, we continue to endeavour and do due diligence on what model would be used potentially if this was a project that the government decided to support and move forward on. Certainly we've said in the Legislative Assembly on a number of occasions that we see the value of that particular piece of infrastructure — not just for the mining sector, but for the residents who would be positively affected by that. There continues to be a dialogue ongoing between resource companies in that particular area and Yukon Energy.

Another important aspect of this is to do analysis of what this would mean to the ratepayer, taking into consideration if actually having a potential client from the Eagle project come online would actually reduce the impact to the ratepayer? So at this particular time, we continue to look at a series of different models on the project, whether that be some of the previous models that have been used to fund these types of projects or looking at federal infrastructure dollars that specifically would support grid infrastructure and taking into consideration that you would, in many cases, be using a very clean energy source to provide an industrial energy solution.

So we continue to look through those options. No decisions have been made. I think, just to clarify some of the questions that have been touched upon — the state of Yukon Development Corporation is as we have found it. I'll leave it at that.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer from the minister on that. I just would note for the Premier as well as for others that, in fact, within a supplementary budget, our understanding of the ability to debate departments is that it's only new appropriations that are debated. So there are some departments which, to me, appear to include Yukon Development Corporation that don't have the government requesting an additional amount in this budget in either O&M or capital and therefore, as a result, the only opportunity we have during Committee of the Whole debate to ask questions about that department is in general debate on the supplementary budget itself, which is why I asked that question at that point in time.

I do appreciate the clarification from the minister and also I think missed mentioning the potential for federal funding of the Stewart-Keno transmission line inadvertently, and I thank the minister for correcting me on that. Again, I just would encourage the government to be aware of this project. I think this is something where there is potential, but as the minister alluded to, there is both an upside and a downside to this project. It's one that, in my capacity as Official Opposition critic for Finance, I would encourage the government to look very carefully at all angles of this and be fully transparent with the Legislative Assembly and with the public about what it is looking at doing, why it's looking at doing it, what the

options are — including if government has simply decided not to proceed with the project — and would encourage the Premier to give Yukoners the opportunity for input on that prior to any decisions that would take on any significant amount of new debt or add a substantial amount to the rate base.

While of course — as the minister I'm sure knows and the Premier may know — people do have the opportunity to file for intervenor status if the Yukon Energy Corporation files a rate hearing in front of the Yukon Utilities Board. But while people do have the opportunity to do so, it's also quite obvious that not many Yukoners do that and the concept of it does sound a little bit intimidating to a lot of people — the idea of filing for intervenor status — and there is not a insubstantial workload. It's not nearly as accessible as allowing somebody the opportunity to comment, either through an online survey or other public engagement, but again the multi-million-dollar decisions that are made by government, especially the ones that affect tens of millions of dollars or consider taking on new debt, are something that are of concern to people.

I think the Premier — I don't think he answered the question, but if I missed his response, I would ask him to just to confirm that. If we look at the item, the total debt is listed on page 51 of the government's consolidated financial statements of the Public Accounts. The total debt showing for the end of March 31, 2017 is \$193,522,000. Can the Premier please confirm whether that's the current status of that debt and, if not, whether it has gone up or down to the best of his knowledge?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The numbers that are shown in the columns on page 51 — of course this is us paying back the debt up until March 31, as the member opposite knows.

Since then, more payments of course have been made. The specifics of that — we would have to get back to him on that.

Mr. Cathers: I just would note in fact that I know that the Premier seemed surprised that I'm asking questions about this, but I asked questions about this in the spring and I will put him on notice that he can expect that when we rise to debate the budget in the future, one of the questions I'm going to ask him frankly — and I believe is the job of every Official Opposition Finance critic to ask — is what the government's current borrowings are and the status of that debt amount. The long-term debts that government has entered into — and before the Premier attempts to point fingers at the previous government, perhaps I would just note that in fact governments of every stripe in the territory have recognized at times that long-term debt is, in certain circumstances, something that needs to be taken on.

However, there are many — myself included — within the Yukon who believe that government should enter into those long-term debts with very, very careful consideration and avoid adding areas that will add significantly to the interest costs for future legislative assemblies, future governments, future generations of Yukoners. The \$8 million in debt that the Premier made reference to being paid down

this year, certainly — while I look forward to seeing the detail on it, you are not often going to see me stand here, if ever, criticizing government for choosing to pay down debt and save interest costs, but I would note that these long-term debts are just one example of it.

When we made reference to the decision made by the previous government to reduce the net financial assets — the cash in the bank — to pay down \$27 million of a loan that the Hospital Corporation had for a previous project, that decision is one that did reduce the financial position of the territory in terms of the net financial assets, but — as noted by officials during testimony before the Public Accounts Committee in 2013 — that decision saved the Hospital Corporation roughly \$1 million a year in interest costs as a result of reducing the cash position to wipe out \$27 million in debt.

These types of things — the decision to enter into borrowings or to retire them and to pay them down, potentially at an earlier date than required — are, in my humble opinion, very important matters that not only the Minister of Finance should be aware of, in my opinion, on an ongoing basis — but they are able to speak to the key details of that. It is in fact something that I believe is very relevant for members of this Legislative Assembly to consider and that everyone should be aware of, just as the bottom line numbers on the total O&M costs of the budget or the total spending for the Department of Health and Social Services, for example, or the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources are debated here. We should be talking about what government is paying in terms of interest charges, and has the mortgage or the Visa bill been run up any higher than it was previously, just in the interests of the accountability and transparency of this Legislative Assembly, particularly when it comes to how future governments and future Legislative Assemblies will have been burdened with costs.

I am going to ask another question that the Premier may consider to be fairly specific. I note that in the Premier's press release — in talking about the government's current financial position — the Premier has claimed that — I believe in his ministerial statement — the previous government didn't properly account for the pension plan requirements of Yukon College and Yukon Hospital Corporation. I note that, in reviewing the Public Accounts, the Public Accounts tell a different story, which, according to the Public Accounts — as the Premier will see if he looks at them in perhaps a level of detail that he hasn't read into it at this point — the current cash needs and solvency needs of the Hospital Corporation are based on an actuarial assessment that was done on December 31, 2016, according to the Public Accounts.

The hospital pension plan was done, according to Public Accounts — an actuarial assessment was done on June 30, 2016. I will ask the Premier a simple question: Are June 30, 2016, and December 31, 2016 before or after April 1, 2016?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, I am not even going to entertain that.

I will talk a bit here about the gross debt. As the member opposite is keenly aware when he is talking about paying

down some of that money, we are talking about \$200 million of debt that the Yukon Party created. So I am glad that they put money toward that debt. It is great that they put that money toward it. But again, that is not all.

When we are talking about our gross debt and we are talking about our net financial assets, we have to talk about how a government has a responsibility to tighten up its forecasts and tighten up the amount of projects that are left to linger. For example, the reason for the drop in the net financial assets — well, that is largely as a result of the acquisition of tangible capital assets. With respect to the current year, there are a number of projects that were initiated by the previous government that are still being completed. When you take a look at Whistle Bend, F.H. Collins, the magnetic resonance imaging — with Highways and Public Works, we have the Whitehorse airport terminal building, Drury Creek highway camp living complex — there is a whole list of projects and another \$17.8 million allocated this year for the completion of projects.

It is great for the member opposite to speak specifically about — when we are talking about the financial pressure that we are in — about the good work that his government did in paying off some of the loans that they created — that's great. I agree that it's a great idea to pay back the money that you borrow, but when he is talking again about the specifics — talking about the disclosure. The disclosure has always been made once per year. This has always been the trend. This has always been, from his government to our government — when we have the Public Accounts, that is when this disclosure is made. What a great process to go through. This year, being my first working with the Auditor General's office — these numbers are succinct. These numbers tell the real truth — the final accounting of the last Yukon Party budget. We need to have that complete narrative when we are talking about net financial assets and where we are right now and the strains on us. We would love to start talking about moving forward, but every time that we have part of the picture being painted by the Member for Lake Laberge, we feel obligated to continue the narrative and show the bigger picture as well.

As far as disclosure, he did ask a few different questions on this. That disclosure is always made once a year with the Public Accounts. The last figure that we have is on page 51, which is that \$193.5 million on the total debt in 2017. We will absolutely give the member — because he is asking for it and because we are open and transparent. If he wants updates since then, we will give them to the member opposite.

As far as his last ridiculous question, I am going to ask him if he could maybe ascertain what the point of his question is, and we will answer the question if there is a point.

Mr. Cathers: What I would point out to the Premier is — as the Premier noted, he does not want to spend a lot of time talking about the past nor do I, but it is important to correct the record.

I would note that the Premier has stated via ministerial statement, in press releases and in interviews that the previous government didn't properly account for pension solvency issues at the hospital and the college. But, as shown by the

Public Accounts, the actuarial assessments that came to light before the end of the 2016-17 fiscal year were after the government, the previous premier and Finance minister, tabled the budget. The new actuarial assessment of the college pension plan, according to Public Accounts, was information that government received on June 30, 2016. Hospital Corporation public accounts — according to the Public Accounts, that information is based on an actuarial assessment done on December 31, 2016.

New information arose within the fiscal year. The Premier chose to phrase that and frame it as the previous government not properly accounting for costs at those corporations rather than noting, as he should have, that new information came to light based on actuarial evaluations.

Then we see a situation here where the Premier blamed the former Finance minister for needing to book \$3.5 million in additional pension plan costs for the Hospital Corporation in the 2016-17 fiscal year and an additional half-million dollars for the college. In fact, what we saw is that government booked \$4 million in cash for those two corporations in the 2016-17 fiscal year and then reduced that booking in the current fiscal year, according to information that the Premier acknowledged earlier in our debate, by in excess of \$2.3 million. So while presenting it as, "The previous Premier left me with a \$4-million bill unpaid" and asserting that the Premier should have known about it, if the Premier were reading his own Public Accounts, he would see that the new actuarial evaluation of both of those corporations happened well after the budget — and in one case, after the change in government — and, in fact, acknowledge the fact to the public instead of what we would call thoroughly taking the Liberal spin machine to it and acknowledge the fact that the government booked \$4 million in cash for those two pension plan solvency issues in the 2016-17 fiscal year and then unbooked \$2.3 million of that amount for those two corporations in the current fiscal year as a result of the change they knew was coming to the federal regulation related to the amount of cash that had to be booked for pension plans.

So again, a very relevant point in correcting where they started out and also providing the opportunity for the Premier, if he had not read the details, to perhaps consider correcting the record in this House and apologizing to the former Finance minister for his past mischaracterizations of the fiscal situation.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Just for context — this is a complicated issue. We view that the pension plans are an integral part of the employment compensation, and the 2016-17 budget demonstrates the government's commitment to a principle by providing the Yukon College that money up front — \$1.9 million to the Yukon College and \$3.6 million for the Yukon Hospital Corporation for their annual pension solvency needs.

Additionally, our government provides additional support by guaranteed letters of credit for those two pension plan solvency funding obligations. I will get back to why that's an important piece in a second.

The big difference here is that the Yukon Party did not budget for a known cost. That known cost is the pension solvency. They didn't put that in their mains, so that's what we're talking about. It's a known cost, but yet in the budget for that year it didn't show up in the mains. It's very straightforward. The member opposite can slide back and forth as much as he wants on this but that's it. We did. Our government put it in our main estimates and we reduced it now because the feds also changed the rules. That's that piece about the letters of credit — how much credit is allowed to be up front. We're very pleased with the change from Ottawa in how much line of credit can be given as opposed to cash.

This is unbooked because of the rule changes. We didn't know that relief was coming by the time of the budget, but again, we know it was a known cost. We put those known costs up front and that's the type of financial accountability you will be seeing from this side of the House moving forward.

Mr. Cathers: The thing about that — again the Premier may wish to correct himself — is in fact that the Premier just stated again that the previous government knew of these costs when in fact the Public Accounts that he signed off on that are tabled in the Legislative Assembly at the end of the last fiscal year show that the actuarial evaluations for the hospital and college pension plans were done on dates after this House debated the mains for 2016-17 — new information, new adjustments.

The Premier has chosen to, rather than acknowledging that new information came to light, blame the previous Finance minister and blame the previous government. While the Yukon government was one of the governments across the country lobbying the federal government to change the regulations to allow them to book additional amounts for government corps through a letter of credit, the Premier just stood here and said that he didn't know that at the start of this financial year that this relief was coming. He may not have had it confirmed, but they certainly would have had an idea that this amount was coming.

Again, I would point out that it's a perfectly legal but somewhat misleading accounting choice to book \$3.5 million in cash for the Hospital Corporation pension and a half-million dollars for the college in 2016-17 and then unbook \$2.3 million of that this fiscal year and then try to blame the former Finance minister. The Premier is probably not going to correct himself on that, though he should.

I'm going to move on to other areas and just ask the Premier within the government about the total number of positions including the 202 new full-time equivalent positions, some within the Department of Finance and some throughout government, that were created by the Premier this fiscal year. How many of those positions are currently vacant and are there any expected lapses in personnel dollars this fiscal year?

Another general budget question I would ask the Premier is that we have noted that the Minister of Education is lapsing over \$10 million in capital budget contained in this current supplementary estimate, even though for some reason she was either unwilling or unable to answer that question in Question

Period, so I would ask the Premier, both as the Premier and leader of the government and in his capacity as Finance minister this: Other than the \$10.2 million in capital spending that is projected to be lapsing for the Department of Education, is he aware of any other significant capital lapses anticipated within any of the government departments this year? In case he missed the question while he was conferring with officials, how many of the government positions are currently vacant and are there expected lapses in personnel this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Interesting tactic — we have two questions here. I am going to start with the first one. We will go back to statements made about pension solvency before I pivot off to the capital question.

Mr. Chair, this isn't rocket science. These are estimates. Every year, what a government does — and the member opposite knows this — they know that the costs are coming, such as pension solvency, and if nothing else changes — if there are no new rules from the feds — then you have a really good understanding of what money should be booked for that, absolutely, if the key interest rates don't change, for example, or if the Bank of Canada is not changing their interest rates, for example, and if there are no changes to the way that the feds need that money to be collected, for example.

When we went to Ottawa with the briefing notes from the Department of Finance — from IGR — I imagine they would be the exact same ones the Yukon Party brought to Ottawa year after year to say: "Please, can we get more in the line of credit so that we don't put up cash for these two institutions that clearly are not going to go bankrupt or have to get all of their public servants now to finally get into pensions." So that is the conversation that we have had with Minister Morneau. I'm sure that this is the conversation that the previous Minister of Finance had with the ministers in previous governments. If the member opposite is saying that I should have predicted the future that finally Ottawa was going to change that rule and give us a little bit more credit, it would have been great. I don't have that power, Mr. Chair.

Again, estimates are based upon past knowledge and this government would do the best job for the taxpayer if we put that money up front into the main estimates. I believe that is a good step. When changes happen, well, it's great. We actually are allowed to put less money in cash and more money into credit for these institutions that are not going to go belly-up in one year. It's a great conversation and I'm sure that the previous Minister of Finance did the exact same due diligence when it was his turn to go to Ottawa and to ask for relief in these pension insolvencies. I have seen the briefing notes — I use them myself — from the departments. Nothing I imagine changed too much in that ask because it was an ask, not only just from us, but other jurisdictions in Canada as well. So it was great to see Ottawa did change that and allowed more of that to be in the form of a line of credit and that's great for our bottom line.

It is great for the taxpayers of Yukon and we are happy with the change. To think that this would be the year that finally Ottawa is going to get it — I mean that would be an

ability to move into the future and see what they are going to do. We can't do that, so if I had that ability, then I would apologize to the previous Finance minister.

On the second question about lapses — we have a couple of different ones here as far as what we are expecting. Here are the numbers on lapses. When it comes to capital in Education, we have the F.H. Collins replacement. Finishing that work outside the new facility that was due to site contamination — that lapse is just under \$1 million. It is \$998,000. Then we have the new track as well. The Education track, which is a recreation site, is also delayed due to the site contamination — \$2 million. The francophone secondary school delay was also due to site contamination — \$7.250 million. All we know are the numbers that are in the supplementary estimates.

Moving on past that to answer the member opposite's question, we have Yukon Housing Corporation investments in affordable housing. There is a total number of \$8.95 million in housing timing issues here. I will go through those one by one for the member opposite. We have investments in affordable housing deferred contributions for programming under the victims of violence emergency repair program and affordable housing rental construction program to a future year, which is coinciding with the application and anticipated completions of projects. That is to the tune of \$2.55 million. We also have the same Yukon Housing Corporation investments in affordable housing deferred for First Nation housing partnership contributions to a future year, which is \$1.5 million. There is also Yukon Housing Corporation in the same investment in affordable housing deferred contributions to non-seniors housing construction in Whitehorse to a future year of \$2.7 million, as noted. The final one is also a Yukon Housing Corporation investment in affordable housing deferred seniors housing construction in Carmacks to a future year, which is \$1.2 million. If the member wants to have a conversation specifically with the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation on this issue, we would absolutely entertain that.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 203, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2017-18*.

Mr. Cathers: Just in resuming — I'm not going to spend too much more time discussing the pension plan bookings and only brought them up today as they relate to statements that the Premier continues to make about the current status of the fiscal situation and the supplementary estimates that we're currently debating.

I just think it's important to note for the record that the Premier has indicated that he didn't know a change to federal regulations was coming and in that case I don't know what the

Premier knew and when, so I will have to take him at his undertaking that perhaps he was not aware that the federal government was going to make that change.

I would note that the Premier should be able to look at the fact that the actuarial evaluations of the solvency needs of the hospital and the college both changed materially and significantly, as shown in the Public Accounts at their most recent actuarial evaluations, which as shown in Public Accounts was respectively for those areas. In the one case, it was in June 2016 and the other in December 2016. Both were well after the start of the fiscal year and one in fact was after the Premier took office.

I would just note that, unless the Premier wishes to provide more comment on this, I think we've established the fact that the government booked \$4 million in the 2016-17 fiscal year based on new information, which came forward from the actuaries relevant to those two corporations. They then booked \$4 million, which they attempted to blame on the former premier even though that information came in after the fact based on new actuarial evaluations. They then subsequently decreased that amount by \$2.3 million this fiscal year.

I would just encourage the Premier to be a little more reflective of the actual facts of the timing around bookings and the government's fiscal situation when he's talking about this number in the future. I think that as we have more time to go through the Public Accounts, we can deconstruct the deficit that he claims was there from \$5.4 million, which had been reduced by \$2.3 million, and I think we can set the record straight on the others as well as we get additional answers hopefully from the government.

May I ask about a few of the global numbers — for lack of a better term — the overall corporate numbers within government? The reason I'm asking is that, again the Premier seems to have a trend of either saying that I'm asking too specific questions, which is mostly what he indicates, or that I'm not asking a specific enough question. We're asking the questions that we hear from Yukoners and that we believe we have an obligation to ask due to our responsibility as the Official Opposition in holding the government to account, including getting information so that not only we can debate it with government, but for members of the public who want a little more of a breakdown than the Public Accounts. Not everyone can easily read a balance sheet for the highlights. We are trying to help in the interest of good public information to provide that information to Yukoners and would hope that the Premier and his colleagues, in keeping with their commitments around transparency to Yukoners, would be willing to provide it.

I would again just briefly make reference to the fact that we were critical in the spring of the change that was made to the budget to strip the budget highlights down from 11 pages of highlights to a mere four and was much heavier with pictures. I would sincerely encourage the Premier to correct that in the next budget that is tabled.

What I want to move to now is to just ask the Premier about some of the overall costs contained within the budget

and the current supplementary estimates. What is the total cost of transfers by government either through contribution agreement or direct awarded contract or some other movement of money to First Nations and municipalities? I'm talking about outside of the gas tax money and the Building Canada projects, which are specific agreements, so aside from the gas tax money which is specifically allocated and the Building Canada, which is typically debated. Can the Premier tell us what the total operational transfer to other levels of government within the territory is? If not, will he commit to getting back to me with that information just in the interest of transparency to Yukoners, especially considering the Premier's comments and narrative about the public making choices around their finances? I think it's important that the Premier put on record in this Legislative Assembly how much money the Yukon government is giving to other levels of government and why it's doing so.

Again, before the Premier responds, as I think he might, I want to note that I'm not saying that to criticize those transfers. I am simply contending that the public has a right to that information so that Yukoners can make their own decisions about the respective merits and downsides of those transfers to First Nation governments and municipal governments.

Hon. Mr. Silver: There was a lot of preamble in that before we got to a specific question and so a couple of different points — I'm not necessarily criticizing the member opposite as far as how much information he wants this time.

I'm just giving him what we know and what, in previous years, would have been the information. Again, I'm here with members of the Department of Finance and we're endeavouring to give him the specific answers.

He asked some specific questions about our borrowing — the \$8 million specifically — asking for more information. I think all the information is there for him. If he wants more than what is on page 5, on page 49 there is a further breakdown of those numbers. If he wants to take a look at the borrowings, Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon Housing Corporation — Housing Corporation, Hospital Corporation — it is all listed here. Again, we're going to give him the information he is asking for and not criticizing him as far as the content. We're just saying we can't give you outside of the Public Accounts — the one time of year when all of this information succinctly gets tallied as a succinct number. That is the budgeting process that has been happening forever in the Yukon. There is a difference between estimates and actuals. He is asking for actuals right now and we will give him that information, but again, he is looking for those precise amounts. Sure — no criticism of that — we will give it to him. He is going to have to bear with us that we are not going to necessarily have that information with us right now.

We do hear him criticizing the new approach in how we do our financial accounting and the pictures. He keeps talking about "those pictures" and all he sees different is this year we have some coloured-in pictures or something like that, but really there is more to it. We're working specifically on

improvements to our budgeting accuracy. That is what we are doing on this side.

As you know, Mr. Chair, this year's report from the C.D. Howe Institute concluded that the Yukon government has the worst record in the country on accuracy of budget projections. In its examination of budgets at the federal, provincial and territorial level over the last 15 years, Yukon ranked 14th along with Nunavut. We also scored very low on accuracy of revenue projections — 10 out of 14. Our government is already taking steps designed to improve the accuracy of those budgets. When the member opposite sees that we just changed things to pictures, there is a lot more to that story, so I do feel obligated when he brings those things up to paint the rest of that picture.

This year, the economic outlook produced by the Yukon government incorporates the changes in the public spending — information that has been missed until now. This integration of economic and fiscal forecasting with budget planning means that we are going to be developing budgets with the best information available at that time, and that is important to Yukoners. Our budget is also going to focus on achievements of outcomes, as opposed to lists of money spent or assets that are required.

This year's main estimates represent our government's fiscal priorities, supplementary estimates — this is a change as well — mechanisms for making mid-year adjustments to overall budget plans contained in the main estimates as opposed to a second budgetary exercise, trying to keep it to those things that couldn't be accounted for. I think that, Mr. Chair, people will agree with us that by taking this approach to this year's supplementary estimate, it's working because this year's estimate was the lowest in many years.

We are also doing improvements to the capital planning piece as well. Capital projects come with a price tag that goes well beyond the initial spending of the building of those capital projects. We have heard the member opposite talk about how calculating the O&M costs for Whistle Bend is maybe something that his previous government didn't think we should have done because those costs would have been so far in the future. We are going to disagree with that. Going forward, capital projects will not just be based on the price of building the project, but also the price of the maintenance and the cost of operating the programs associated with the capital builds. That makes sense to us. More planning on capital builds means having more ability to influence the O&M costs of services that are going to go into these beautiful buildings. Capital investment will be made with a focus on delivering services to Yukon's needs. That is important. Of course, there has to be lots of flexibility at the planning stage to consider all viable options and to ensure that the projects are going to meet the community's and government's goals — and Yukoners' needs, most importantly — while still ensuring that capital investments are affordable and sustainable over a long term. In our opinion, that includes the forecasting costs to operate these buildings.

We are putting more rigour into our capital planning. This includes planning with the capacity to deliver. This will avoid

past practices where very large capital lapses and revotes have led to fewer resources to meet those current needs as well. That is an important piece of changes. It is not just changes of picture graphics as the member opposite would have you believe.

There will always be unforeseen events that will delay capital spends, and we plan to minimize that as well. To have a focused, five-year plan that is flexible and able to move, I think that makes a lot of sense to Yukoners. That predictable five-year plan will be a key figure for the 2018-19 budget as we continue to change and to move into a new way of fiscal planning and budget accuracy.

Identifying projects over a five-year plan period enables our ability to plan in general. It allows us time over the planning period for greater transparency and opportunities for input as well and to collaborate with First Nation governments, municipalities, communities, Yukon businesses and others. I just want to touch base on that. Every time we hear that the big change from this government was pictures, we will respectfully disagree with the member opposite. There is a lot more to it when it comes to improvements on the capital planning and also improvements to the budget accuracy as well.

With regard to the transfers to other levels of government, we will get the information that the member opposite wants. But our budgets are not broken out that way, and the member opposite knows that. He has spent a lot of time over here on this side, but we will be willing to get that information to the member opposite.

I am sure I will be corrected if I am wrong, but I believe I did answer the members opposite's questions.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the answers that were received, although not all of the narrative around them. I would just note for the minister — and I do appreciate that he has provided an undertaking to get back with additional information on the loans paid down and the breakdown of that — that I have read and am looking right now at pages 49 and 51 in the Public Accounts, as well as page 50. While there is detail shown on the breakdown of the loans by corporation, as well as their total amount, it doesn't answer some of the questions — like I asked the member — of whether any had been paid down earlier than they were required to be as part of the \$8-million reduction, or whether there was a choice to speed up payment or pay down interest earlier than their maturity date.

Again, I want to note that I'm not saying that is a bad decision if that choice was made — simply that if that decision was made, it is information that does reflect to what extent government's costs for the 2016-17 fiscal year were based on forced growth versus discretionary decisions to pay down debt and try to blame the previous Finance minister for the fiscal cupboard allegedly being bare for that fiscal year.

I would also note that one of the reasons I am very interested in the amounts of those loans and those borrowings is that, if you look into the detail of the borrowings by corporation, as shown in Public Accounts — as the minister may see in looking at it, it does indicate that some of the

Yukon Housing Corporation loans, in particular, have fairly high interest rates compared to current market rates.

Once we have a little more breakdown on some of this information, one question that we'll be asking — and I would, in fact, encourage the Premier and the Department of Finance to look into, along with the responsible departments and ministers, if they haven't already done so — is whether there is the ability to convert some of those borrowings into lower interest loan vehicles and whatever the method for that would be — again, understanding that, for some of them, there may be a penalty for doing so that might make it non-viable. In looking at the references to the Housing Corporation's loans with CMHC and chartered banks, as indicated in the Public Accounts, it notes that the fixed interest rates range from 1.01 percent — which, of course, is a very low interest rate — to 12.5 percent in one case. For another of the group of loans from Yukon Housing Corporation payable to chartered banks and CMHC, respectively, it references fixed interest rates ranging from five percent to 9.88 percent. Again, five percent is lower than what I think government would currently get going to the market or a government corporation would get, and 9.88 percent is significantly high.

I am not going to spend a lot more time on that specific area today, but I just want to point to that and note that, in saying that, the Premier seems to be misinterpreting my line of questioning or thinking it is somehow getting into a level of detail that is inappropriate. My view, as Finance critic, is that these areas are something that the Minister of Finance should, in his role both as Finance minister and as Premier — and as part of the whole-of-government approach that they like to talk about so much — be ensuring that government departments and government corporations and their respective ministers and staff are taking a look at whether the long-term borrowings of the Government of Yukon can be reduced, or the interest rates reduced, through a change that allows them a lower interest rate. I point out that those types of things are not without precedent.

I appreciate his undertaking to get back to me on the transfers to First Nations and municipalities. I agree that the minister is correct in noting that those are typically shown within individual departments, but I think that overall breakdown — I don't know if the current government receives the community-by-community breakdown that has been provided in the past, but we would appreciate them undertaking to provide a community-by-community breakdown of their capital and O&M spending and table it in the House. In that case, with O&M spending, I am not referring to the spending on the cost of operating the nursing station in Mayo or Carmacks, and those types of things. I am talking about more of the operational level transfer to municipalities, the breakdown on, for example, the cost of providing transport for recycling materials within the individual regions of the territory. Specifically, since government has put the focus on asking Yukoners to provide comments on how to address the government's financial pressures, this information and that transparency about the transfers to other levels of governments is something that I

think is in the interest of this Legislative Assembly in receiving and in the interest of all Yukoners having that information.

I would also ask the minister this afternoon — or at a later date if he does not have the information — to provide us with information on the total cost of funding for things like projects and capacity building to other levels of government, including First Nations, municipalities, Council of Yukon First Nations and Kaska Dena Council, which are organizations representing governments but not governments themselves.

Moving on to another area, I would also just return to noting that the minister, in making reference to the supplementary estimates and patting himself on the back — for lack of a better and not unparliamentary term — I would note that the Premier noted that this is the lowest supplementary budget in recent years, but what was missed from that — and I think it's important to lay out the public record for all Yukoners who are interested in the government's finances or providing comments — is that by changing the timing of the Sitting from what it has been more historically, we were advised by officials that government is now no longer basing the supplementary estimates on the period 5 variance report, but has changed it to period 4. Changes to your finances based on four months of the fiscal year are materially and substantially different than doing it based on five months.

It is also interesting — the Premier made reference to five-year capital planning and seemed to be unaware that the government has been doing five-year capital plans for some time. Perhaps he would like to correct that or clarify his remarks.

Also, with reference to the operational costs of Whistle Bend, the Premier seemed to be indicating that I was saying governments shouldn't budget for costs at the end of their lifespan, but in fact I would correct the record and remind the member what we said that was that while the Premier has pointed to the government's current estimated annual operational costs of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility at \$36 million once it is fully in operation, based on the most recent information we have received from the Premier and ministers in the Assembly, the government is not planning on having that facility fully in operation until the end of the mandate. So trying to blame and trying to point to the decision to spend down over \$80 million of cash in the bank this fiscal year — you can't say that \$36 million is part of that \$80-million number because, in fact, only a rather comparatively minor amount is being spent on recruitment this fiscal year for that facility.

Also, the Minister of Health and Social Services made reference earlier in this Assembly in this current Sitting in debate to making changes to the operational scope at the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. I would be interested in hearing what the changes in scope that the Minister of Health and Social Services told us about, but did not describe in detail — what those changes were and how much of an effect on that total O&M number those changes had.

Secondly — again related to the government's overall fiscal picture showing the supplementary budget — the minister also made reference to making changes to the relationship and agreement with the Salvation Army and appeared to be saying it was increased O&M funding on an ongoing basis. I would appreciate, as well, hearing how much that is going to be adding to the government's costs over the next five years.

Also — one last thing in that housing-related area — if we could get some clarification based on the Premier's comments in the House and the supplementary budget — it appears that there is a reduction in the budget because of the River Bend facility project that was just opened being delayed, which was what I believe the Premier told us earlier and in fact what we heard from the development corporation. I apologize, I can't pronounce their name as well as I should be able to. They told us that they are in fact about a year ahead of schedule.

Could the Premier clarify: Did he misspeak earlier or did we misinterpret his remarks? If not, can he explain why it appears that the budget is showing a reduction in O&M money and deferring those costs to future years for assisting with that project, whereas the project itself is actually about a year ahead of schedule?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Lots of questions there to unpack — let's go back to the rates for the Hospital Corporation.

We're always looking to save money. The rates that the member opposite sees today for that particular year are very similar to previous years. It's not like this is a spike. When you go from low one-percent rates all the way up to almost 10 percent, it does seem like a large number.

Just to alleviate the nerves of the member opposite, this isn't a big spike in the status quo of that rate — of those borrowing rates — but we will also always double-check to take a look to see if we have the best rates possible and if that is the best we can do, of course taking into consideration that changing midstream could affect us through penalties as well. As far as that goes, these are the rates of doing business that we've been seeing over a longer term trend than just this Public Accounts, and we would agree with the member opposite — always look to save money. We always double-check to make sure those rates are the best that we can do for the taxpayers.

From that also, talking about other levels of government and NGOs as far as our core funding requests, we will disclose where we can. There are areas, as the member opposite knows, where we would be breaching confidentiality, so if there are areas where we can disclose the core funding requests to other levels of governments and NGOs, then we will endeavour to do so.

Period 4 versus period 5 variance reports — what we're doing is we're trying to make sure that we have the ability to check early and to check often, and that's exactly what we're doing. If you check earlier, then you have the ability to change course if necessary — if that's necessitated. I guess what we will see over the next five years is whether or not these changes bear fruit — whether or not these changes mean that

we have better budgeting accuracy. If we can continue the trend of having smaller supplementary budgets that are used for extenuating circumstances or types of finances that we weren't anticipating to begin with, we believe that this is a smart endeavour.

I would love to take credit for it, but again this is working with the Department of Finance and I believe that this team — the Department of Finance — has Yukon's best at stake when they make their decisions and they are also taxpayers here as well. The suggestion to turn to period 4 when it went through the process of Cabinet and caucus debates and conversations is something that we completely agree with, believe in and have implemented, and we will take the responsibility for it if it doesn't pan out. Being able to check early — that gives us more ability to be flexible and to pivot if necessary.

One of the last questions asked by the member opposite was about the Da Daghay Development Corporation from Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. The member opposite is correct in the fact that the physical building from Ta'an Kwäch'än came out when they said it was going to come out, but when they need the money from us, that was delayed. That was delayed and it will not be until next year.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the information that the minister has provided. I am going to move on to a few other questions here.

I just want to note for the record and for those listening and reading this is that one thing that is important to keep in mind when we are debating the finances is — if you look at page 4 of the Public Accounts showing the fiscal year ended March 31, there has been a narrative built up by government that expenditures were exceeding the revenues. In fact, if you look at the trend shown in the chart on page 4, from 2008-09, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, it will show that in 2011 — the final numbers as shown in the audited Public Accounts — the blue line showing total revenues was about equal to the purple line showing total expenses. In 2010, expenses exceeded revenues, but in fact for the other years, including the year ending in 2017, the total revenues exceed total expenses as according to Public Accounts. In fact, it should be noted as well, while we are on the subject, that the change in net financial assets over the years as shown on page 5 shows that net financial assets declined from 2008 to 2011, and then increased from 2012 to a high point in 2015. Then some of those adjustments that have been made since then were due to cash contributions — examples given like the Hospital Corporation of roughly \$22 million per year to build the ER and so on.

Moving on to another specific area in this year's budget — but it is one that relates to the Premier's home town and to the total number of full-time equivalent positions on the government books — we understand that in the Department of Health and Social Services, there has been the addition of five people who were previously privately employed by the doctor through the medical practice in Dawson and that through changes that occurred — and I understand there have been some changes there due to the personal circumstances and, I believe a retirement of the long-time doctor there. But it is our

understanding that there have been new positions brought on that are now employed within Community Nursing. Can the Premier confirm the total number of FTEs as a result of that decision? Also, can he confirm whether that number is included in the 202 new FTE-position count that he gave us in the spring or on top of it? I would also go to a question that I actually made the Premier aware of back in September, and that is about concerns that we have heard from Yukoners about the growth of costs of the administration of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act*. We are looking for the information from government.

We have heard — and we believe it warrants asking the question — that costs have gone up on the government side. We have the information from the side of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and are satisfied with that. But on the government side, we've heard that administration costs are going up related to both of those acts. We have heard that there has been an increased cost in legal costs both due to staff time at the Department of Justice and outside contracting, and we have heard that this may be affecting a number of departments and corporations.

Again, I would note, in stating that, that this is information that we've heard that we believe warrants us looking into it. If the Premier can demonstrate that what we've heard is not correct, then we will certainly take the information presented. But when we hear concerns from Yukoners coming forward who believe that those costs are increasing due to the increased costs of administration — whether that be through government refusing to respond to information requests, or Cabinet perhaps downloading duties previously done within the Cabinet office to departments, or whatever the cause may be. There are a number of potential sources, but we are after the overall cost of both ATIPP and HIPMA, including the number of positions broken down by department and corporation that are allocated within each entity to managing either ATIPP or HIPMA, and information on the total costs.

One of the many reasons that is relevant is that — when the Premier was talking about financial challenges and looking for ways to reduce the growth of government spending or talking about new taxes such as the sales tax that government appears to either have decided to implement or certainly very carefully is not rolling out, several members of the government caucus extolled the virtues of consumption-based taxes, which made it sound to us like they were leaning toward that model or seriously considering it. When government is talking about increased taxes, increased fees, and asking Yukoners to provide information on what they think government should do to manage the finances, it becomes very relevant about whether government is spending increased resources in, effectively, different parts of government administering legislation and perhaps disputing with each other, as we've heard asserted, about the interpretation of legislation.

In terms of the growth of ATIPP, one thing that I heard from a constituent of mine who is a retired government ADM

— I believe that was his position when he retired — is that he was working in government at the time when the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* was first brought in. According to this person, when it was first brought in, there was, within government, only one position in government that was dedicated to administering ATIPP, and that — he tells me — was a part-time position. He has brought forward to me, among several other concerns, the concern about the potential growth of ATIPP and the fact that this started out with a rather small entity over time to growing — we've heard — in the past year, under the government. If the minister wishes to provide us with a trajectory, perhaps some of these costs occurred, as well, under the previous government.

My point in bringing this forward is not to blame the current government — and I would hope the Premier would not simply resort to trying to find information to blame the past government — but again, based on a concern we've heard, we think that it's relevant to what the total cost is of administering these two important pieces of legislation. Are there ways that government can reduce those costs, whether through increased proactive disclosure or a more collaborative approach between branches of government or between government and the independent Information and Privacy Commissioner? That is, again, why we're after this information and why we believe that it merits government not only providing the information but looking into that question of: Is there a way that government can more efficiently manage the costs in these two important areas and reduce the cost to the taxpayers of administering these two important pieces of legislation, but still somewhat internal pieces of legislation, to government that can be perceived by many Yukoners as government spending time and money regulating itself, managing itself and forcing itself to disclose information to the public, rather than simply proactively disclosing that information?

So again, if the Premier can provide me with the current information and if he wants to provide historical information on that as well, we're certainly interested in increased transparency and information in this area in the interest of the Legislative Assembly doing their job and ensuring that, in my capacity as Finance critic for the Official Opposition, that I ask the Premier, in some cases, probing questions that may be worth government looking into further.

Last but not least, before I turn it over to the Premier, I would just ask him again what the — I had asked him previously about the cost of the report to Yukoners document the government sent out. I would again ask that as well as what the cost of government advertising as a whole is, both in terms of online advertising and print advertising. Those total numbers, I believe, are very relevant to the total financial picture.

I said last but not least, but I'm going to add one more to that list, which is that the government has launched the new "engage Yukoners" website and even announced it by a ministerial statement. What is the cost of website design and developing that platform, as well as any estimated increases to

the annual cost of government's online information sharing that results from this new website?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So again, it's a bizarre strategy here to ask so many questions at once. I don't know if the member opposite knows this or not, but he can ask one question and we can answer it and then he can move on to the next question, and then we can answer it. I believe that would be easier for my officials here and easier for the sanity of Hansard as well.

So I'm going to start at the beginning here with the concept — and we've heard this from the member opposite as well — of going into individual lines and bars of revenues versus expenditures and somehow extrapolating from that something different from what the Financial Advisory Panel has determined.

Over the past 10 years, the rate of growth in government expenditures has exceeded the rate of growth in revenues. The Financial Advisory Panel has noted in its draft report that the Yukon government's revenues over the past 10 years has increased 1.7 percent per year compared with an average growth for spending of 2.5 percent per year, so the differences in these annual growth rates means that the Yukon's financial position has steadily been weakened. Now it's important to understand the differences between the amounts of money raised through revenues, compared to the growth rate in expenditures of revenues.

Looking at the chart in the Public Accounts on revenues and expenses for the 2008 to 2017 period, it is the slope of the line over those years that show the rates of growth. Of course the member opposite can come in and say, look, here is an example of one of those years where that is not true and that is not the trend. Again, the Financial Advisory Panel — great news, the Financial Advisory Panel will be available to answer these questions from the member opposite, so I look forward to that debate in the Legislative Assembly.

Again, when you are taking a look at the slope of the lines over those years — the rate of growth of expenditures and revenues — it is not necessarily the height of the individual lines as the member opposite would have you believe to show the fiscal planning piece. It's the trajectory — that is the problem — not how tall the lines are when you consider the implications of this trend and this trajectory on the government's financial position — period. The panel has acknowledged that the Yukon government is responding early to these developing challenges — these fiscal challenges — and that early action to correct this problem means that there are many, many more options that are going to be available to consider otherwise.

The member opposite reminds me of another politician who says, "People tell me..." and, "I keep on hearing..." and, "I'm going to come to a certain opinion based on what I have heard."

If members opposite here have stood up and spoken of the different options — not recommendations, but options at this point — that were put out there by the Financial Advisory Panel, they are doing so because we feel that in this Legislative Assembly all of those options need to be discussed

and so that is what they are doing. When they are talking about the consumption tax — well, members opposite will talk only about the consumption tax without that other piece, the decrease to our income tax. That is a really important conversation to be had — it really is. I believe that the full narrative needs to be explained to Yukoners before they make their decisions when they talk to the Financial Advisory Panel and when they say whether or not they are interested in consumption versus income tax. But to say that somehow having a dialogue means that we have made up our mind on that is simply not true, Mr. Chair.

Just as clarification again on that debate about revenues versus expenditures that the member opposite started this conversation with, I brought it out for a reason, but I will curtail my answer on that for now.

Moving on to Health and Social Services and the specific question about Dawson and the doctor's decision to retire, it is true, Dr. Parsons has decided to retire early in 2017, which I have to say is a blow to our community. Dr. Parsons and his partner — also a doctor — have been providing amazing service to the medical community of Dawson for decades.

It's a loss for sure. Back in the days where Suzanne and Gerard were the only two options in town, we had just as good coverage as anywhere else because of their commitment to the Hippocratic Oath and just to the services provided in the nursing station. Also, Suzanne as well is an amazing artist and their kids are amazing kids in the school. Anyway, I digress.

The Yukon government wants to ensure now that Dr. Parsons has retired the ongoing, uninterrupted delivery of those medical services that he provided in Dawson City. Health and Social Services has agreed to assume the clinic management through the continued operations of the Dawson City medical clinic. Funds are there for \$125,000 available to coordinate the delivery of the collaborative medical practice within the clinic for operational costs.

Moving on, there were a couple more questions — the engagement website was the next item up for bid. The engagement website is across government. To give a fulsome answer, we would have to add up all of those costs. Highways and Public Works will be up in this supplementary debate as there are dollar values in their department, so I do encourage the member opposite to direct his question to my colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, as he will be able to give the answers to that question as that time.

As far as the ATIPP and HIPMA situation — members opposite know already know that the Member for Lake Laberge has asked for this. A written question was given to us from the Member for Lake Laberge for these numbers and we are working on a response. I have asked him before if he can give us any more information about “some people have told me” or “what I've been told in the streets” — that's not a lot to go on to know specifically what he is looking for. It would help the government a lot if he's interested in that at all. We are going to be giving him that information and we are working on that response currently.

I think that's it. If I missed something, I'm sure the member opposite will ask again.

Mr. Cathers: I can attempt to ask shorter strings of questions if the Premier finds that hard to follow. I was simply, as has often happened in the past in debate in this House, grouped a number of questions together and given the minister — usually in the past cases, I would be on the other side of answering the questions, but I was just going off of what is often common practice in this House to ask a string of questions together versus individually. I can attempt to shorten it if the Premier is finding it confusing. Sometimes I get on a roll and think of something that I don't want to forget.

The Premier answered part of my question about the cost of moving those positions in from Dawson out of the former medical practice of Dr. Parsons into community nursing, I believe it was, but he missed the question of — one of my questions was, what effect has that had on the number of full-time government employees?

If I understood correctly from the official at the briefing, I believe five people were affected, but I don't think the total number was an increase of five FTEs. Can the Premier tell us what that increase is, and whether that is included in or on top of the 202 full-time equivalent positions that he told us in the spring were being added this fiscal year?

With regard to his questions about ATIPP and HIPMA, what I just want to note for the Premier on this is that we have heard the concerns — as the Premier, I am sure had in opposition too, sometimes people come forward and provide information. The member receiving it decides if they think there might be something there, whether they believe it is a question that they should ask in the Legislative Assembly. We are asking for increased disclosure and reporting on this, not just to the Legislative Assembly, but to the public and as well to government. Again, as I have suggested previously and will again here this afternoon to the Premier, if there is any accuracy to the claims we have heard that these areas of costs are growing significantly, this may be an area where, through changes in policy or changes encouraging more proactive disclosure by ATIPP specifically, there may be room to reduce government costs without compromising public service.

That is why I am asking the questions here, both to do our job as opposition in looking into something that sounds like it may have merit to it, as well as to in fact draw the government's attention to this issue. Subject to the information that comes out of this, if there does seem to be an opportunity for improving how business is done through things such as more proactive disclosure, it might be a way to improve government service to the public while reducing costs.

With the engagement website, I would just again note to the Premier that, much like the \$8-million number that we were talking about in the press release that the Premier issued on October 31, the Premier, I believe, is the one who made the ministerial statement about the new engagement website. What I would have to ask is: If indeed Cabinet or Management Board approved this new website and decided to do this new initiative, did they not understand the costs before doing it? Especially in contrast to some of the Premier's

criticisms of the former premier and assertions about lack of long-term planning and full costing, if the government announced an initiative that it decided was so important that they announced it with a ministerial statement in the House, did they not understand the cost of that new website and service before approving it and announcing it? If not, why not?

If they did understand, it does seem they ought to have the information in briefing notes or readily accessible to be able to tell us whether the amount spent on website design was \$1,000 or \$500,000 or somewhere in between. I would just note that every new initiative like that which government does, if there is an increased cost to website design to updating it and so on, it is a relevant question. We're not quite sure whether this website was something the government had been working on for a while or whether it was simply a reactive response — which might explain the Premier's apparent lack of understanding of the cost of that site — or if it was just a reaction to the Official Opposition criticizing the Minister of Highways and Public Works for his repeated dropping of the ball on the *Public Airports Act* and his — shall we say — extremely poor handling of engagement with stakeholders on that file.

Perhaps the website was just a reactionary response that government didn't fully think through, but whether they know the costs or not, that information is something — in the ministerial statement, I would suggest that, right along with the ministerial statement, there should have been a Management Board submission that outlined the costs of this for the current Cabinet and Management Board to decide whether the improvement in services justified the increased cost.

Again, as I noted, the cost of advertising overall is something that we believe deserves public disclosure. I am going to ask the minister a couple of other specific questions. One is about the manner in which his government, as part of their one-government approach, is handling Cabinet and caucus participation and scrutinizing government decisions. Could the Premier please tell me how many caucus and Cabinet committees there are and what those committees are? I assume and I understand from comments that the minister made previously that the Cabinet Committee on Legislation is still a current Cabinet committee.

Can the Premier advise us if there are any other Cabinet committees and any caucus committees tasked with specific projects or reviews?

Moving on to one other issue that is specific to a budget but relates to the Premier's community and the relationship with the Town of the City of Dawson, there is an amount that we are seeing in the Public Accounts of an increase in funding for the recreation centre in Dawson — an increase from \$1.027 million in the main estimates to \$2.377 million in the revised estimates for the fiscal year and actuals of \$2,315,102. Can the Premier please explain what that increase in funding relates to and when the decision was made to increase the funding and who made it?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the questions from the member opposite. As far as questions coming in clusters or not — segues are nice, I guess. As I was doing that criticism to the Member for Lake Laberge, I do remember running out of questions at the end of my list when I was in opposition and begging the indulgence of the department officials when the list was all over the place. Fire them anyway — that you want — and I apologize because it is true. Sometimes you get on a roll and the questions are just going to come as you see them. We will just endeavour to answer them as well as we possibly can as they come.

I guess as far as the efficiencies and cost savings that the member is talking about, any suggestions from the member opposite are welcome. I guess a question to him as well — and I hope he has done this; I hope he has made these suggestions to the panel as they have done their work going to all the different communities. Again, an opportunity to ask those questions of the panel is going to be coming up very shortly in this session. Any more information that the member opposite can share with us as far as the specifics of what he's heard would really help us to speed up the process of answering questions. When the questions are vague “we hear that maybe this increase in administrative costs in a particular arm's-reach branch of the government,” of course, it's going to take a while to get these responses back. Any more information that the member opposite can help us with would be fantastic.

There was a question as well about Dr. Parsons. It does match up, because you're right — it's four FTEs, as far as we understand it. I don't know if the member opposite was told five. We will check into the fifth. If I heard him correctly today, I believe the number he used was five. Our number is four FTEs. If you look, the number is only \$125,000 this year, so that doesn't match up. This is going to be an ongoing pressure as we move forward and it's something that we have identified that we're going to have to deal with as we move forward. All of those FTEs were not for this fiscal year. The pressure has been identified and \$125,000 has been put toward solving that issue.

There was a question again from the engagement website. The member opposite is not correct, it didn't need a Management Board submission because the cost was included in the communications budget across government, so that is where that came from.

Again, when we're taking a whole-government approach to how we do engagement, this, in my opinion, in the long term, is going to be a cost-saving method. We will endeavour to get specific numbers as far as how much specifically this came from, but again, the Minister of Highways and Public Works will have that at his fingertips when he is there at Committee of the Whole with his department when we get to that section of the debate in Committee of the Whole in the supplementary budget.

Now the member opposite made a stretch that maybe the engagement website was a reaction to some debate that we were having in this Legislative Assembly this session. Boy, the member opposite gives us an awful lot of credit. If we

could pull off that amount of work in a couple of weeks — I have to tell you that would be a herculean effort and kudos to any department that could do it. As we said in our ministerial statement, the planning for the start of March, during the budgetary considerations — so baked into those plans is when this process started. It started because we do believe that this government needs to do more for engagement. A one-stop-shop for that engagement process makes sense to us on this side of the Legislative Assembly.

So no — thanks for giving us the credit that we could think and act that quickly on our feet to be asked some questions in the Legislative Assembly on a Monday and come up with a complete engagement survey strategy a week later or two weeks later — that would be impressive. Thanks for the accolades.

I can answer one more before we run out of time here. We were asked specifically about Cabinet committees. There is Management Board. There is a Cabinet Committee on Priorities and Planning. There is also a Cabinet Committee on Legislation. Then for specific issues, we have ministerial working groups that are addressing issues such as climate change, Housing First and cannabis legalization. They are going to be used as needed. They are developed as we move forward into some of these conversations. Usually, as they come up, it's a matter of a particular department focused in as being a core or lead in a particular topic, but with a government that wants to do a whole-government approach. Subcommittees are based on the fact that other departments have a need to be involved in these conversations and want to be involved in these bigger conversations.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 9, entitled *Act to Amend the Pounds Act (2017)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 203, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2017-18*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following document was filed November 6, 2017:

34-2-25

School bus service for the new Grizzly Valley subdivision, letter re (dated October 30, 2017) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Tracy McPhee, Minister of Education (Cathers)

Written notice was given of the following motion November 6, 2017:

Motion No. 194

Re: delaying the implementation of amendments to the *Designated Materials Regulation* (Kent)