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HANSARD

Monday, March 5, 2018 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2018 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

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Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, March 5, 2018 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Speaker: As the Chair informed members last Thursday, Karina Watson, our former Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, is now our Sergeant-at-Arms. Today is Ms. Watson's first day in the Chamber as Sergeant-at-Arms. I welcome her to the House in that capacity for the first time on behalf of all members.

Applause

DAILY ROUTINE

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

TRIBUTES

In recognition of United Nations World Wildlife Day

Hon. Ms. Frost: I rise today to pay tribute to United Nations World Wildlife Day held March 3. World Wildlife Day is a global celebration for our planet's wild animals. It is an occasion to raise awareness of the necessity of environmental conservation and the actions we take as stewards of the land.

First Nation people of Yukon have valued and cared for this land and its wildlife for millennia. Now, together as Yukoners, it is important that we recognize and appreciate the environment where we are fortunate to live.

We have the privilege of sharing this environment with some of the world's most unique animals and plant life. With this privilege, we have the responsibility of maintaining a healthy environment that sustains all of Yukon's wildlife and populations, including our lesser-known species and those that are at risk.

There are some animals and plants that are endangered or threatened in Yukon. We must do our part to protect these species and their habitats. Maintaining the rich biodiversity of Yukon is a collective effort. We work with Yukon First Nations, non-governmental boards, committees, renewable resource councils, neighbouring international and regional governments, hunters, trappers, outfitters and individual Yukoners out working and enjoying the land. We maintain a database of inventories on many Yukon species, particularly those of concern, but we can't do it without the people of this territory.

The tagline for this year's World Wildlife Day is "Do one thing today to help protect these magnificent creatures". One thing that Yukoners can do to help is report sightings of vulnerable species to the Yukon conservation database, particularly those that are rare or at risk.

Yukoners can help protect our creatures and plants by learning more about the status of wildlife species and their habitats. There are so many ways to be stewards of the environment, and these are just a few examples. I can say with confidence that most Yukoners understand the importance of protecting our natural environment. A healthy environment with sustainable wildlife populations and opportunities to enjoy the wilderness are fundamental to the well-being of our communities.

Mr. Istchenko: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March 3 as UN World Wildlife Day. The theme of this year's wildlife day was "Big cats: predators under threat". While the majority of big cats seem like a world away, we are, in the Yukon, home to small numbers of one of the smallest of the big cats — the cougar.

Big cats around the world are facing many threats, mostly related to human activities — poaching, illegal trade and habitat disturbance are among these causes. While cougar may be few here in the Yukon, we also are home to the beautiful lynx, which may not be classified as a big cat, but is arguably as majestic.

The diversity of the Yukon animal population continues to be one of the reasons that drive people to our land and also one of the things that keep us here. Our animals have sustained people on this land for thousands of years and continue to do so today. We are fortunate to have so many groups entrusted to the management and continuation of our northern animal species. Between our Yukon First Nations, our renewable resources councils, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the Department of Environment and many others — like the local hunters and trappers — we have more than enough manpower to take care of our different animal populations. By ensuring the proper management of each species, we can continue to enjoy an abundance of animal life for many years to come.

I urge these groups to continue to work together on ways to ensure balance remains within our ecosystem and that species are managed in such a way that allows populations to thrive and continue to sustain Yukoners who rely on them. Not only will this ensure that these animals continue to sustain the Yukoners who rely on them, but it will ensure that we do not have to face the threat of extinction among our animal populations.

Ms. White: It is a pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge World Wildlife Day and to celebrate big cats.

With ever-changing weather patterns due in large part to climate change, as well as loss of habitat, poaching and human/wildlife conflict, the big cat populations of Africa and Asia are under threat of extinction like never before. Most of us will never see lions, cheetahs, snow leopards, pumas and some other big cats in their natural habitats but that doesn't make their welfare any less important to those of us who may never see them.

The solution to saving big cats and other threatened and endangered species around the world are conservation policies based on sound science and the rule of law. By protecting big cats and other creatures, we protect the ecosystems around them. There are lessons to be learned as we watch what happens to these populations across the globe. In the Yukon, you won't see their southern cousins out in the woods but you may see lynx, and if you're really, really lucky, you may even see a cougar.

With the federal government's announcement of funding for wildlife conservation, it is my hope that this will lead to the creation of a Yukon-made species-at-risk legislation to address the concerns that we have about flora and fauna in the territory. With the migration north of the cougar and changing laws south of our border we, as a territory, are going to have to sit down and have the hard conversations around trophy hunting. The magnificent beasts out in the wild, such as the grizzly and the cougar are under increasing pressure by us, the human species.

World Wildlife Day asks us to consider regaining the balance and respect so that future generations will be able to see these animals alive and wild where they belong.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the House to welcome a constituent, Sally Wright, and of course, Lillian Nakamura Maguire, who joins us again from the Seniors Action Yukon association.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a response to questions raised by the Member for Kluane on November 9, 2017.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Adel: I have for tabling the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, dated January 8, 2018.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 18: *Order of Yukon Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 18, entitled *Order of Yukon Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 18, entitled *Order of Yukon Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 18 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced at this time?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports a five-year capital plan as a means of promoting transparency and predictability about the government's capital planning.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports tendering major construction projects that are seasonally dependent no later than March of each year.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada, to work with Yukon First Nations to fulfill the commitment set out in the 2018 federal Budget Address to engage with affected indigenous groups on how best to address past and present negotiating loans, including forgiveness of loans.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to:

(1) use the protected area provisions provided in the *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act* to designate and protect sensitive and damaged areas until a comprehensive all-terrain vehicle management plan is in place; and

(2) meet with stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan for the management of all-terrain vehicles in Yukon for tabling during the 2018 Fall Sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House supports construction of the new francophone high school in Riverdale.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Government performance plan and progress report**

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise today to introduce this government's first performance plan and progress report to Yukoners. As a government, we have created a single plan to move our society toward a more just, economically prosperous and sustainable future. Our plan is outcome-focused and builds on the mandate letters that I presented to each Cabinet minister in early 2017. It also includes highlights of upcoming initiatives that are poised to create tangible benefits and positive outcomes for Yukoners across the territory for years to come.

The report outlines some of the steps that we have already taken as one government to move the territory forward. I recognize that we have set ambitious, yet achievable, goals, which is why I'm very proud of the early accomplishments of this government and my colleagues here today. From the reinvigoration of the Yukon Forum as a place for our governments to work together with First Nation governments, to fostering reconciliation and to the publishing of our long-term capital plan for major construction projects, we are advancing our agenda with purpose and resolve and striving to deliver the changes that Yukoners have asked for.

We created the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel to talk to residents and businesses about their long-term investment priorities for the future. We have also cut taxes to allow for the private sector to grow.

This performance plan captures our commitment to citizens, which is all about transparency, accountability and our aim to co-create Yukon's future together. To that end, Mr. Speaker, the plan also contains a set of key Yukon indicators that establishes a baseline on critical issues such as environmental stewardship, improving wellness and driving economic prosperity. The indicators identified today are a starting point for our broader efforts to focus this government on evidence-based decision-making.

Over the next year, we will talk to Yukoners about how they think we should measure our progress as a territory. As a former teacher, I can tell you that it is not simply good enough for us to grade our own exams or to write our own report cards. Yes, we need to think critically about our own performance and identify opportunities to improve, and we are committed to doing just that, as I outlined in our budget speech a few days ago.

But we also need to involve Yukoners in selecting indicators that speak to them and give us clarity on how we are progressing toward our vision. We also want to use evidence to guide our decisions, help us set targets and achieve the outcomes identified in this plan. It is all about counting what counts, and I look forward to continuing the conversation about what matters to Yukoners throughout the rest of 2018 and in the years to come.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the feedback on this first progress report to Yukoners.

Mr. Hassard: Since we hadn't seen a copy of this progress report until the speech that we just heard from the

Premier, I am not certain how we are expected to respond, but I certainly hope that this isn't just another piece of propaganda for the government to pat itself on the back.

The Premier's remarks indicate he is bragging about how they cut taxes for business, but I notice that the Premier forgot to mention that during the election he promised to eliminate the small business tax completely — a promise that has now been broken. I also notice that the Premier forgot to mention that his government missed its own deadline to have all seasonally dependent contracts tabled by March of each year — of course, another broken promise.

I could go on here for hours on all of the broken promises or the issues that this government has definitely dropped the ball on but I think that it is more important that we not spend our time talking about what sounds like a self-congratulatory report card that the Premier certainly could have announced through a press release rather than taking away time from talking about this rather lackluster budget that we have before us.

Ms. Hanson: It is a strange thing to be asked to comment or to respond to something that you don't have in hand. We have been asked by the Premier to respond to something that we don't have. We can't comment on the content or on the process that has been set out in terms of articulating what performance measures will be delineated in this report.

We've been clear that we support any initiative to develop strategic plans, business plans, indicators and outcomes for this government. We've made it clear over the years that we know that what you can't measure, you can't manage. It is strange that the Premier would stand here and say, as a former teacher — well, as a former teacher, he seems to have forgotten a key point: You don't ask the parents to come in for the teacher interview until you send the report card out. So we haven't seen the report card. I have no comment to make. I will look forward to receiving it.

Hon. Mr. Silver: With the performance plans today as a ministerial statement, we're not necessarily asking for comments from the opposition. We're using this as an opportunity to get out to the public that we are moving forward on these strategic plans. We will use that opportunity to move forward.

We've been in government for 15 months now and we've made substantial progress on our commitments to Yukoners. I look forward to the opposition looking through the performance plans and coming up with their questions on our measurements and our engagement. I'm sure we'll hear more from both the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party on that.

I will highlight that out of the 2017-18 alone, we have delivered on eight commitments, a five-year capital plan and a list of seasonally dependent contracts — and by the way, we're in March right now. The date has been set and those contracts will come out, as opposed to what the opposition

would have you believe — that is simply not true. So those contracts will be out in March.

We also have advanced the fibre optic project, the permanent funding for the Yukon Now tourism marketing initiative, money for retrofits as well, expanding campground infrastructure, advancing the new francophone high school, and assisting victims of sexual assault with the sexualized assault response team.

In 2017, we delivered on many commitments as well, including introducing presumptive PTSD coverage for emergency response workers, establishing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday, improving mental wellness by hiring new mental wellness workers — five out of 11 have been hired so far — changes to legislation to protect against discrimination on grounds of gender identity and gender expression, revitalizing the Yukon Forum and holding four meetings annually, rebuilding relationships with the Yukon First Nations and improving public engagement — 23 public engagements since taking office and also the new engagement website.

So we're very proud of the commitments so far. Again, these performance plans are just another way of getting that message out to Yukoners about the accomplishments to date. Again, as we did say, it's not about just having our own report card out there. We want to hear from Yukoners about what they think of the performance plans and we want to engage with them as we move forward into year two, year three, year four, and beyond.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, it was this time last year that the Premier had delayed the return of the Legislature after an election longer than any other government in Yukon history, and we certainly criticized the Premier for delaying getting back to work. At the time, his excuse was that he needed extra time to write his budget because it would be a much better budget than Yukoners had ever seen before. He claimed it would have better estimates. He claimed it would have better forecasting. Well, it turns out that the Premier was wrong.

After bragging about his better estimates and bragging about his record capital budget, we now see that last year the Premier left \$30 million of his capital budget unspent. That is \$30 million that could have put local contractors to work, Mr. Speaker.

So Mr. Speaker, can the Premier explain why he was unable to live up to his promise to invest that important infrastructure money last year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a great opportunity to clear the record here. Every budget has a forecast of what they can spend, and then every Public Accounts has an accounting of what actually gets spent. So we will take a look at the Yukon Party's track record

of those comparable numbers and we will compare those to the ones that we've put out.

What we are trying to do — as compared to the opposition when they were in government — is have a more realistic look at the capital dollars that can actually get out the door. I believe, Mr. Speaker, the record of any capital budget was \$235 million or around that, which was actually able to be spent. So really, if the forecasts are over \$300 million or at \$280 million, what this government needs to do across party lines is work with the private sector, work with the other governments to make sure that what we are actually saying that can get out the door really reflects the ability of the contractors that are in Yukon and making sure that we can keep that GDP here in Yukon.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I think it is interesting that the Premier is blaming the contractors of Yukon for not having the capacity or the ability to get the work done — interesting.

Last year, the Premier told us he was delaying getting into the Legislature because he wanted to improve the way Yukon does its estimates. He reiterated this last week — and I quote: “We have made a deliberate decision to increase the certainty in Yukon's public finances, beginning with our first budget.”

The Premier went on to say — and I quote, “As a result, when the supplementary estimates were tabled for 2017-18, they did not differ greatly from the main estimates that were presented last April.”

Well Mr. Speaker, the main estimates for capital presented last April said the capital budget was \$309 million. The budget documents that the Premier tabled on Thursday said the Premier is leaving \$30 million of that infrastructure money unspent. Does the Premier think that \$30 million in lapses in infrastructure is not a big deal?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, \$40 million lapsed in 2012-13; \$90 million lapsed in 2013-14; and \$100 million lapsed in 2014-15.

We just delivered one of the smallest lapses in recent memory, and yes, that is entirely true. I want to thank the member opposite for his interest in the good work we are doing to make our future plans more transparent. This year, we will introduce a five-year capital plan. It is the first time this has happened. We are introducing that because the contracting community asked us for certainty. They were sick and tired of seeing all these lapses — all this money being promised and not being spent — so we actually said, “Here is how we are going to proceed and here is our five-year capital plan.” It is a good thing, Mr. Speaker. It will provide clarity for citizens and the business community about where the government is going and it fulfills one of this government's promises.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, as we have already discussed, the Premier left \$30 million of the capital spending he promised in last year's budget unspent. The Premier predicts that he will end the fiscal year with a \$6.3-million surplus. If the Premier had lived up to his promise and spent all of the capital money, Yukon would have had a \$23-million

deficit, but you will remember that last year's budget said there would be a surplus even if Yukon had spent that extra \$30 million in infrastructure money.

Can the Premier explain why last year's budget was \$30 million off? Was this what he did in order to ensure that there was a surplus — cutting back capital spending?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, to reiterate what was spoken about by the Minister of Highways and Public Works, \$30 million is a lot different from \$100 million. What we are doing on this side of the House is trying to reduce that amount. Every year, the Yukon Party would put out these large forecasts. We know that is an issue. We have talked with industry. We want to make sure — and these conversations had not been had before with municipalities, with industry and with First Nation governments as they put out major contracts as well to try to see how we can pivot and change and make sure that we accommodate so that the GDP gets affected better. We are going to continue that dialogue. We believe that the \$30 million, if that is the number that the opposition is focusing in on, again, is a lot better of a discrepancy than \$100 million from the previous government.

Question re: Government contracting

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, after dragging their heels for 12 months, the government finally announced last week that they are going to award the 10 \$1-million exempt contracts under the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*. It was certainly good to see the government finally doing something on this procurement file after over a year of delays; however, looking through the list of contracts, I do have some questions for the minister.

I noticed that two of the contracts were awarded to cleaning service contractors. Obviously, this is an important industry and the work that local contractors do in this area is invaluable; however, I have looked through the last five cleaning service contracts awarded by Government of Yukon to see how often local companies compete or lose bids to southern companies. It looks like, of the last five contracts, there were 18 bids and every single one of those bids was by local companies. So it goes without saying that every single one of those contracts went to a local company.

Could the minister tell us if this is the case, because it leaves us with this question: Why did the minister use two of his exemptions for contracts that appear not to have been at risk of going to southern companies?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am very happy to talk about fulfilling this election promise this afternoon. This government vowed to support local procurement and maximize government spending in the territory. We have done that. Through the excellent work of Highways and Public Works staff, we have 10 contracts before local contractors throughout the Yukon. We are the very first jurisdiction in the country to do so. Let me say that again: We are the very first jurisdiction in the country to get these procurement exemptions out the door. This is great news for the territory and I look forward to the member opposite's next question.

Mr. Hassard: Hopefully the minister listens to the question this time because it certainly wasn't an election promise.

After looking through the contracts, we also saw the two contracts awarded for roof replacements. Again, this is an important industry and the contractors who do this work in the territory are exceptional at their jobs, but again it looks to me that at least out of those last five contracts there were 13 bidders, all of whom were local except for one, but that non-local company was actually the highest bidder.

Could the minister please confirm if this is in fact the case? Again, we are left wondering why the minister would use two of the 10 exemptions under the free trade agreement on contracts that again appear to not have been at risk of going to a southern company.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, I'm really happy to talk about this fulfillment of an election promise to support local procurement and to maximize government spending in the territory — promise delivered. We have a procurement team working hard to get these 10 contracts out the door. We fulfilled an election promise. They worked extremely quickly to do so, and they got the job done.

I have also fulfilled a mandate item to increase the ability of local businesses and First Nations to secure government dollars and contracts. This is great news for the territory. As a result of the hard work of Highways and Public Works staff, \$4.4 million in government work will go to Yukon companies — cleaners, roofers and a host of other people — and I can tell you that this is great news for the territory. We're the first jurisdiction in the country to use these exceptions. I'm proud of that work.

Mr. Hassard: \$4.4 million out of \$10 million — I don't think that's very good when we're looking at the report card that the Premier was just speaking about.

Yukon fought for these exemptions under the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* to be included so that we could protect local businesses that are at risk of losing work to southern companies. We have highlighted four instances where this exemption appears to have been used on contracts that looked to have been at no risk of going south.

We're left wondering if the minister wasted the last 12 months when he could have been identifying contracts that were truly at risk of going south. Could the minister please share with us the criteria that he used to decide which contracts were being chosen, and could he also provide us with the criteria for those who may be eligible to bid on these 10 contracts?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for his interest in this fulfillment of an election promise.

We led the country, Mr. Speaker. This little territory did what other provinces — much larger provinces — didn't get done. We will get about \$4.4 million into the hands of local contractors, and the member opposite may think this is an insignificant amount of money but I certainly don't, and I don't think the contracting community does either. This is money that would have been zero, but it's not. It's

\$4.4 million. It is great news for the territory and it is great news for the local contracting — roofers, cleaners. A whole array of contractors is happy today because we have more money in rural Yukon, more money into local contractors' hands.

Once again, we are the very first to do this. The member opposite wants some criteria. I would be more than happy to provide that in the days and weeks to come.

Question re: Internet connectivity

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the construction of a second fibre optic loop to improve Internet connectivity in the Yukon has been in the news for years. Regular outages and slow Internet speeds are not exactly selling points when it comes to promoting innovation and the IT sector in the Yukon.

We have already had a number of studies on the matter that have left two options on the table — the Dempster loop or a connection through Skagway. This year's budget has \$11 million identified for this project — a fraction of the cost for either option. Can the Premier tell us what this \$11 million will actually pay for and where the rest of the money for construction will come from?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Of course, this will be a multi-year project. It is not going to happen in one year. The \$11 million is representative of the good work that we can get accomplished this year.

We are in a unique situation right now with Ottawa — it being an embargoed situation. We have more details to come on this particular project, but you can be guaranteed that the \$11-or-so million is going to be put into making sure that the route that has been picked moves forward in this financial year this summer.

Ms. Hanson: I'm not sure what is embargoed about a budget that was released last year. Strengthening Internet connectivity is critical to diversify Yukon's economy and bringing redundancy is a key component of this, yet we know that \$11 million won't come close to covering the cost for either of the proposed options.

The latest report on the Dempster route has the cost rising to nearly \$80 million. If this government is going to spend \$11 million on this project, surely they have a plan to cover the balance. How much federal funding has this government requested from Ottawa, and has the Yukon government chosen the Dempster or the Skagway route?

Hon. Mr. Silver: When it comes to redundancy, it's an extremely important use of taxpayers' money and we're very committed to making sure that money gets out the door this summer. We've been working with stakeholders in the industry. We have done an awful lot of work on this file, and we are waiting for just a little bit more info from Ottawa before we can make any announcements, but you can be guaranteed that the route has been picked and the work will be done this summer.

I'm not sure what the member opposite is talking about — about money from last year's budget — but what we're waiting for is embargoed information now — that this federal

budget has been released. Once that is over, we'll be able to speak more freely about the route picked. So I'm asking for the opposition's patience, but I will say this: The route has been picked, the work is moving forward, and we'll be happy to get that money out the door this year — a multi-year budget that's going to take more than just the \$11 million that has been identified in this budget.

Ms. Hanson: This government claims to be open and transparent, yet they can't answer basic questions about their plan to spend \$11 million and they won't answer the question about which route.

CBC reported last week that the federal budget postpones plans to spend \$450 million on northern and rural infrastructure until after 2022. This money was specifically meant to improve road access and Internet connectivity. The federal budget also states that a mere \$17 million is to be spent from this fund over the next year and a half for the whole country. Both the Dempster and the Skagway fibre optic connections are forecast to be well over and above \$17 million. The federal budget could mean more delays on this important infrastructure project.

Does this government have any guarantees that the federal government will in fact be a funding partner, and has the Premier expressed concerns to the federal government regarding the delay in infrastructure funding for the north for this important connectivity project?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What we are doing here is taking a respectful approach to the dialogue that we have with other governments that are putting forth substantial money in this. It's not up to me to be speaking about the federal government's commitments here in the Legislative Assembly. What we can say here in the Legislative Assembly today is that a route has been picked and that money that is in —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: If the member opposite would listen to the answers, Mr. Speaker — a route has been picked. Money has been put in the budget for the work that can be done this year. We're very excited to be announcing further details on this in very close due time.

Question re: Renewable energy

Ms. White: Last week's budget was a disappointment for Yukoners who want to see leadership on renewable energy and climate change initiatives from their government.

In fact, the words "renewable energy" and "climate change" didn't even appear a single time in the Premier's Budget Address, but I guess that makes sense given that this budget does so little to address these critical issues.

Renewable energy is no longer about the future; it is about today. Businesses, municipalities and indigenous communities across the north are investing and benefiting from green jobs and a reduced reliance on fossil fuels, but the Yukon government is showing no leadership in these fields.

Mr. Speaker, my question is simple: Why is renewable energy not a priority for this government?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: One of the great things about energy is that the first place we should be going is to try to

reduce the amount of energy that we have, even before we get to renewable energy. If there are ways in which we can conserve energy, then we are ahead. In fact, in this budget, we announced \$11.7 million in energy retrofits.

Last week in this Legislature, the member opposite asked a similar question and pointed out that we should invest more money. We will be investing more money. Our platform commitment is to invest up to \$30 million over the time of our tenure here. I looked backed at the Third Party's platform and I noted that they said they would invest \$10 million in renewable energy — so we're ahead at \$11.7 million.

Ms. White: I think the minister would find that, if he read his platform, it said \$30 million of new money every year.

From solar panels in Old Crow and Mount Lorne to the wind power project of the Kluane First Nation, we know that Yukon has potential when it comes to renewable energy, and these projects all have one thing in common. That is that they came from the communities and eventually, in some cases — after many delays and pressure — the government came on board. This is what I mean when I say this government shows no leadership. This is no proactive government initiative to invest in renewable energy in this budget, yet the need is there.

Just this past December, Yukon Energy had to burn fossil fuels every single day to meet Yukoners' basic energy needs. While the rest of the north is innovating to decrease their dependence on fossil fuels, Yukon seems to be stuck in a rut.

Mr. Speaker, what is this government's plan to reduce Yukon's fossil fuel dependency, and how do they plan on achieving their goal without investing in new renewable energy?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We will be investing in new renewable energy and we have some projects on the books already. I think I will try to answer — to go back to the Leader of the Third Party for a moment — because there was just an announcement from the federal government that they were going to delay some of their investment in northern energy infrastructure. However, when we spoke with them this week, what we understand from them is that it won't be affecting the flow of money to the Yukon, so that is good news.

We are in negotiation with the federal government around the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan, around the green energy fund, around the Arctic energy fund — all of which will provide energy that will go toward renewables and to conservation, so this is a good news story.

By the way, our platform said that we would invest \$30 million every year but we would build up to it over our term.

Ms. White: I appreciate that the minister says renewable energy is a priority, but he would be a lot more credible if the budget his government tabled last week didn't directly contradict him. This government's refusal to invest in renewable energy and its budget show that climate change is, at best, an afterthought.

To top it off, they are once again breaking their promise to invest \$30 a year in new money for energy retrofits. The fact that this government tries to spin the decade-old appliance rebate program as proof of their commitment to energy retrofitting is an embarrassment. It highlights how weak their commitment to fighting climate change really is.

Given that we just heard talk about a government performance plan, can the minister tell this House why his government should get anything but a failing grade on energy retrofits and renewable energy investments?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Let me take a stab at that. This year — 2018 — will mark the single largest investment the Government of Yukon has ever made in energy efficiency in the territory — the single largest investment in energy efficiency in the territory.

Our commitment was clear during the campaign that we would allocate up to \$30 million per year for energy retrofits by working with federal agencies to access funding. We are delivering on our commitment to fund energy retrofits and will be announcing more funding in the coming months as we ramp up toward \$30 million.

Question re: Infrastructure funding

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, last week, the Premier sent out a statement saying that he was very pleased with the federal budget. However, as reported by CBC last week, the federal budget outlines plans to postpone \$450 million in infrastructure spending specifically for the north until after the next federal election. The delay of \$450 million of infrastructure spending for the north is concerning.

Was the Premier aware of Ottawa's plans to delay all of this spending until 2022 or later when he sent out his statement saying that he was pleased with the federal budget? If so, why is he pleased with the federal budget?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: A moment ago I rose in the House and I think I answered this question. The investing in Canada infrastructure plan, which is currently in negotiations with Ottawa but which has numbers attached to it, has, as part of it, a rural and northern infrastructure component. We announced that this past summer. I think it was in July. I will look back for the members opposite to inform them.

When the federal government announced that they were delaying it, we contacted them right away to find out if that was going to impact the Yukon. The response I got was no — there was an issue but the funds that they had allocated for the Yukon would be flowing and there would be no delay.

Mr. Cathers: Again, we see no answer from the Premier, and the Minister of Community Services has admitted that they don't even have an agreement signed with the federal government. A verbal assurance from the federal government is not worth the paper it is not written on. The Premier has taken a lot of trips to Ottawa and has largely come home empty-handed. Has the Premier reached out to Ottawa to express concern over this delayed infrastructure spending? If so, who has he contacted and what was the response, or is he again going to refuse to tell this House what he has discussed with the federal government?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is interesting how this question is being parsed out, even though we are answering the question in the Legislature.

I will go back to my announcement last week. What I was specifically talking about — what I was pleased with — was the \$1.3 million that we got back from the TFF — from the federal transfer — when it comes to the renewal that comes out of Statistics Canada. We did meet — this particular one meeting — with the federal Minister of Finance. We explained how \$1.3 million, to us, is a large deal, and we want to make sure that this money — and the federal transfer stays whole. We got a commitment from the federal minister and we got that money back. That is what I was talking about last week. It is interesting how the member opposite will take this and apply it to me basically saying that I love the federal budget. I am glad that the minister here is speaking specifically about how Yukon is not affected by the narrative that the Yukon Party is trying to create.

Question re: School replacement

Mr. Kent: Last fall, we asked about the capital plans for schools here in the territory and the minister said at the time that the schools that are currently being considered for renovation or replacement include: Whitehorse Elementary, Kluane Lake School, Selkirk Elementary School, Takhini Elementary School, Wood Street Centre, St. Elias Community School, and Christ the King Elementary School.

We see now that Kluane Lake School and Christ the King Elementary School have been identified in budget documents to be the first of these schools to proceed. Can the minister tell us what criteria was used to determine that these would proceed first and what consultations took place with the various school communities to arrive at this criteria?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can indicate that with respect to the school revitalization plan being worked on by the Department of Education and by this particular government — we are embarking on some thoughtful planned approach to the retrofit and there will be a 10-year capital plan presented with respect to retrofits of schools across the territory.

Primarily, Mr. Speaker, they are being placed on that list with respect to the age of the particular building, but there are other factors as well. The list has been inherited by this government, but prior to making any decisions about the finality of that list — and, of course, there are always options for things to change over time, depending on what is going on within a particular building — we will be embarking on a list reviewing the one we inherited to make sure that, in fact, all of the factors are being taken into account to make sure that the schools are revitalized and maintained to the benefit of our students.

Mr. Kent: Last year's annual report from the Department of Education that the minister had her picture in so presumably signed off on, said that school revitalization plan was to be finalized in the summer of 2017. Again, that is during the minister's time in government so it is not an inherited plan; it is one that they should have had some input

into. I did ask about the criteria and it seems like they are still developing the criteria.

Mr. Speaker, Holy Family Elementary School has made it into the five-year capital plan for work in years 2021-22 and 2022-23. There is a lack of detail in that five-year capital plan as to what work will be undertaken and, of course, that school was not identified on the list provided by the minister last fall.

Can the minister explain what work is being contemplated for Holy Family in those years, and why it has jumped the queue of the other schools that are requiring renovation or replacement?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question, but I don't agree that anybody has jumped the queue. I think my answer to the first question was that while there is a list, nothing is carved in stone. We are carefully planning to determine which schools should be dealt with first.

I should say that there has been over a decade without much attention being paid to schools with respect to their upkeep, with respect to the requirements that they need for maintenance — there are some indications in the budget that are evidence of that — and this is a project that we are taking with all seriousness. The schools, in fact, need attention. They need ongoing maintenance, they need attention and some of them need to be replaced. Those are huge capital decisions; they are huge decisions not only for this government, but for the community of Yukon, and we will make those with careful planning.

Mr. Kent: Hopefully the minister can provide information later on. I mean, that is the five-year capital plan that Holy Family is being considered in and we would certainly like to get a better understanding of what work is contemplated for there.

Another school requiring attention is the Ross River School. Engineering reports for the Ross River School called for a long-term strategy to ensure the continued structural safety of that school. In the fall, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said that, for the time being, the government's only plans were to install sensors and have technical inspections twice a year.

Can the minister update this House with the latest information on the Ross River School? What has the monitoring determined and when was the last technical inspection? Will the minister be able to table that information here in the House?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for this unique question.

The health and safety of our students, staff and school communities is always a top priority. The school is safe. Several engineering firms have confirmed this over the last year. We're monitoring the school to ensure it remains safe now and into the future and we're committed to working with the community of Ross River on future plans within their community.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 206: *First Appropriation Act 2018-19* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 206, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, Mr. Hassard.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, it's certainly an honour to rise today to speak in response to the 2018-19 Budget Address.

Firstly, I would like to thank the constituents of Pelly-Nisutlin for their continued support and encouragement. Secondly, I would like to thank all of the staff in their respective departments for the work that has gone into preparing this budget document.

I guess there are things that I'm certainly happy to see in this year's budget, such as the \$442,000 for a new RCMP unit to investigate unsolved homicides. As you know, the workload of the RCMP is something that the Yukon Party Official Opposition has raised many times in this House. In fact, we have pushed the government to take action on this file for the last year and we're certainly glad that they've listened to that.

As well, I am pleased to see \$320,000 for a coordinated response team to support victims of sexualized assault. Again, I believe that this is money well spent.

I will turn to some things that the Official Opposition is not so happy with. Last week, the Premier released what I will call phase two of his plan to send Yukon down a path of big debt and unfortunately it appears to be a long-term plan. In black and white, in the Premier's own documents, it did show that the previous government left the Liberals with \$93 million in the bank — \$93,000 isn't too bad, I don't think.

Now let's look at the Premier's high-debt plan for Yukoners that he tabled here on Thursday — not only to have all of that \$93 million spent by the end of the year, but also to take Yukon \$20 million into the hole. Then he plans to go even further with that by climbing to \$100 million by 2021.

If I could, I would just like to hit rewind for a moment and go back to last year at this time when, as I said earlier during Question Period, the Premier was dragging his heels and delayed returning to the Legislature for longer than any government in history. When we criticized the Premier for this delay, his excuse was that he needed extra time to write the budget because it would be a new and improved version with better estimates and better forecasting.

Yet, in fact, I will quote the Premier: "We have made a deliberate decision to increase certainty in Yukon's public finances, beginning with our first Budget.

"As a result, when the Supplementary Estimates were tabled for the 2017-18 fiscal year, they did not differ greatly from the Main Estimates presented last April."

It appears that the Premier forgot to read his own budget documents because, despite all of his bragging about improved forecasting as well as better and more accurate estimates, it turns out that there are some significant

discrepancies between last year's budget and what actually happened. Last year's capital budget was \$309 million. The Premier and his government certainly made a big deal with plenty of fanfare about the size of the capital budget; however, the government and the Premier lapsed \$30 million of this capital budget — \$30 million in lapsed funding. Remember, the Premier said that the supplementary estimates do not, in his words, "differ greatly from the Main Estimates presented last April." I would have to disagree. I would say that \$30 million in lapsed capital funding is a good definition of "differing greatly", and I think most Yukoners would agree with me.

A \$30-million difference between what this government told Yukon's contracting community, what the government is actually going to spend and what you actually spend is a very big difference. Unfortunately, I think this is a clear indication of the Premier's approach to the finances.

As I already mentioned, the Premier's budget this year is taking Yukon's finances \$20 million into debt. That is a big number and certainly one that Yukoners should be concerned about. I certainly hope that the Premier and his colleagues would be concerned about this as well. However, considering that the Premier does not seem to think that \$30 million in lapsed funding is a big deal — as we heard in Question Period — it is no wonder that he does not seem to be concerned about the \$20 million in debt that he is taking Yukon into this year.

We also heard the Premier and the Minister of Highways and Public Works talk about seasonally dependent contracts. We were told — and contractors were told — during the campaign that all seasonally dependent contracts would be out by March 31 of every year. Last year, that certainly was not the case. They rewrote their election platform and said that this year they would all be out by March 31. Now we see in the budget \$46 million, but is that it? Is that all of the contracts that are coming out for this year? We don't really know.

The Premier touted the Financial Advisory Panel as being a good step in correcting the financial future of Yukon, but again, he doesn't seem to be listening to them either. One of their recommendations was to not grow government. So what do they do in response to that? They create a cannabis corporation, rather than relying on the private sector. This is coming on the heels of the Premier announcing that government needs to get out of the business of being in business — again, quite a mixed message for Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, if I could just focus on my own riding for a few minutes, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that there is no mention of the Ross River School, and we heard during Question Period the minister somewhat respond to that. During the election, they promised to deal with — and this is in the words of the Liberal government — the housing crisis in Ross River, but we see nothing in this budget to address that either — nothing to deal with the road between Ross River and Faro as well. I guess maybe this government isn't too concerned about the students who travel back and forth from Ross River to Faro or vice versa, or those residents

of Ross River or Faro who commute from one community to the other to work.

\$2.273 million for an RCMP detachment is in the budget, but it appears that it is only a placeholder. There is no RCMP detachment actually mentioned, as near as we can tell, where that is going to go. We had hoped —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Hassard: Apparently that is funny. I disagree.

We were hoping to hear if Faro was finally going to get the new RCMP detachment that they so desperately need. Since we're on the topic of communities, why did the Premier make such big noise about his campaign slogan of being heard? "Be heard", it said — yet he made no effort to hold any public consultations on this budget. It begs the question: What happened to making evidence-based decisions and what happened to every community matters? Those were big taglines in the campaign.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is fairly safe to say that I'm not that impressed with the Premier's budget, and I certainly could go on at great length, but I believe that the Legislature's time is best spent digging down into the departments and having that debate there. I know that all members in the Legislature would like to have the opportunity to say their piece about the budget before us, so with that, I will close my remarks and wait until we have debate on the departments.

Mr. Adel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to acknowledge that we are standing on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. I would also like to thank our Minister of Finance, the Department of Finance, all Cabinet ministers, caucus and department staff that helped develop this budget.

The budgeting process was undertaken in order to build a strong, confident, inclusive document that will guide Yukon's economic growth. This budget should serve as a road map to a better economic future for Yukoners who are looking for the direction that this government is taking.

Prior to this budget, we were headed in the wrong direction financially. The cost of O&M on capital assets was not fully considered, and this was driving forecasts of significant deficits. The Premier's Budget Address outlined where some of the costs incurred and these are reflected in the main estimates of our budget, where they had previously been accounted for in the supplementary estimates, if at all.

The supplementary estimates that were tabled for 2017-18 did not differ greatly from the mains presented last April. As a government, we have made progress in developing more accurate budget forecasts that truly account for the expenses of government. Our budget shows a much improved economic outlook over last year's projections, which is attributable to the hard work of the government departments in applying good financial principles to their budgets.

There are continuing pressures on our government to provide services for our aging population. I spoke in this house during the fall session about aging in place and the pressure on our finances as a government. After continuing care facilities are built, the costs continue, and we need to have sound financial management and fiscal management that

consider all the costs that are incurred in order to provide efficiencies in services to Yukoners. Mr. Speaker, we produced a budget that addresses these fundamentals. This budget contains the sound fiscal management practices that our constituents asked for: increased transparency in our planning and spending, and consideration of elements that change as we adapt to an evolving economic environment.

In fully accounting for costs during the budget process, we have delivered on the following commitments: We committed to creating a five-year capital plan to let the private sector know what was coming down the pipeline — First Nations and municipalities as well. We have delivered.

We have committed to developing an annual list of seasonally dependent contracts, and getting them out the door by March 31. We have delivered, with \$46 million in seasonally dependent contracts to be tendered by March 31, 2018. Organization around procurement services will allow local businesses and First Nations the opportunity to bid on government projects. This will ensure maximum economic benefit and job creation for all Yukoners.

We have committed to making the "Yukon Now" tourism marketing permanent. We have delivered with \$1.8 million annually.

Mr. Speaker, advancing the fibre optic redundancy project was another commitment we are delivering by including the fibre optic line in the five-year capital plan. We are looking forward to sharing more details on this in the coming weeks.

We are committed to allocating up to \$30 million a year in energy retrofits. We are delivering with over \$11 million allocated in 2018-19 and more funding to be announced soon.

We are committed to expanding campground infrastructure. We are delivering with a \$1-million investment in 2018-19.

We committed to building a new francophone high school and we are delivering. That project is moving forward with \$3 million in 2018-19 and supported by a respectful relationship with Commission Scolaire Francophone du Yukon.

We have committed to developing programs to assist victims of sexual assault. We have delivered with \$320,000 for the creation of a sexualized assault response team.

There may be unexpected or unforeseen circumstances that will affect this five-year capital plan and we will not get it all right. However, I am confident that, through being as clear and transparent as possible with government finances, my constituents in Copperbelt North and all Yukoners can have confidence in this government's ability to guide the Yukon in a sound, responsible economic course. That's what my constituents asked for, that's what we promised Yukoners and that's what this Liberal government has delivered on with this budget.

Ms. Hanson: It's an honour to stand in this House on behalf of both the constituents of Whitehorse Centre and more broadly citizens across Yukon who expect the elected opposition members of the Legislative Assembly to diligently

work to hold government to account. It is the essence of parliamentary democracy.

A key element of our job is to work with government where and when possible to amplify the voices of citizens, of issues and of opportunities that may be overlooked or that may present challenges that government would prefer not to address or that government is not aware of, because none of us can lay claim to knowing all there is to know about the diverse issues, challenges and opportunities that we as a territory face.

The 2018-19 budget is the seventh Budget Address that I have listened to and studied. I listen with an ear to how the government of the day sets out the promises and the commitments it is making to the citizens of Yukon. I listen especially to see or to hear how it will affect the citizens of Whitehorse Centre.

I will come back to some issues specific to Whitehorse Centre after I have touched on some of the broader issues addressed — or more specifically not addressed — in the Premier's speech last week.

Listening to the Budget Address last week, I was hoping to hear that after a year-plus this government had finally honed in on a vision and would articulate it. Sadly, that did not happen and what I heard and what I read was a transactional document. It sounded more like actuarial accounting as opposed to a statement of a vision for a dynamic territory like the Yukon. The legislative agenda for this Sitting of the Legislature as set out by the Premier is also thin.

Last year, I expressed delight and a willingness to work with the government on what I heard was going to be a larger review of Yukon laws, policies and practices that was mentioned in last year's throne speech, so it is disappointing to see such a scant legislative agenda for this Sitting. Perhaps we will see a more robust rollout in the fall.

Clearly missing from the Premier's address last week was fulfillment of a commitment made by this government both during the election campaign and again last May in response to questions in this House and in November when this Assembly passed the motion to establish an electoral reform commission. This is disappointing. We hope this government is not going to follow their federal counterparts' lead on this important matter. Yukoners have made it clear that they do want to see the commitment to establish, in a timely manner, a Yukon electoral reform commission. They want to see it fulfilled and they don't want to see it — not in the months or weeks prior to the next election. They expect to see the outcome of a commission focused on ensuring every vote counts in time to inform the next Yukon election.

One of the most shocking omissions in the budget for 2018-19 is any mention of climate change. This is hard to fathom. Climate change affects every aspect of life as we know it in the north and it is transforming how we must plan for the future. In the same vein, the lack of investment in renewable energy is also unacceptable. This government campaigned on a promise to spend 30 million new dollars each year on energy retrofits. To date, we see this government mirroring the behaviour of its predecessor, the Yukon Party,

by re-announcing existing or re-occurring programs — that is, no new money. It is no secret that Yukon has an energy problem. We burn fossil fuels to keep the lights on every single day in December. Yukoners can be forgiven for being surprised that there is no new money for renewable energy in budget 2018-19.

Again, it is sad to see the government acting as if there is no history in this history with respect to addressing climate change and to innovation around renewable energy. I heard the minister opposite say that this government's investment was the largest single investment in the Yukon's history. Well I happened upon an October 2001 report prepared for the Yukon Development Corporation. A line that caught my eye was that in 1998 the Yukon Development Corporation was made responsible for implementing major elements of the Yukon energy policy and action plan. This was supported by an appropriation by the Legislative Assembly of \$16 million for, among other things, energy efficiency, green power, wind research and other initiatives. Keep in mind that the budget in 1998 was about a quarter of what it is today.

This is a government that has chosen to not seek new revenue sources. It has chosen to maintain a high dependency on Ottawa and then says, "Trust us that we're spending more money on renewable energy than any other government." Not so.

We know the previous government's antipathy to non-fossil-fuel-generated energy, but we had hopes that this government would finally take serious actions to turn the page. Last year, there was a small amount of \$1.5 million for an innovative renewable energy initiative. This year, the question is still out there.

We also hoped that the delay in long-awaited changes to laws and regulations is as a result of careful analyses to ensure that any new proposals are in line with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. They are consistent with the obligations set out on Yukon land claims and self-government agreements and the devolution transfer agreement. I look forward to hearing confirmation from the various ministers on this.

As well, we are looking to see specific commitments from this government on how it will work with Yukoners living with disabilities. Nowhere in any government documents that we have been able to access do we see an analysis of how government is or is not living up to the obligations under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

I still hold out hope that this government — given its repeated statements of belief in evidence-based decision making — I still hold out that hope, despite the Premier's rejection out of hand of several of the recommendations that came from Yukoners — came from Yukoners via the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel.

I have a hope that we, as Members of this Legislative Assembly, will have an opportunity to discuss some of the key recommendations and their underpinning rationale, especially when it comes to opportunities for revenue generation. Yukon citizens are leery of continued and increasing dependence on

Ottawa. As a mature government, it is past time for us to begin to explore a fair rate of return for our resources and to find socially equitable means of generating revenue. The panel offered a number of ideas worth exploring. We look forward to having those conversations in this Assembly, where they should be held.

I say this, Mr. Speaker, despite the surprising rigidity of position that we saw demonstrated by the government on matters that were either the public input on policy, or legislative matters that were championed by the citizens of this territory, did not correspond with what the government wanted to do. So it's one thing to do 23 public engagements and talk about all the online surveys and public meetings, but if you have your mind made up before you table the legislation — or table your position — then citizens will soon begin to realize that there isn't much value to that engagement, and that speaks to developing a real cynicism in civic society. We can't afford that; democracy can't afford it.

We were saddened — so it was a sad reaction to evidence about the need to expand the scope of PTSD coverage under WCB or the refusal to acknowledge the legitimate expectations of the francophone community — that this government would fulfill a commitment made to them of ensuring inclusion of a francophone appointment to the Yukon Hospital Corporation board or the decision to cut funding to YuWIN — the most popular and well-used job board, preferred by both jobseekers and employers alike. No replacement in place — just trust us and we will have one over the coming months — the coming months, as we're leading into the high employment sector.

I still hold out hope that the Premier and ministers mean it when they talk about a whole-of-government approach and that it will finally conclude the work begun in 2009-10 to develop a poverty-reduction strategy that addresses the social determinants of health. We take the Premier at his word when he said: "It is not what we say but what we do that counts."

As this government starts to act to "right size" government that we heard in the budget speech last week, we will be looking at what performance measures the government will utilize to determine what has worked, what is working and what is not. The data available to members of the Legislative Assembly provide no meaningful information to determine what — if any — objectives various government programs have and what success looks like. As it stands, there is no way of measuring whether or not we are succeeding in our efforts to create a more equitable community, one where no one is left behind.

Last year, I expressed several caveats to my attempts to be optimistic about the directions suggested by the then-new government in the throne speech. The first one is whether those words, those stated intentions, will materialize. We welcomed the change in tone. We appreciated the symbolic gestures made by this government on issues from collaborative care to building a more resilient economy. Unfortunately, it appears that, as we worried last spring, this government appears to have followed the federal Liberal lead on this as well — that is, a change in discourse does not

necessarily mean a change in action. We had hoped that this government would take a different approach than its federal counterpart when it comes to actually delivering change for Yukoners.

We can talk about patient-centred collaborative care all we want, but if patients are still being bumped from wait-list to wait-list and that the silos in our system are not dismantled, we have failed. When the government cites as one of its three follow-ups from the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel being a comprehensive review of health and social services, we have to wonder if the government suffers from hubris or ignorance. Hubris would drive a process that ignores the multitudes of studies, research and data that have accumulated since 2004 when the federal, provincial and territorial governments agreed to a multi-pronged, multi-year, multi-billion-dollar commitment to reform our health care system.

There is no excuse for ignorance of the active engagement of over 900 Yukoners, a huge array of professional and non-governmental organizations that responded to the then-Premier's commissioning of a health care review in 2008 — 10 years ago — to examine the sustainability of Yukon's health care system. The commission was tasked with exploring ways of transforming the Yukon health care system that would focus on its long-term sustainability. I will be curious to hear whether the Premier or the minister responsible for health has read both the report as well as the follow-up dialogue on the Yukon health care review called *Taking the Pulse*, which was conducted by a steering committee appointed by this Legislative Assembly. If they have, they will realize that many of the words they have used in both their election campaign and in their responses to questions from citizens and the opposition are more than just words.

Continuing to talk about whether or if we need to make systemic changes to provide patient-centred care is not only financially irresponsible, it is disrespectful to the many people who have time and again offered both professional and personal knowledge to lead the government toward effective public health care options. Rather than engaging in yet another process, perhaps it is time to assess what progress has been made on issues identified 10 years ago, such as: wait times, lack of family doctors, access to long-term care, palliative and home care, limited substance abuse treatment and programming, and limited mental health services.

Respondents wanted to see then a stronger focus on recruitment and retention of health care professionals, better home care and community-based options, and more collaborative and alternative health care options, including midwifery. We're just in the process of doing yet another consultation on midwifery. How many has this territory suffered through? How many have health care professionals and parents suffered through because governments are too timid to make the decision — too timid to deal with the power brokers in this territory?

In many cases, as I said, the reality is that government has been unwilling — in fact, has been frightened — to take action on many of the 43 recommendations set out in the

health care review of 2008-09. The time for timidity has passed, and delay by more process is not tenable. The body of evidence has been amassed for this government. The question is whether or not it is committed to a publicly funded, patient-centred health care system. The evidence is supported at the territorial, national and international levels by research, evidence-based and costed practices and analyses by divergent economists, health care professionals, the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, the Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Nurses Association, et cetera.

While on this topic, I cannot let pass the repeated assertions by the Premier and Finance minister that suggest the need to address the health care system is largely due to an aging population. Quite frankly, it is sad to see an evidence-oriented government buying into the grey tsunami mythology. If anything, we are dealing with a grey glacier.

Keep in mind that the baby-boom tide will peak and then, like the glaciers, fade away. In the meantime, to fall into the trap of building large infrastructure such as the proposed 300-bed — now 150-bed — Whistle Bend facility as opposed to models of care and support that are based on evidence, practice and research show are most effective is indeed a waste of resources.

The singular focus on Yukon's population that is aging as somehow symptomatic of pathology is at minimum ageist and at worst creates false pictures of the realities of many if not most Yukon citizens who choose to age in place in Yukon.

Perhaps I speak this way because it touches me personally. I am a person who has chosen to age in place in this territory, and I don't see myself as symptomatic of pathology. I do believe that what you're missing in this whole discussion is that the vast majority of Yukoners who choose to stay in the territory, unlike those of us who came here 40 years ago and 40 years ago — the vast majority of non-indigenous people did not retire in this territory.

But you know Mr. Speaker, the Premier and Finance minister, the Minister of Health and Social Services and the members opposite all received a copy of a very polite letter from — the Seniors Action Yukon, it's called. I think that it's worth looking at some of the statistics there because, when we're talking about budgets, we're talking about numbers and we're talking about statistics. I am just going to quote, if I may, from the letter that they sent to us all and they're talking about how seniors benefit Yukon, how they benefit Canadian society as a whole.

It is not just a financial drag on the economy when you hit 65 or 70. The people in this room for the most part, I assume, I guess if you get elected, probably have other jobs too. Most seniors, according to the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, we are a much more age-diverse population than we used to be. As of 2017, about 12% of the population was over 65, and the key thing is that Yukoners who are seniors, age 60 and up, pay income taxes, Mr. Speaker. We pay, at a minimum, \$44 million roughly a year in income tax. We contribute per capita more in terms of donations to charitable

organizations than the average Canadian does by a significant proportion — about 25 percent higher.

Seniors in Canada and seniors in Yukon contribute more in terms of volunteer hours. That is part of the ethos that hasn't gone away in terms of activism and being engaged. Canadians who are seniors, and in Yukon — this includes your neighbours and your friends — contribute significantly. It is estimated that they contribute more than four million hours nationally in unpaid child care each week at the national level. So it is a challenge to be hearing the government focusing on how much of a drag on the economy seniors are, when what we should be doing is looking at ways to invest in engaging those seniors in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, in the old days, people left here because there were no options for them. We are actually trying to create that scenario if this is the attitude that is portrayed and if they do — if those seniors leave — for each one of those seniors who leave, there is a significant financial penalty to the territory. It is roughly \$22,000 or \$25,000 per capita. Is that really the message we want to send? Do we not want to have a diverse population in this territory that reflects all ages and all experiences?

First Nation communities talk about the wisdom of the elders. In my community, in my riding, there are at least five or six seniors apartments, and I can tell you, it is a diverse lot. To a person, they want to be able to live in their home, but that is why we need to be really thinking and paying attention to the evidence that has already accrued across this country and across the world on how we can provide those supports at way less expense than building institutions.

Instead of the opportunity that comes with making our seniors and elders feel like the valuable members of the community that they are, this government has sent a message that they are a burden. So indeed the complete absence of any mention of any government support for independent projects like the Vimy Project, which has developed over the years a sound business plan for those not needing income-supported models of care and/or housing in order to age in place belies this government's stated commitment to work with all Yukoners. It's the range. Government needs to be flexible. It needs to be nimble and you can't just focus on the pathologies.

In budget 2017-18, the Finance minister said that the government had negotiated another \$11.4 million — over 10 years, it turned out — to enhance mental health and home care. So naturally, we were curious as to how this has been deployed. We heard last year that there would be new mental health workers living and working in the communities. To date, we have seen no data on how many of those have been staffed. The minister said that over the past year, there has been an enhancement in home care, yet the budget information document provided does not fully corroborate this. Missing still is how the home care monies are being spent. Has there been an expansion of home care on weekends and evenings?

The public and Members of the Legislative Assembly should be able to look at the budget documents that are in this

Legislative Assembly and be able to ascertain how money is being spent, where and what it is delivering. That is what we talk about when we talk about performance indicators.

The information provided in the background for the budget is equally confusing. In response to the simple question posed by the media — it said: “Can you provide an explanation for growth in the FTE/personnel expenditures?” We get this — the answer is that overall, there is an increase of 242 FTEs — blah, blah, blah — marking an increase in how many million dollars. Then they talk about how FTE increases are primarily a result of the increases to the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, 10 new beds at Thomson and increased home care — 186. So is it increased home care of 186, or is that a cumulative total?

The way information is conveyed is not clear. The information that is provided in terms of the number of new teachers and FTEs there doesn't correspond to what we were told in the briefing for Education. Mr. Speaker, there is a need to improve the data and the information. That is why we look forward to actually seeing how the government will define its performance indicators and performance measurements.

Also, what is not in this budget that is surprising — last year, the government announced it was willing to invest new money into daycare. It has been disappointing that what the government really meant was that they would wait to see what the new incremental funds they could leverage from the federal government were before agreeing to essentially play catch-up, but not keep-up, on over a decade of inflation. Daycare should be universally affordable for all children and all families. It is time for Yukon to fundamentally rethink our early childhood learning and childcare system. Childcare in Yukon used to be at the cutting edge. Time and neglect by successive governments have left us behind.

As we move toward a more diversified economy, one of the realities facing many young parents is that much of the new work is project-based or contract-based. The current system of assessing eligibility for subsidies is both bureaucratically cumbersome and unnecessary. Childcare services in Yukon should draw from the best practices known to contribute to children's development and well-being.

We have the experts in this territory. This means consideration of a transition to publicly funded and publicly managed childcare services that take into account the family's needs, such as work schedules, ensuring staff are well trained in early childhood education and receive wages and benefits that reflect the value of the work. It is not enough to say that children are our most precious resource. We need to show it in terms of not providing minimum wage for people who look after that valuable resource. Childcare programs should be housed in physical environments that enhance children's learning and well-being. This government can take a leadership role to model an effective public daycare model by making sure that when the Whistle Bend care facility opens, a daycare centre is incorporated into that facility that provides daycare for both the children of the staff who work at that facility — staff who will be working shifts — and for the community residents of Whistle Bend.

Last year, I encouraged this government to be bold, not just in words but in actions, so that Yukoners over the next months and years see a real difference in their day-to-day life because, ultimately, that is what every government should be about — making life better for the people they represent. To date — and again in this year's Budget Address — we see a government that appears timid, unwilling to even take moderate steps outside of a very narrow, self-defined paradigm. Now is the time for bold action and for living up to the commitments made in the election campaign and the throne speech. It is not a time for Caspar Milquetoast. That approach may be comfortable, but it will not provide the transformative leadership needed to fulfill the promise that is Yukon.

You know, one of the issues that still nags at the realities of many Yukoners is the issue of inequality in the Yukon. Despite the abundant resources that we have and the generous federal transfers that Yukon gets, we have yet to find a way to ensure that no one is left behind; that no kid goes to school with an empty stomach. Yukoners are still struggling with a shortage of affordable housing. The investment in new housing in this budget is a drop in the bucket. How many people will this help? How will it materially affect the 160 people currently on the social housing list? The musing about moving to the private development of land for housing has no timeline, no projection or cost-benefit analysis. Members of this House will know that we are open to ideas to improve and increase the availability of affordable land for building homes.

I have questioned this Legislative Assembly most recently when the Financial Advisory Panel was here as to why the Yukon government is involved in this process. We want to see the analysis. We want to know what the benefits and the risks are. We want to know that affordable land will be made available so that affordable houses can be built. Because this lack of progress in making land available has led again to another cycle of rising house prices with a new high of over \$463,000 in Yukon. How do we expect young people, who we hope to attract to work in the growing tech and innovation sector, to relocate and/or stay in the Yukon if they cannot afford to live here even with a full-time job? Now imagine having to find a place on Yukon's minimum wage — \$11.32 an hour.

Even someone making \$15 an hour would struggle to find a place to live that won't take up 50 percent or more of their income. This is how we end up with people who have a full-time job who still need to go to the food bank on a regular basis. This is how we end up having kids go to school hungry, because their parents have to make the impossible choice of heating their home, getting nutritious food or paying for school supplies. We believe we can do better and we must do better.

As I said at the outset, I wanted to make a few comments with respect to my own riding in Whitehorse Centre. I said on many occasions in this House and elsewhere that Whitehorse Centre is unique in that it is the centre of much that powers this territory. It is a community that nearly every Yukoner visits from time to time — people from the communities

coming to town for a medical appointment or to participate in events like Rendezvous or Adäka. Many people from all over Whitehorse and surrounding communities work downtown. Downtown is also the starting point for many tourists' journey to Yukon.

The citizens in downtown Whitehorse, as well as the Marwell area, are proud of the diverse and vibrant community that they call home, and we are diverse. We have elders and seniors, young families and students. We have life-long Yukoners and people who are just putting down roots in our territory whether they come from anywhere across Canada or around the world. It's my job to attempt to bring these diverse perspectives and what unites us to the forefront of this Legislature.

So Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns that arise from the Liberal government's 2018-19 budget is the growing perception that this government, like the previous government, tends to ignore the realities of the people who live in this area.

When I spoke to the 2017-18 budget, I mentioned the active and engaged Whitehorse Centre citizens who, through the Downtown Residents Association, reflect the hopes and concerns of both downtown residents and those who live and work in the Marwell area.

As I noted previously, there has been an ongoing concern with the lack of coordination of planning between the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon government. To be clear, from my observation it has not been a lack of planning or engagement by the City of Whitehorse. They have worked hard over the years to engage with citizens of this riding on a range of options for the future of downtown with the view to maintaining some of the unique features of old town, the waterfront and planning for more housing density.

However, over the years, there has been a tendency for the Yukon government to simply announce various initiatives that, on their own, may be a good idea, but which cumulatively have left the downtown area residents of the capital of Yukon wondering how the interests of all citizens are taking into consideration and how those considerations lend themselves to a balanced, diverse community. I hope that, at some point in this Sitting, we can have a frank conversation about the impact of serial decisions by Yukon government.

As well, I hope that the various government departments involved will engage with the Downtown Residents Association and the City of Whitehorse as the city completes the downtown and Marwell plan. For now, I ask you to mentally picture the downtown area of Whitehorse between the south access and Cook Street. At the south end of the area are single residential homes, a number of social housing duplex units, apartment buildings, hotels, numerous eating establishments, several daycares, churches, medical and dental offices, government offices, et cetera.

I think most members are aware that I have been concerned that there had been a long-planned playground for the south area of Whitehorse.

The kids there were excited. That was kyboshed when the previous Yukon government arbitrarily and with no consultation placed a new group home at the end of Hoge Street. In of itself, other than the complete lack of notice, the fact that it effectively killed the prospects of a new playground — or any lack of consultation. The group home is lovely, but the impact on the local community had unintended negative consequences.

In addition to the Hoge Street group home, the area is also home to Kaushee's Place, Betty's Haven, Options for Independence Society's apartment building, Challenge's apartment building, the emergency youth shelter, two older group homes, the Sarah Steele alcohol and drug treatment facility, soon the new Challenge complex at the end of Main Street, the new Salvation Army shelter and transitional housing facility, the Blood Ties supportive housing cluster, and the recently announced Housing First complex for Wood Street and Fifth Avenue.

As I pointed out last year, there is a growing need, past-overdue, for a coordinated approach among the Government of Yukon departments and the city to work cooperatively with area citizens to achieve a balance. There are legitimate questions to be asked and to be answered about what creates a healthy balance in terms of addressing the array of housing needs in any area of any community. I hope that, as the City of Whitehorse prepares to finalize the downtown and Marwell area plans, the Yukon government will take a whole-of-government approach to essentially work with residents and elected municipal leaders and officials to simply do an overlay, to take some Mylar and put down, "What were we talking about in 2010? What did the community plan look like then? What about 2015? What is forecasted for 2020? What did the citizens have in mind and what has changed? What is forecasted to change?" At least to the extent that this government knows what it has budgeted for downtown Whitehorse — because that is what government is about: it is respect for the citizens, for their voices and all voices to be heard.

So there are many other aspects that I haven't touched on. We are concerned about a number of the areas of expenditures that belie the notion of being evidence-based. We'll come back to those during debate of each department. I particularly am looking forward to hearing the Minister of Highways and Public Works give us more details — or actually some details — on what has changed between — I don't know — 1986 and 2018 with respect to the department of transport's views on the Dawson City Airport, the rating of that airport and why \$11 million is a wise investment, but we will come back to that.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to respond to the 2018-19 budget presented by our Premier and our Minister of Finance on behalf of our government on March 1.

Working with Yukoners was a key theme in the Premier's Budget Address. For me, this is the only way we can move forward: by working together, by listening to each other, and

by taking action to seize this moment in Yukon's history. Our approach is unique in Canada and I am proud to be part of it. I have been privileged to be able to travel to communities to meet with people where they are, to attend meetings and events to explore our natural attractions, to talk to Yukoners. I have attended many, many Yukon events, and I know that there are many Yukoners who can attest to that — festivals, gatherings, meetings of most associations that are related to my portfolio. I have visited heritage sites at Forty Mile and Lansing Post, and heritage and archaeological sites at Herschel Island; I have gone up to the ice patches. I have really worked hard to understand the work of our public servants in all of my departments.

We, as Cabinet and caucus, attended well over 100 visits to Yukon communities. All of my time spent at events and in Yukon communities was spent in constant consultation. That is what we do. We have taken a very deep dive into lives of Yukoners. I do not buy the doom-and-gloom picture that was just presented. I don't see our Yukon that way. I see a dedicated group of individuals who are working really hard on behalf of all Yukoners — all Yukoners regardless of what party they associate with. That does not matter. We are here to represent Yukoners and what is best for everyone.

This year's budget is a strategic one that sets a plan for the coming years, particularly in the area of capital spending. However, as the Premier noted, this capital budget is not set in stone. It will change as we face unexpected challenges, it will change as we hear from Yukoners about their priorities, and it will change as we identify innovative solutions to maximize opportunities that arise.

It is this flexible thinking that will enable Yukon to grow and to evolve as our citizens, our industries, our government partners and, indeed, our world evolve. The operation and maintenance budget forecasts a deficit of \$4.8 million as we balance costs resulting from our aging population. We just heard the Third Party speak about this. Yes, we do have an aging population.

So many of us are lifelong Yukoners. We intend to be here for the duration of our lives. We do have an aging population and we have to face that. We also have a very young population and we are making investments into education. We are making investments into what is good for all of our citizens within Yukon. Increasing demand for public services with government's ability to pay — that is the challenge that we have, Mr. Speaker. We must work together — governments, the public service, Yukon citizens — to walk the path of fiscal sustainability.

Today, I will highlight the areas relevant to two of my three portfolios: the Department of Tourism and Culture and the Women's Directorate.

The budget for my third portfolio — the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board — is not included in the Government of Yukon's main estimates, as the finances of the board are independent of government and are capably managed by their board of directors, a board representative of key stakeholders of the system, workers and employers under the leadership of Chair Mark Pike.

I will start with Tourism and Culture. The Premier emphasized in his Budget Address that engagement with the public is a critical piece of creating a budget that sees real results taking place in Yukon communities and in people's day-to-day lives. This is exactly the approach that we are taking in the Department of Tourism and Culture, with two major strategic planning initiatives taking place in 2018-19.

The first is the Yukon Tourism Development Strategy. As I have stated previously in the House and on numerous occasions at public events and in meetings with Yukon stakeholders, we are leading the development of a tourism strategy for Yukon, not a Government of Yukon strategy. This is a Yukon overall strategy. While the Government of Yukon plays several roles in Yukon's tourism industry, we know that there are many stakeholders who make this industry the vibrant growing contributor to Yukon's economy with over 3,500 jobs — 3,500 good-paying jobs — and we are now the highest in Canada in terms of tourism-related jobs and a contributor to 4 percent of the territory's GDP.

As we finalize the numbers for 2017, it looks like this will be a record-breaking year for the industry and we certainly heard that from the federal minister of tourism recently, saying that this is the best year ever recorded for tourism in Canada. I would like to recognize all those who contribute to the success of this industry — an industry that continues to be a strong and steady economic driver for the territory — from tour operators to hotel operators to First Nation cultural centres to restaurant owners to NGOs that support industry and promote our territory and many, many others. Thank you. We would not be here today without the investment of all of these stakeholders.

We are all ambassadors of Yukon and welcome visitors with open hearts, authentic approaches and opportunities to transform their lives with larger than life experiences. We are not trying to solve a problem in the tourism industry. The steady growth in the sector illustrated in the financial and economic outlook section of the 2018-19 Budget Address shows that we do not have a problem. What we have is an opportunity to grow the industry sustainably in a way that meets the needs of both Yukoners and visitors.

In July 2017, tourism stakeholders came forward at a roundtable session to let my officials and me know how they would like to see engagement proceed on a Yukon tourism development strategy. They asked for face-to-face engagement sessions in all Yukon communities and for a steering committee to oversee and guide the engagement process and the development of a strategy.

I heard these Yukoners loud and clear. A steering committee was struck in the fall of 2017, with 15 members representing the tourism industry, NGOs, First Nations, municipalities and the arts and culture sector, led by co-chairs Valerie Royle, my Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture, and Rich Thompson, who is representing the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and was selected by the steering committee members. The committee has been instrumental in getting the engagement process up and running very quickly. To determine the common path forward, we are asking the

tourism industry, stakeholders, governments, NGOs and Yukoners for their ideas and opinions. I was pleased to announce the start of our public engagement effort last month with co-chair Rich Thompson, and I encourage everyone to have their say in the sustainable growth of the tourism industry. You can do so by attending one of our 40 facilitated sessions taking place around the Yukon this month or you can go online and complete a survey. Lots of people like to do that, even though I know the Third Party is not very complimentary of this type of engagement. A lot of people have very limited time and would like to just take the moments when they have a chance to do a survey like this.

The high-level, goal-oriented, multi-year strategy will be drafted once the engagement phase has concluded this spring. The steering committee has outlined how the draft will be shared with governments, stakeholders and the public prior to it being finalized. Once finalized, government and stakeholders will develop action plans to support the strategy. You may have noticed that there is no money earmarked for the implementation of the Yukon tourism development strategy in the 2018-19 budget. That is because this is a Yukon strategy, and we will not presuppose the outcome. My department will, however, look at its operations and stakeholder funding mechanisms to better align with the strategy in the 2018-19 budget and the 2019-20 budget. This approach is consistent with one of the three actions arising out of the Financial Advisory Panel's recommendations to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of delivering overall services to Yukoners

What has been included in this year's budget is a \$1.8-million investment into the Yukon Now marketing program to attract North American visitors to Yukon as well as funding to complete the visitor exit survey and enhance the www.travel yukon.com website. These are all mechanisms for evidence-based decision-making.

I was also pleased to see \$1 million budgeted for improved camping opportunities for Yukoners and visitors. I was recently reminded by staff from the Department of Environment that Yukon campgrounds are the biggest source of accommodations in Yukon in the summer, and we need even more sites. These investments are critical to continuing the momentum of the tourism industry and to continued economic contributions to the territory.

In his Budget Address, the Premier said that: "... the dedication and the ingenuity of public servants have been underutilized assets..." and I agree. The professional staff in the Department of Tourism and Culture will be put to work in an all-staff meeting in the coming months to look at how we can be more effective and efficient in delivering tourism and culture programs and services to and for Yukoners. I have full confidence that they will have innovative ideas for improvement and creative suggestions for implementing government's actions arising out of the tourism development strategy.

The second major strategic project in tourism and culture in 2018-19 will be the development of an arts and culture policy. This work will begin following the finalization of the

Yukon tourism development strategy. As we know, the arts and culture sector is involved in the development of this strategy and that this strategy will inform the arts and culture policy.

Once again, this initiative will include sectoral and public engagement aligning efforts and an exercise to maximize the efficient delivery of services. We will work with our 2018-19 budget to implement and then align the financing of key actions in the 2019-20 budget.

Collaborating with First Nation governments was a key focus in the Premier's Budget Address and a key factor in successful relationships. These relationships are paramount to both Yukon tourism — the Yukon tourism development strategy and the arts and culture policy initiative. Respect for and sharing the authentic First Nation culture is a pathway to reconciliation. I firmly believe this.

First Nation people are deeply rooted in and connected to their culture. Helping all nations to rejuvenate, celebrate and share their cultures with Yukoners and visitors will bring benefits for generations. These benefits go far beyond economic benefits associated with thriving indigenous tourism industries of successful First Nation artists. The true benefit of lived First Nation culture will be seen in the social fabric of the Yukon from the justice system to education to social services to health care. By working government-to-government, we will get things done together.

When in Ottawa in February, I was incredibly proud of our approach to meet government-to-government-to-government, with Canada, Yukon and First Nation governments meeting together to discuss issues of mutual concern. This was clearly a unique approach from other jurisdictions and one that continues to get the attention of the federal government. Our relationship is important on many fronts, including advancing the mining industry.

The Department of Tourism and Culture is pleased to be part of the progress made on class 1 mining notification. My department is tasked with ensuring that Yukon's heritage resources and historic sites are preserved, shared and celebrated. To this end, we work hand in hand with Yukon First Nation governments on projects such as the ice patch archaeology, palaeontology in placer mining and the Tr'ondëk Klondike UNESCO World Heritage Site application. With respect to class 1 notification, we will work to ensure that heritage resources and historic sites are respected and that tourism interests are considered while working quickly and efficiently to move applications through the process.

Through the good work of the Yukon Forum, the joint priority action plan will guide us forward in our government relationships with Yukon First Nations. My department is working in partnership with First Nation officials on action plans for one of the four priority areas, and this is heritage.

I was in Mayo on February 14 to mark the 45th anniversary of the delivery of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* in Ottawa and the 25th anniversary of the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun's signing of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, and to celebrate the signing of the Lansing Post heritage management plan for the protection,

conservation and interpretation of the heritage resources at the site and to recognize and protect the traditional and current use of the site by Na Cho Nyäk Dun. This is an excellent example of working together to implement land claim agreements for the benefit of all Yukoners. I actually had the opportunity to go out to Lansing Post prior to the finalization of this plan, and it was really amazing to go on the land and visit alongside the chief and council, the elders and the staff members to really appreciate the historic value of this site.

My department officials are currently working on heritage management plans with Carcross/Tagish First Nation for Conrad and with the Selkirk First Nation on the renewal of the heritage management plan for the Fort Selkirk Historic Site.

On the capital budget side, I was very pleased to see a focus on maintaining and upgrading Yukon highway systems, which provide access for visitors to our communities, wilderness, parks and tourism products. Access is one of the big three absolute necessities, along with awareness and products for a viable tourism industry. Airport access is increasingly important to the industry as air arrivals into the territory continue to grow. Government investment in the Whitehorse International Airport to improve passenger bridges, runways, baggage handling and screening infrastructure is key.

Moving forward with paving the existing runway at the Dawson airport is critical to tourism development in the Klondike. It is such an exciting time for tourism and culture in the Yukon. The possibilities truly are unlimited. I honestly can't wait for the tourism development strategy to be finalized so that we can get to work on action plans and implementation.

Mr. Speaker, turning to the Women's Directorate, the Budget Address included a second early action arising out of the recommendations of the Financial Advisory Panel. Of particular relevance to the stakeholders of the Women's Directorate is a comprehensive review of the health and social services, which will build on previous work done. Of course, we will look at the previous reports done 10 years ago and build upon that. Why wouldn't we? That makes sense. The Department of Health and Social Services delivers programs and services that directly impact the lives of Yukoners.

It is important that these services meet the needs of all Yukoners in a timely, effective, and confidential and dignified manner, particularly for our most vulnerable citizens. We know that we must look at all government policies and programs through a gender-inclusivity and diversity lens, and considering the intersectionality of the numerous identities of Yukoners, such as culture, race, gender, age, class, ability, educational level, religion, et cetera.

I think that — just going back to some of the comments that were made while I'm on this section — in terms of an aging population, we should not take this personally. That is a reality of life. We have an aging population, and I absolutely respect our elders and seniors and the input that they have into our territory. Their investment certainly has brought us to where we are today in Yukon, and I have the utmost respect.

In terms of looking at the options available to Yukoners, I think that if members of the House have listened to our Minister of Health and Social Services, she has talked non-stop about other options. We inherited the 150-bed Whistle Bend facility. This is something that we had to complete. The project had started so we are looking at many other options, and I really look forward to the review of Health and Social Services and the Women's Directorate having input into that.

The Women's Directorate will continue to support the work of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Yukon has led the way by hosting the first hearings right here in Whitehorse, and we are encouraging the commission to table its final report in Whitehorse, closing the circle on this important work.

Just last week, I had the honour of attending a community feast in Lower Post, where the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry statement gatherers were providing additional private opportunities for families and friends in southeastern Yukon and northern British Columbia to give their testimony to the inquiry. These statement gatherers came at the request of the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the advocacy of the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society. Many of those giving testimony were Yukoners from Watson Lake and Ross River.

We are committed to responding to the final report of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls commission, in partnership with local women's groups, First Nation governments, Government of Canada, the RCMP, and other Yukon government departments.

I know from personal experience that a preventive approach to community safety and safety at home will be foundational elements to addressing the violence that still occurs in our communities and in our homes. As we speak here today, Mr. Speaker, the community that I represent, Kwanlin Dün, is laying to rest a young woman who was taken far too soon.

We have much work to do in this territory and in Canada to address the inequality that our indigenous women face each and every day. While prevention is key, we cannot forget those who have been murdered in our communities and those who continue to be victimized. In the 2018-19 budget — I am glad to hear the Leader of the Official Opposition mention these two initiatives because they are very important — there is \$442,000 for a new RCMP unit to investigate unsolved homicides. This program is very meaningful to the Kwanlin Dün community. Most of the lives taken have directly impacted that community. There is \$328,000 for a coordinated response team to give victims of sexualized assault the services they need when they need them. The Sexualized Assault Response Team, which the Women's Directorate is working on with our internal and external partners, is a huge move in the Yukon and it is long, long overdue.

The Premier highlighted a budget commitment for building and maintaining the government's social and affordable housing units. This is important, as housing is a basic human right that is not afforded to all Yukoners. We

must have housing options available to all of our citizens that enable them to be safe and secure in their homes without sacrificing food or electricity in order to pay their rent and without staying in violent situations because they cannot afford to leave or because there is literally nowhere to go.

Obviously there is so much more to talk about in the 2018-19 budget for the Women's Directorate and the Department of Tourism and Culture, but I will leave those details for Committee of the Whole.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the budget today.

Mr. Kent: It is my pleasure to rise to respond to the budget tabled last week by the Premier and Minister of Finance for the 2018-19 fiscal year.

Like other colleagues, I would like to start off by thanking my constituents in the riding of Copperbelt South. It has been a pleasure to represent them here in this Legislature since the election in the fall of 2016. It is a very vibrant community with a number of community associations and neighbourhood associations, and I have had the opportunity to attend many of their meetings over the past year and a half. I look forward to attending many more. It is a great place to get a sense for what the concerns of the various neighbourhoods within Copperbelt South are, and I appreciate it because I have been able to take their concerns and raise them with the appropriate ministers. I would like to take a little bit of time to thank some of those ministers for responding and getting back to me with response to those concerns, including some of the highway work and improvements and signage work that the Minister of Highways and Public Works has done, especially on the back end of the work that was done at the Carcross Corner last year.

There is still a little bit of signage activity to go. I have put that forward to the minister in letter and I look forward to hearing back from him very soon on that, including, of course, some tourism-oriented directional signage for some of the tourism businesses that are along Duncan Drive right at the Carcross Corner. I look forward to hearing from the Minister of Highways and Public Works on that.

When it comes to the Golden Horn School and some of the concerns identified by the school council, I have had the opportunity to attend a number of school council meetings in the past while. I know there is a portable identified in this budget. I'm assuming — I'm hoping, I guess — that it's for Golden Horn School. It's on the tender forecast as well. I know that they've had to utilize some storage space for learning space out there and they have two kindergarten classes coming in and one small grade 7 class graduating this year — as I have mentioned and as the school council has mentioned to the Minister of Education — so I thank the government for recognizing that and hopefully we will have that portable in place for the start of the school year this fall.

One of the other things that was identified at the school was the drop-off zone and lighting. I know that I did send a letter to the minister with respect to some of the aspects that the school council had raised and I don't believe I have had a

response, but I look forward to getting a response to that letter — the drop-off zone and the lighting and some other aspects around the school. Again, a big thank you to the Golden Horn Elementary School Council for raising those concerns and letting me raise those concerns on their behalf as well.

Finally, I would like to just thank the Minister of Environment for getting back to me with respect to some concerns raised initially at the Pineridge Community Association meeting regarding the Wolf Creek campground. There was some work that was undertaken last year there, and I know there is more planned for this year to increase the accessibility in that campground. There have also been some concerns from neighbours with some reckless behaviour by some of the guests at that campground — some fires that were lit outside of the designated camping areas. Again, I thank the Minister of Environment for getting back to me with respect to some of the action they have taken and will be taking with respect to supervision at the Wolf Creek campground.

Many other things, of course, come up at these neighbourhood association and school council meetings. I did reach out to constituents to ask specifically about issues with respect to highway safety. I note that in the five-year capital plan, there are highway safety upgrades planned for the Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway throughout the next five years. I know I have identified some of these for the minister already, but I will just put on the record here what I have heard from some of the constituents in Copperbelt South.

Some of the intersections — not the major intersections where the work was done at last year with the south Klondike and Alaska Highway, but some of the intersections such as the Gentian Lane and the Alaska Highway — and I know I brought this up with the minister before. With respect to the passing lanes on the highway where there is the opportunity for individuals to pass, I know I have witnessed a close call where some people are travelling south, turning on to Gentian Lane, and someone passes them in that allowed zone. I have also heard from constituents about a couple of other close calls with similar actions there.

The minister got back to me last year with respect to this issue, but I am hoping he will have his departmental officials take another look at this issue and see whether or not they could put in double solid lines at that intersection for the safety of not only those people who live on Gentian Lane, but those who are travelling in either direction at that time.

I have also raised a concern with the traffic lights at the junction of Robert Service Way and the Alaska Highway. I'm hoping that some turn signals could be put in there. I know the turning lanes are in there, but again it is something that I raised with the minister and I look forward to hearing back from him.

A couple of other issues have emerged more recently with respect to highway safety. An acceleration lane coming out of the Meadow Lakes Golf Course — there have been a number of homes obviously built in there since that initial work was done and a lane that would allow vehicles turning out of there to accelerate is something that a constituent of mine in Wolf Creek raised with me, as he has seen some dangerous

activities take place as a result of no opportunity for vehicles to enter a safe acceleration lane before entering the main highway traffic pattern there.

Another thing that we were curious about and hope that the Minister of Highways and Public Works can let us know about is with respect to the multi-purpose trail. I know there was one built by the Pioneer RV Park when that work was done as part of the Whitehorse corridor work, but it doesn't appear that there was anything upgraded with respect to trails in the work that was done at the Carcross Cut-off last year.

Again, these are some issues that either I will hopefully get a chance to raise with the Minister of Highways and Public Works during debate or perhaps I will just pass those questions on to our HPW critic, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

A number of concerns have emerged from these meetings — and I should, again, take the opportunity to thank those various community associations. At the meetings I have been at there has been everything discussed from maintenance standards on the highways to FireSmart and invasive species, the infill lots, of course, school busing in the area has come up and those are some of the things that we will hopefully get a chance to explore with the appropriate ministers as we get into the departments.

I should put a quick plug in for a constituency meeting that I'm having this Thursday at 6:00 p.m. at the Cut Off Restaurant. Anyone in the riding or in the neighbourhood who wants to attend is, of course, more than welcome to come out and raise any concerns that they have that I can take forward to the appropriate ministers, either through letter or on the floor on the House over the next couple of months as we go through the Spring Sitting.

Mr. Speaker, there have been some changes in my role in this Legislature. My part of Community Services is now with the Member for Porter Creek North and the critic role for Economic Development is now with the Member for Kluane. I have taken on, in addition to my responsibilities at Energy, Mines and Resources, the critic role for Education, which is something that I am very excited about and I look forward to the opportunities to discuss education issues with the Minister of Education with respect to this budget, whether it is expenditures or policy matters in the Department of Education. As members know, I have a young son who just started kindergarten this year. It is an exciting time for him and an exciting time for our family, and I look forward to asking questions that will help him and other students as they move through their public school career here in the territory, whether they are in Whitehorse or in the communities.

There are a few things in Education, whether they are policy or expenditure-related items, that I will be looking forward to hearing back from the minister on or having discussions with the minister about throughout the spring. One, of course, is the new curriculum development — we are looking for some progress reports on that. I have heard from parents — as have colleagues in our caucus — that they do have some concerns with what is happening there but, again, we look to hear back from the minister on what is happening

with respect to the curriculum development and what the role of the Education Advisory Committee has been with respect to that.

I did go on the Education website and I think the last minutes were from May of 2017 with respect to that advisory committee, so we will look forward to hearing a little bit more from the Minister of Education when it comes to the rollout of the new curriculum.

Student support services and the allocation of educational assistance has been and probably continues to be an important topic for many parents throughout the territory, so I know that is something my colleague from Porter Creek North raised during her time as critic for Education. I will look to pick up the ball on that and see what type of responses we can get from the minister to get a sense for where we are at with the EA allotment in the schools.

Capital planning, of course, is something that is extremely important when it comes to Education. We did talk about it briefly during Question Period earlier today, and hopefully the minister gets a chance to clarify what she said when she talked about inheriting the school revitalization plan because, as I mentioned during Question Period, that plan wasn't finalized until the summer of 2017, based on facility condition assessments. After Question Period, I did look up the Education annual report and found that on page 41 of the report under school revitalization plan, so hopefully we get a chance for her to clarify why that was an inherited plan when it wasn't finalized until last summer, well into this government's current mandate.

Again, often during Question Period, there isn't a lot of time to get fulsome answers so we did talk about which schools were in that revitalization plan, and the fact that Christ the King Elementary School, which is slated for work according to the five-year capital plan in 2020-21 through to 2022-23, and the Kluane Lake School as well, in Burwash Landing — 2018-19 and 2019-20 — those are two of the schools off that plan list that have been slated for work, whether it's replacement and/or renovation. So we'll look for some more details with respect to that.

Again, what I asked for during Question Period today was the criteria used to pick those two schools, I guess, off of the broader list that was provided by the minister for the plan — how were they chosen? What type of discussions and conversations were held, not only with those two school communities but the school communities of the other schools that were listed in the revitalization plan? Hopefully we can get into some more detail about that as we move into Education debate or in the coming days.

The other one that I mentioned in Question Period today that jumped out at me in the five-year plan was the Holy Family Elementary School in Whitehorse — slated for work, according to this five-year plan, in 2021-22 and 2022-23. We would be interested in getting a sense of what that work is. Is it for emergency repairs? Is it for additions? Why is that — and Holy Family wasn't on the initial list. They would be new to this list, so we're interested in getting a sense of why Holy Family is now included. There may be a very good reason, but

we'll want to hear from the minister as to why they essentially seemed to be added to the list and then moved toward what I would consider the top of the list along with Kluane Lake School and Christ the King Elementary.

Of course, when it comes to capital planning, the big project that is underway right now is the francophone high school — I believe it's before the environment and socio-economic assessment board now — that is to be put in Riverdale. So we'll look forward to hearing back about the final recommendations from the YESA board on that project. I think there is \$3 million identified in this current budget for that project. However, the minister, I believe, has said outside of the House that construction isn't expected to start until 2019-20. So we'll look for a little bit more information on what exactly that \$3 million is identified for and when she anticipates those expenditures to go forward.

When it comes to a couple of other things on the public school side — the school calendar. Of course, there's a one-year school calendar out now. I think the department is working on a three-year school calendar. I know that many parents in my riding and other parents whom I've heard from are anxious to have that three-year certainty and they'll look forward to getting a sense for when that calendar will be developed.

I'll have some questions on advanced education as well — particularly with respect to Yukon College's transition into a university, what plans there are for what are known as the endowment lands up there, and how the government is participating with Yukon College on identifying potential projects.

I noticed in some of the budget documents — and again, I have not had a chance to go through in great detail yet, but there is \$7.6 million allocated for training. We would certainly be interested in getting a sense for where those dollars are going. Are they going to be going to the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, or where exactly will those dollars be spent? Is it strictly trades and tech training, or is there adult basic education money that is going to be spent there as well?

We will have some questions as well for the minister on the transitional plans for the Yukon Native Language Centre to the Council of Yukon First Nations. There are some questions that have been raised by individuals who have approached our office, and we will look forward to getting some detail from the minister on that as well.

I know the Leader of the Third Party has mentioned it, and it has been brought up with me as well, and that is the status of funding for YuWIN. As the Leader of the Third Party mentioned, it is an important service that is offered for individuals who are seeking employment, and I have heard from members of the community that they are concerned, so we will want to get a sense from the minister about what exactly is happening to YuWIN and what the transitional plans are as far as employment services go for Yukoners, especially, as the Member for Whitehorse Centre mentioned, as we are heading into a busier summer employment time. We will certainly be looking to drill down a little bit on the

question of YuWIN and the funding or the funding cuts that have been made to that organization.

One other thing that we have heard — and, again, this is the standard Whitehorse coffee shop talk, and I am not sure if any decisions have been made so we will look to get some clarification from the minister — is that the Immigration branch, which is currently under Education, is rumoured to be moving to Economic Development. That is a policy decision that the government has maybe made, or maybe has not made, but we will be looking for some clarification and rationale as to why it would be moved from Education to Economic Development. Certainly there are economic aspects when it comes to the nominee program and the temporary foreign worker program, but we will be looking at digging into the rationale as to why that move was considered and contemplated or, if indeed, it is. Again, as I mentioned, these are just some of the rumours that we have heard in the community.

I will just move on. I want to be mindful of time today, but I will move on to some of the Energy, Mines and Resources issues and initiatives that we are following. Obviously we are pleased, as the Official Opposition, to see many of the exploration and development projects advancing based on what we are seeing in the commodity market with the prices. When we went through the last downturn, the previous government wanted the Yukon to be in a good position to rebound from those down markets, and it looks like we appear to be moving forward.

There are some concerns that have been raised by industry members to us, whether it was when we were down at Roundup or in the number of phone calls and meetings that we have throughout the year.

I would like to certainly thank the Member for Kluane, who hosted a mining roundtable in Haines Junction in January. We had a great opportunity to hear from a number of individuals who are either placer miners or in the quartz mining business or exploration business. It was a great opportunity to sit down with, I would say, about 20 individuals and get a sense for what their concerns are heading into this upcoming season.

Class 1 notification — I know the Premier mentioned it specifically in his budget speech. We still are hearing concerns from prospectors and others engaged in the exploration industry as to what exactly this is going to mean. Is there going to be a different class created for non-motorized or non-explosive use, I guess, as far as class 1 activities go? What exactly is this rollout going to look like? Again, as the Premier mentioned, and I believe the Minister of Tourism and Culture mentioned in her response today — class 1 — we're still hearing a lot of concerns from industry when it comes to the rollout of this notification and when and where it is going to take place. Obviously it is in the non-settled First Nations' traditional territory — Ross River, Liard, White River — and then the asserted territory of the Taku River Tlingit — I believe they also have those notifications in place, but again we will be looking for some answers on the rollout of that.

The staking bans that are in place and other land withdrawals, whether they be national parks or territorial parks — over 50 percent of the Yukon is now off-limits to new staking. A large portion of that is in the Ross River and Watson Lake area where there is tremendous potential for base metals. I know that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources spoke about the Selwyn area on the heels of Roundup. The unfortunate thing is that, unless you have an active or a current claim in that area, you are out of luck. There is no new staking allowed in there. I recognize the history behind this staking ban in that area, but we're looking to get some information from the government on how discussions and negotiations, particularly with Ross River and Liard, are going so that we can get some of this land back into circulation and some new claims staked in the area. My understanding from one of my long-time friends who is in the industry is that there is some potential new information that could lead to some increased staking activity in that area, particularly with zinc at or near an all-time high as far as price goes.

On the energy-side of things — I guess the one thing I know the Third Party has talked about the retrofits and what the government is considering doing as far as energy retrofits, but my bigger concern is on the status of the IPP. Obviously there is the wind farm on top of Haeckel Hill that I believe has gone through YESAA favourably and may even have a decision document written for it to proceed. There is a solar farm being contemplated in my riding, just off the Mount Sima Road. That was working its way through the environmental assessment process. And then obviously there is a variety of First Nation projects.

I guess we will look to talk to the minister about the status of the IPP and which of these projects are, and which ones aren't, affected by them. Again, I know there are a number of projects in and around the community of Watson Lake — everything from the transmission line connection that the minister talked about after Roundup to smaller-scale renewable and biofuel projects — the LNG biofuel that ATCO had considered a number of years ago. So whether it's the Member for Watson Lake or me, we would certainly be looking for some additional information on that as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am just going to conclude with some general observations and some general items that I would be interested in talking about during this Spring Sitting. Of course, the five-year plan — which has been brought in with much fanfare — I think it would be more helpful to us as legislators if, when you're talking about these specific projects, there were some numbers assigned to them, it would give us a better idea on what exact work was contemplated in what years. There are some coloured bar codes telling you in which fiscal year their work will be undertaken, but I think if you had some numbers assigned to it, it would be an awful lot better and an awful lot easier for us to determine what scope of work is going to be considered for each of these projects that are listed here in the various capital categories — for instance, the Alaska Highway Whitehorse safety improvements: if the numbers were there, it would give us a

better idea of the scope of work that was going to be undertaken.

One of my favourite things to talk about, because I was the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works, is the procurement file. As members know, we had a Procurement Advisory Panel prepare a report and recommendations for us. I know that, during the 2016 election campaign, the Liberal Party did mention that they would implement those recommendations within two years. As it happens, we are coming up on the two-year mark pretty quickly, so I'll be looking to get a sense for the responses to these various recommendations and how they've moved some of the ones that were longer-term up, and what they have done as far as the ones that were shorter-term — which ones have been met. There were time horizons — one-to-two years, two-to-four years or within a year, I think — so we will look forward to hearing from the minister on these recommendations and if they are planning to meet that campaign commitment to have all of these recommendations adopted within a two-year time horizon from the election. So if not the spring, we'll certainly be looking to the fall — so an update from the minister would be appreciated.

The other issue that I raised as Economic Development critic, and that I had the chance to talk to the minister about in the fall, is the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* exemptions. The \$4.4 million in projects that the minister announced last week — as we heard in Question Period earlier today — leave quite a bit to be desired. As the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin mentioned during Question Period, we're proud of the contractors in the Yukon who do work on roofing projects. We're proud of those contractors who are in the cleaning and custodial industry. But again, we couldn't find in very quick research on the tender management system — I think we only found one Outside contractor of those four who bid, and it was on a roofing project, and that contractor was far and away the highest bidder. So it seems that these 40 percent — these four of 10 projects — that were chosen by the Liberals for inclusion here really didn't run the risk of being tendered Outside, unless the minister knows something that we don't. Again, these cleaning and roofing contracts normally go to Yukon companies. So again, it seems like 40 percent of the exemptions were wasted on projects that potentially won't go Outside.

When it comes to the other six projects that are listed as part of those exemptions — I guess one of the concerns that we've heard about is, how is the eligibility determined for those projects? Obviously one of the longer-term recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Panel was to come up with the definition of a Yukon business. We'll be interested to hear more from the minister on how he has defined "Yukon businesses" when it comes to these CFTA exemptions because, of the remaining six projects, we're, again, reaching out to contractors and hearing from contractors throughout the territory. There isn't a lot of information right now on them. I'm assuming they'll all be awarded here before the end of the month. My understanding

is that it's this fiscal year's batch of exemptions that are being let.

Again, \$4.4 million spent on them leaves \$5.6 million on the table as to what we could have done. One of the projects that we noticed — the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and I noticed — on the tender management system was a bundling of bridge rehabilitation work. It was nine bridges, I believe, that were bundled together. There were, I think, four, maybe five, bidders. One of them was local; all the others were from Outside, but one of the Outside companies was successful. So we saw that as an opportunity to perhaps structure that tender differently — maybe not nine total bridges — because it was over the \$1-million threshold. But if that contract had been structured differently — broken up a little bit — you could have developed some additional capacity in the in the local market by using that as one of the exemptions.

Looking at the transportation infrastructure portion of the five-year capital plan, there are six bridges listed here, alone. I know, historically, those are projects that have gone to Outside contractors — maybe not long-term historically, going back to years ago when Hector Lang built many of the bridges in and around the territory but, in recent history, those have gone Outside. So that is an opportunity I think that we missed out on to build some capacity in the local contracting community by using those in one big nine-bridge batch, rather than breaking them up and allowing some of the other contractors to put some locals to work with respect to those projects. Hopefully the minister will take that advice when similar projects come out again.

Mr. Speaker, last week, we talked about the gateway project. Again, I'm interested in that \$600,000 that the Premier announced in his supplementary budget last fall to set up a project office. As I mentioned in Question Period on Thursday, it doesn't seem like this project has advanced very far from where it was pre-election, where there were discussions and negotiations with First Nations. At the time, of course, we told the federal government and we agreed that these projects wouldn't proceed without the support and without signed agreements with affected First Nations, and it just doesn't seem like it has advanced very far — if we are not getting any shovels in the ground this year — especially when there was so much fanfare around an announcement with the Prime Minister last August — or into September.

We talked earlier today, both my colleague from Lake Laberge and the Third Party, about these federal infrastructure dollars that are being deferred. I'm hoping that, whether it is the Dempster fibre optics or transmission lines, particular the Stewart-to-Keno one, which is YESAB-approved and engineered and I believe has the support of the Na Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation — why that one isn't being advanced more vigorously or why we haven't heard from the federal government with respect to support for a project like that.

I'm just going to wrap up on a couple of other comments — and I heard it mentioned earlier today that the Vimy Project — when I saw representatives of that organization in the gallery last Thursday, I was expecting positive news during the Premier's budget speech respecting that particular

project, but unfortunately we didn't get any, so we will look to get a sense for where the government stands on the Vimy Project.

One of the other things that I think would be helpful for us — and again, my apologies if it is included in the budget documents — would be a community-by-community breakdown of the capital and the maintenance projects that the government is undertaking. It gives us a better opportunity to talk to our constituents about potential work within the different communities and what is going to be taking place or where they can expect delays, whether it is roadwork or otherwise. I am hoping that if it is not included in here, we can get a detailed community and project breakdown of the capital expenditures that the government is going to be undertaking this year.

I thank the House for the opportunity to respond to the Premier's budget. The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin certainly articulated many of our concerns with respect to the trajectory and some of the lapses that we have seen going into this year on the capital side. We will look forward to holding the government to account in the coming weeks and having good fulsome discussions on departmental expenditures and policy items as we go forward.

Again, a big thank you to my constituents in Copperbelt South for their continued support and advice on a variety of issues.

Mr. Hutton: It is a true honour and a privilege to rise today as the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun. I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you and mahsi' cho to all of the constituents from Keno City, Mayo, Stewart Crossing, Pelly Crossing and Carmacks. Without their support I would not be here and have this opportunity to speak today.

It has become apparent to all Yukoners that the Government of Yukon's finances were on an unsustainable path. This budget will take the first steps down a more sustainable path for Yukon's future by providing a long-term capital plan. This will see consistent spending over the course of the plan, allowing industry to prepare and thereby maximize economic opportunities. This provides some much-needed certainty for the construction sector to be able to see which projects are coming in future years. This approach will also help alleviate the boom-and-bust scenarios of past years as projects were rolled out annually with no plans for what was coming in future years. This first plan is a living document to allow for improvements and refinements over the duration of this five-year period.

I would like to say a big thank you to all of the staff in the Department of Finance for their hard work on this file. Costs in the territory are currently on a steady upward trend that must be reversed to ensure Yukon's financial sustainability for the future. The Yukon Financial Advisory Panel provided many options for us to consider to move us toward this goal. At this time, our government has committed to moving forward on three key recommendations. First, we will be conducting a comprehensive review of Health and Social Services as this program alone accounts for almost one-third

of total government spending. Second, Yukoners have been clear in expressing their desire for a more efficient and effective delivery of public service to Yukoners. Third, our government will also be seeking strategic partnerships with others to look for new and innovative ways to benefit Yukoners. Our ministers have made over 100 visits to the communities, which I believe is an unprecedented level of engagement for the communities. This collaboration is another example of our government staying true to its commitment that all communities matter. This two-way communication is vital going forward to truly identify the needs and priorities that will best benefit our communities.

Our government's continuing collaboration with our Yukon First Nations has helped us to make a major shift in the way conversations are being conducted. This approach of respectful government-to-government discussions has helped us enter a new era of working together and will ensure that all Yukoners benefit as this relationship matures and more meaningful partnership opportunities are realized going forward.

These renewed relationships with First Nations have already shown great promise and great potential as we see the Yukon government, First Nation governments and the mining industry sit at the same table to work out potential problems and find solutions together to move projects forward. These projects moving forward in a timely manner benefits everyone, as time is money and shorter time frames are good for everyone involved.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that this is a budget for all Yukoners. With this budget, we have started on a course toward a more sustainable future for Yukon's finances. A full and fair accounting of all costs accruing to this government for future operation and maintenance burdens is included in this budget. This will ensure Yukoners have a clear picture of the fiscal pressures our government is facing as we go forward.

We have heard much from Yukoners that has helped and will continue to help us as we face future challenges. We look forward to continuing these collaborative efforts and I truly believe that the more engaged Yukoners are in our government processes, the more the Yukon benefits.

This diversity of views is one of the things that make our Yukon such a great place to live. All Yukoners can and should be involved in the work of making the Yukon not only the best place in Canada to live, but the best place to live on the planet. With our vast wilderness, plethora of natural resources, clean air, fresh water, abundant wildlife, coupled with the fantastic human resources we have available to us, our future is bright if we do this right.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi' cho.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today as the MLA and Member for Porter Creek North on behalf of my constituents to respond to the 2018-19 budget. I would like to begin by thanking my constituents in the riding of Porter Creek North for placing their trust in me to represent them in the Legislative Assembly.

I have been actively working on a number of issues that have been brought to my attention. With each phone call or meeting that I have the good fortune to attend, I get to know more people within the riding. I look forward to helping them in this session and encourage you to introduce yourselves when you see me out and around town.

I would like all my constituents to know that we, as the Official Opposition, do hear you and we do take your concerns seriously. We will continue to work for you and to help your voice be raised with this government. My door is always open, and if you have something you aren't sure about or just want to chat about a constituency issue or something that I would handle in my critic's role, please let me know.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the electoral district of Porter Creek North is as diverse as it is large. Our current southern border begins at the north side of 12th Avenue and the eastern boundary bisects Porter Creek neighbourhoods at Holly and at Sycamore. It extends north of Crestview and all the way past Scout Lake to the west.

It is home to two mobile parks, single homes, apartments, new residential areas, Jack Hulland School, two industrial business areas, small businesses and miles of trails and greenspace.

The neighbourhoods in my riding straddle socio-economic divides and contain both opportunities and vulnerabilities. There are successful private businesses and services that contribute to a thriving neighbourhood. There is a gentle balance of cultures and religions that have lived harmoniously for decades. However, the area has undergone densification and growth over the years and I am excited to see its future and potential.

I would like to speak today on a number of initiatives this government chose to implement this fiscal year in the 2017-18 budget. There are initiatives that I would like to thank the current government for including, but there are also some criticisms that I have and will share.

We can all agree that allocating funds throughout this big territory is no easy feat. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Minister of Finance's budget speech delivering the budget, I see this government's priorities throughout the budget and can appreciate the wish that this government has to achieve its goals easily, but in the real world it is impossible to please everyone. However, I am sure there are a number of select groups that will be very pleased with what is contained in these pages.

It states that this government would like to support a people-centred approach to wellness. I have yet to see what this means and how it is going to be achieved, but I support the notion. I believe the strong government-to-government relationship with First Nations does foster reconciliation. I believe in the importance for government to make strategic investments to benefit our communities.

I think this government has come a long way to achieve these goals while ensuring the needs of all Yukoners are taken into consideration. However, governing is a balancing act. Budgeting is a balancing act. It's important to remember that.

Strategic investment is a good thing, but these investments must come with communication and consultation. This government has proven to be very open and communicative with some, but strategically quiet with others. This is not a good quality for a responsible government. Transparency is touted in the budget once again, but this government has not done much to show Yukoners that they are transparent and open.

I think back to the 2017-18 budget and the promises that were never carried through by this government and I can't help but wonder which of the promises in this budget will be put on hold.

Today, for all the things they did promise, I will respectfully ask them to follow through on those promises. I understand that there are situations where government planning does not involve conversations or input, but more needs to be done. You are the government of the day now and you should engage and consult as your government promised, especially with such a large budget to work with. Every decision made has the potential to affect individuals, their families and their livelihood. Recent events surrounding a government decision to place a group home in the middle of Porter Creek has led me to form new relationships with many constituents.

From these conversations, I have gathered a key message for the government: planning major projects with no communication with area residents is a bad idea. It is not the path to responsible government. Acting now and then asking for forgiveness later is not how good decisions should be made. We have been told the process is being followed, but we know that if it wasn't for the moccasin telegraph, this would have probably flown under the radar and everybody would have woken up one morning to a rezoned property and major renovations taking place.

The main focus here — and the facts show the secrecy behind the purchase is paramount. One fact we do know is that there are two group homes in the downtown area that are old and they do need replacing. Were there other avenues that could have been considered to use the current lots on which these two older trailer units are situated?

At this point I would also — as my colleague thanked his community association, I would like to thank the Porter Creek Community Association for their good work on behalf of all Porter Creek residents.

I too am happy to see the budget highlights of \$442,000 allocated for the creation of the RCMP unit to specifically handle unsolved homicide investigations, as two of these unsolved homicides occurred within my riding. I'm glad to hear that more intensive work will be done on these ongoing investigations and I am sure the RCMP are very happy as well.

I have had the pleasure of attending a number of school council meetings at Jack Hulland Elementary School, Elijah Smith and Porter Creek Secondary throughout the course of the last year. As the Jack Hulland School resides in my riding, I will use them as an example in my response today. All of these schools have truly dedicated and well-run school

councils. As the former Education critic for the Official Opposition, I would attend meetings with a dual purpose — as MLA and messenger and advocate for the school council to ensure their concerns were being heard by the minister. I brought forward a very serious concern to the minister regarding safety concerns in the school's pick-up and drop-off areas. I have been met with the same reply as the school council: "We are working on it; we are looking into it."

It is unfortunate that there is nothing in this budget to reflect that work is in fact being done at all on this issue. It is unfortunate because I know very well that Jack Hulland is not the only school council to raise this issue, and I am not the only MLA to convey concern. I am concerned that among all of the lines of the budget and with the extra money bestowed on Yukon from Canada, there was not a budget line at least promising an assessment of school parking drop-off and pick-up areas. I want to convey my disappointment here today well before an accident occurs.

My new role as Community Services critic will bring me into contact with members of all communities within Yukon. I believe the issues facing a smaller community versus the capital are very different. One size does not fit all when it comes to waste management and building matters. The impact of government on our lives is huge and we cannot move without some permit or paper that says we can or we cannot. Now I know that this has evolved throughout the years as incidents happen and someone creates a new rule for safety for other practical or impractical reasons. It is and has become unwieldy in many cases and perhaps another look at red tape should be attempted. As the Premier said in his speech, the departments are all looking for ways to tighten their belts. Perhaps at the same time, they can review and tighten the regulation and red tape that Yukoners are finding daunting.

I will have a number of questions for the Minister of Community Services when we get into departmental debate. For the most part, many of the increases and decreases were explained at the budget briefing that I attended this morning with Community Services officials. I would like to thank all department officials for the work that they have put in in helping us.

I am also happy to see more funding for sport, and I would like to convey my belief in the importance of physical literacy. I believe that any chance this government has to invest in sport programming will help our children and keep them interested in becoming and being active to the benefit of every community.

I also serve as the official critic for Tourism and Culture, and I will have questions for the minister on a variety of topics and will hopefully be able to glean some information from her on such things that she spoke about today — the Yukon tourism development strategy — and how she thinks this new public engagement process will benefit our territory and tourism in general.

I am also critic for Yukon Housing Corporation and will have many questions on that as time unfolds. I look forward to the breakdown of the many housing projects that have been

written about on the graphs in the budget. Rest assured more questions will be coming.

I will leave it there for comments on good departmental spending as it pertains to my roles as critic. I will have a number of questions for the minister of each department, as I mentioned previously.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond today and I look forward to hearing from each member going forward and to getting into departmental debate, where I hope maybe we will get some answers from the other side of the House.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like to begin by recognizing the citizens of Whitehorse West and thanking them for their support. It is an honour to represent their interests in this House. It's great speaking with the people in the neighbourhood the other day. As always, they were very gracious with their time and I enjoyed hearing their thoughts about the territory. I look forward to more conversations like that in the coming weeks and months.

I also want to thank all the civil servants who worked so very hard on this budget. Pulling so many disparate threads together into a tapestry so deftly takes an enormous amount of work. Despite the protestations of the opposition, I believe they did a great job.

A few months ago, I found myself in the basement of the Whitehorse International Airport. Getting down there was an ordeal.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Speaker (Mr. Hutton): Mr. Cathers, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe the Minister of Highways and Public Works is in contravention of Standing Order 19(g) by imputing unavowed motives to another member, specifically in suggesting that members of this side have been critical of civil servants, when our only criticisms have been toward the government.

I would urge you to have him withdraw that statement and correct the record.

Deputy Speaker: Mr. Streicker, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What I heard my colleague state was, despite protestations of the opposition, he believes that public servants did a great job. I don't believe he is imputing unavowed motives to another member. I think he's talking about words that he has heard from the members of the opposition.

Deputy Speaker's ruling

Deputy Speaker: On the point of order, I will consider this to be a dispute among members.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A few months ago, I found myself in the basement of the Whitehorse International Airport — the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, to be precise — and getting

down there was an ordeal. I filled out forms; there were locked doors and security passes issued to get through the barriers. Through to what? Well, that is what was so interesting. I found myself in what I remember was a cramped warren of steel and concrete filled with a clattering contraption that resembled a Rube Goldberg-style mousetrap. Its steampunk-like wheezing mass of belts, gears and rollers ferries our luggage up to the mechanical turnstiles upstairs.

By the time I got beyond the locked doors into the basement, I expected more. Indeed, there should have been something more, Mr. Speaker. A little bit more modern and robust. Staff at the airport told me that the contraption was as fragile as it looked. They were worried that it might break down. Stuff like this never breaks down when it is idle. No, things like this break at wholly inopportune times, because machines like this only break at bad times. They only break when they are working, when they are going full bore, inconveniencing 300 passengers from Germany or Vancouver at midnight — the worst time possible.

Recent airport renovations fixed and burnished the stuff people see every day, but improvements to this ancient-looking contraption beneath the airport, behind locked doors and security guards, well beyond the public's view, had been cut from previous budgets. The important stuff hidden in the basement was ignored.

There was a facade of improvement at the airport, but the job was only half done. As the Premier has noted, the budget for 2018 is not just about spending. It is about finishing things left unfinished. It is about getting important stuff done. It is about getting the public's money's worth. It is about getting money into Yukoners' hands. It is about efficiency. It is about doing more with less. It is about modernization. It is about resetting the Yukon's direction and doing things right. It is about this territory's future — what we aspire to be.

The work we will do in this House over the next couple of months will manifest itself throughout Yukon — in communities, in First Nations, and at kitchen tables across this great territory. It will create jobs; it will change and improve lives. At the very least, it will ensure we can collect our bags from the airport relatively quickly at the end of the evening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's discuss our vision for the territory. Let's talk about hard-working Yukoners, about strong communities, about our beautiful environment, and about our resource wealth and our unparalleled quality of life under the midnight sun.

In Riverdale, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a new school. The rebuild of F.H. Collins was begun in 2011 and was supposed to take two years. We are finishing the job seven years after the good people on the Opposition benches started work. We were going to build a track and field facility at the site of the school — a proper track. Residents can take solace in the fact that the track will be proper, with regulation length and shape.

We are also starting work on the Marwell tar pits. Yukon government received federal funding for this job in 2010. It banked \$4.6 million from Ottawa, which had the effect of bolstering the territory's financial picture but, for reasons I

will leave to the members opposite to explain, no work was ever done. Now the bill is due. This government believes in paying our debts and doing what we said we would do. We will clear the ledger and do the necessary work on Marwell that has been pending for eight years.

The Erik Nielsen International Airport is the most important portal in the territory. There is no land available for commercial leases. There hasn't been since 2014 when a double whammy of legislative changes to the *Financial Administration Act* and *Land Titles Act* stripped the government of the ability to strike commercial leases at the airport. It is a baffling situation. It had the tangible effect of severely hobbling our aviation industry and was executed without any consultation. We're untangling this four-year-old Gordian knot. This year, we are spending \$1.3 million to have lease lots available at the airport, greatly benefiting the aviation industry.

We're also spending another \$5.5 million doing important foundational work at the airport such as relocating the landing system, improving the taxiways and runway lighting, paving, and replacing our aged skyway and baggage handling system. The investments will improve the efficiency of this essential piece of transportation infrastructure for citizens and industry. It will improve safety and lessen the threat of disruption of services to the travelling public.

We're also finishing the Whistle Bend extended care facility. This critical piece of health infrastructure will be finished in a few months. It is one of the few things we're doing for the aged in this territory. It is a fairly significant commitment and, yes, we have budgeted to cover the massive cost of operating the facility into the future.

Our community airfields are a critical piece of our transportation network. They drive our rural economy and provide a safety net for aircraft facing bad weather. They are essential for emergency health care, for policing, for justice, firefighting and for industry — for people just getting home. This year we're investing almost \$7 million to modernize and improve these important rural transportation portals.

In the world of information technology, we are making great strides in modernizing our service delivery to citizens. This year we will be launching an open data repository, offering more online services to the public, and building redundant fibre to avoid Internet outages that hobble our IT industry and cost our service industry dearly in lost opportunity sales.

This budget isn't just about spending money. It's about diversifying and building the territory's economy. Even in the twilight of the 2017-18 fiscal year, the great employees of Highways and Public Works, in concert with their colleagues across government, managed to do something not yet seen in Canada. They employ the Yukon's exceptions under the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*.

In just seven months, they worked with senior management across government on criteria and invited qualified Yukon companies to bid on the jobs. This year, that process will guarantee that more than \$4 million of the government's money will stay in the Yukon.

In this new budget, we will review the process and what we accomplished and then make it better. We will use these exceptions on specific jobs of up to \$1 million in value and, in the next fiscal year, the palette will be more vibrant. We will have a full year's worth of contracts to review. With that, we will be able to target industries and communities that require a bulwark against Outside competition, yet we will hold competitions that ensure Yukon taxpayers get value for money.

There is also much we're doing to build the economy that doesn't require government money. We are rebuilding relationships with the territory's First Nation communities. This is having a tremendous effect on the whole territory — smoothing the way to better planning, expanding business opportunities for everyone, and bringing new certainty to the Yukon as a place to live, work and explore. All of this doesn't happen magically. It doesn't happen by accident. It takes a plan. It requires a systematic approach to the challenges we face. It takes some thought, some rigour, some courage. This is not stuff for the timid.

This year, we delivered on several promises. We launched a five-year capital plan. With it, Yukoners have a road map showing where we're headed. That is not to say there won't be any detours or course corrections. As with any map, sometimes you find a quicker path or a flood bars a route that you thought was open. This plan is organic and it will be tweaked, but it shows our direction and allows the citizens and industry to look to the future and make appropriate preparations.

There is good reason why we promised and delivered on a five-year capital plan — because over the past seven years, government delivery on its spending practices was erratic and wide of the mark. Contractors heard promises of \$231 million in capital spending in 2012. They got \$40 million less than that — \$192 million — and the same thing in 2013 — a \$90-million lapse — enormous, staggering. Then in 2014, it happened again — \$100 million in capital spending was lapsed. \$293 million was promised, projected — a \$192-million delivery — wide of the mark, erratic. The business community was frustrated by this erratic budgeting — the over-promising and under-delivering. This is not a way to run a government. It is just one of the reasons why we vowed to do better. This year, we did do better. The hard work of the civil servants — all that work that they put into last year's budget — has paid dividends. The lapse this year will be better than in any other year in recent memory. It's not perfect, but it's better and it's a step in the right direction toward lapsing less money.

This year, we have made good on our promise to deliver a five-year capital plan. We have set the capital budget at a fair and achievable \$280 million. The opposition leader characterizes this as a loss. It is not. It is about 20 percent more than the members opposite ever spent — 20 percent more than has ever been spent. The most that a government has ever spent was \$247 million in capital, so this budget target — if we are able to get it all out the door — represents a high-water mark, creates more jobs than ever — not less.

It is reasonable in keeping it stable — in keeping this funding stable — it will help planning into the future. It will be less erratic. The capital plan and the long-term budget will help take some of the wild swings out of the capital budget that we have seen in the past. It represents good governance. It represents a promise delivered. Of course, the confusion on the members opposite's bench is understandable. There is clear discord on the opposition bench about budgeting and capital spending. Publicly the opposition leader criticizes us for cuts to the capital budget. Publicly the Member for Lake Laberge urges us to cut the capital budget to balance the books. Publicly the opposition leader urges us to cut more to eliminate the deficit. It is all very erratic and confusing and it sheds some light on a lot of things. We have set a course and we are staying that course. We are delivering on our promises.

We also delivered on \$46 million of seasonably dependent contracts. With this, as the Premier noted in his address, we are putting out contracts at the right time, not just in time. Again, this is a vast improvement over the previous practices. Over the last six years, about 18 seasonably dependent contracts were posted before April 1. Most were posted later. For the first time, this government will get between 40 and 50 tenders posted before April 1. We will get 40 to 50 contracts out the door, which is almost a three-fold increase over previous years. This gets the contracts out of the way long before the ground has to be broken. In both cases — planning and getting contracts issued — we will access and improve our processes in the future to better serve our citizens and businesses.

In the end, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget is about hard-working Yukoners getting more opportunities. It is about finishing jobs long left hanging. It is about resetting the territory's direction and doing things right. It is about our future and about what we aspire to be — modern, culturally diverse and inclusive. It is about building strong, healthy communities. It is about maintaining a beautiful environment and doing savvy resource development responsibly so we all benefit from the region's wealth. In short, it is about living great lives in a great place and keeping it that way. The details of juggling that life involve actions both big and small, from building relationships based on trust to caring for our elderly to ensuring your bags are ready after you leave the plane in the evening. This budget represents our first strides in that important work.

Mr. Istchenko: It is pleasure to rise here today for the first time in this Spring Sitting of the Legislative Assembly — no, that is wrong. I did a tribute today, so this is number two — and to rise as the MLA for the great riding of Kluane. I first want to thank my family and friends for their support, trust and, often, guidance, and to the constituents of Kluane for their support. Since the Fall Legislative Sitting, I have been busy in the riding meeting with constituents, listening to concerns and trying to help find solutions. The riding of Kluane is very large and diverse. It starts at the Takhini River bridge and goes all the way to Beaver Creek and down the Haines Road to Blanchard. I have said this in the House

before, but I like to reiterate this: We have a municipality; we have three First Nations; we have unincorporated communities, rural subdivisions and constituents scattered throughout the hinterland.

This reminds me of a time when I had to go see a constituent about an issue he was having. I would like to put this into perspective for this House and for some of the MLAs who live in Whitehorse whose ridings aren't rural.

I received a call while travelling up the north highway. A constituent wanted to chat with me. I said "I'm headed your way, can we meet?" "Pick a time, pick a place," I said. "I'm on my way." He said, "Well, when you drive past the Koidern River, pull into the boat launch and you'll see a black pickup. Open the hood, and by the battery there's a radio in a Ziploc bag. Turn it on, go to channel 5 and call me. I'll send someone down to get you."

To my surprise after calling, 10 minutes later, around the corner comes a jet boat to pick me up. We travelled up the river in beautiful Kluane country to the family hunting camp, where he and his family were there. We had a great meeting. We talked about the issue he had. I gave them some advice and took some advice; we shared some stories.

Rural Yukon is different, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Yukon, and what the world thinks of the Yukon, is based on a rural Yukon lifestyle, and I will fight for those values in this House from day to day, every day. I have been hearing loud and clear from my constituents that they are not being heard. They are being told and I believe this government campaigned on "be heard".

They have concerns with how the new Liberal legislation on marijuana will play out in our communities, especially for our youth. How much more will things cost with the looming carbon tax the Liberals signed on to? These are among many other things.

I just want to speak a little bit as I look through the budget, the five-year capital plan. I just got it so it's going to take awhile to soak it all in, find a spot for it up here and pass it on to the riding. So on behalf of the riding, I'll highlight a few things here today.

One of the first things said in the new five-year capital plan benefits Yukoners by creating awareness of capital plans among Yukoners, municipalities, First Nation governments and private sector. I know I've heard from the members opposite that they have met over a hundred times — constituents in my riding haven't been met with yet. I'll highlight some of that.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Istchenko: Some of them have, but there's many who haven't. Some of the communities have been driven through.

When we look at the five-year capital plan, one of the first things I saw in there was the Kluane Lake School. I was so happy to see that, because that's something I worked on as an MLA in the previous government with the local First Nations and the community. One of the concerns is that there hasn't been follow-up consultation and conversations with what's going to happen to the existing infrastructure. What

will happen with the existing infrastructure, the existing school there? They're waiting to have a meeting to have that conversation.

I'm glad to see it, because I was the Minister of Highways and Public Works, and I was so glad to see they're moving forward with the Carmacks grader station. I worked for Highways and Public Works and I know what it's like to work, and I have been to every single one of those grader stations. When I look in the five-year capital plan, I just see the Carmacks grader station. I have the Destruction Bay grader station, which is in need of — basically it needs to be replaced.

I am also happy to see — I know that the previous Member for Vuntut Gwitchin had fought hard for a health centre and that it is moving forward, and I see a scalable generic health centre design here in the budget, but I'm curious to see next steps moving forward with other health centres in the riding of Kluane, such as Destruction Bay. When it comes to that, if this government is looking to move the health centre, what will happen with the existing health centre that we have now?

Another thing that is, of course, near and dear to my heart when I looked through the budget was Alaska Highway restoration and permafrost remediation — that is the Shakwak agreement. I see it is coloured, and I'm not sure what all the colours mean. I'm still trying to figure that out, because I was told they don't correlate with the other colours up here, and I don't see dollars assigned to any of this either — but when it comes to Shakwak, I just see a colour sign in 2018-19, so it makes me wonder about 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 as we move forward in the five-year capital plan. We know that Shakwak — and I haven't heard a peep. I have been in contact with the good people in Alaska legislature, sending letters, but things don't look too promising. I haven't seen press releases from this government here today fighting for Shakwak, fighting for the Kluane riding, and I will be looking forward to getting a bit more of an update.

I also looked at airports. The Minister of Highways and Public Works discussed airports and talked about how important they are. I will tell you that airports are so important. I have an airport at Silver City that has been asking for work to be done to it, some dust suppression put on there, and I haven't divulged down into it, but I will be looking forward to having that conversation with the minister, having the critic during that role ask that question. It is important as it is a very, very busy airport — there is the Arctic Institute down there — I know there is a dust study happening, there has been tons of permafrost and glacial work done out of that for years, along with many animals studied.

I will speak a little bit about waste-water upgrades. When I look through the five-year capital plan, I do see water, sewer and road upgrades — Haines Junction, 2018-19 and 2019-20 — but I believe when the previous government met with AYC and met with the municipalities, it was to be a five- to seven-year plan with the work that needed to be done. I'm curious to see — but then above it, I see water and waste-water upgrades, phase 3, Haines Junction and Champagne and

Aishihik First Nations, and I see that work continuing on through. I'm hoping that this is the same, but I don't really understand it and there will be more questions to follow.

It was brought up earlier in the House today about red tape — from one of my fellow colleagues. I fundamentally believe that is probably one of the bigger issues heard on the doorstep from just about everyone, whether it is a small business person, whether it is a large business person, whether it is somebody going to a government office to fill out a piece of paper so they can change something or do something. I see in this budget the IT systems development projects, corporate budgeting systems, corporate financial system modernization, e-services, web publishing, land titles modernization, motor vehicles licensing and registration, open data repository, professional licensing and regulatory affair — and I sure hope that the direction is to look at some of the issues when it comes to the red tape.

I have been in contact with the Community Services minister about an issue with lotteries. It is sort of semi-solved but, fundamentally, you have to go back and you have to consult and talk — physically be there to talk to those organizations. You can't be creating things out of an office in Whitehorse for rural Yukon. It just doesn't work.

Those are just some of the conversations I will have over this Sitting, once I get into the budget, to see what happens. This year, I wrote a letter to the Minister of Highways and Public Works a few times about the conditions of the road and the lack of sand in the yard and coffee-talk shop — and you hear it all the time that there wasn't the same amount of sand ordered. So we're going to divvy down into some of that stuff and make sure that there is an O&M budget. I see that we're a growing government again here, but let's hope that there is an O&M budget for them so they have something to do.

The diverse fibre line to provide sustainable, uninterrupted fibre optic service throughout the territory — I'm confused, as I think my colleagues on this side are. Is there money for this? Who's paying for it? What does it look like? I think that is so important to the Yukon, especially important to rural Yukon, when you talk about Internet services in rural Yukon. It is so important, because they need to access what I spoke about earlier — all that e-services stuff that the government is looking at doing and, if they need to be on the Internet to try and get things done, sometimes there is not even a possibility to fill out a piece of paper. They just send you to the Internet. In rural Yukon, some of the service we have now is not that great. I sure hope this comes forward and I sure hope that the Premier has lobbied the federal government and has spoken to the federal government and the funding is in place.

Another one that was put in the five-year capital plan is the innovative renewable energy initiative for communities and First Nations to develop small local scale and heat-generating projects. That goes to comments earlier about the IPP and needing the IPP to be finished. We don't have an IPP, so without an independent power producer policy, there is no way anybody can sign. They can't come to an agreement.

During Roundup, or shortly after Roundup, I believe the Minister of Economic Development said that we are going to do a study on the cost of a powerline from the south. Well, that one has been done already. I know it put uncertainty on economic development in Yukon with the opportunity for power dams, with the opportunity for the private sector and development corporations to work together and put something out there, so they're not sure exactly — do we support this or do we not support this? I sure hope this government does.

Those are some of the questions I will have with responsibilities as critic. One of the ones that is near and dear to my heart — because it is one that I created when I was a Minister of Environment — was the Alsek moose recovery program. It's in its third year and I believe — again, coffee-shop talk, but I will have more questions on it — I'm hearing that it's going to be audited to see if it worked or didn't work. But I'm hearing that it will be audited by somebody independent who knows nothing about it and they're not going to talk to the local trappers and they're not going to talk to the local resource council and the First Nations, so I will have questions on that.

I just want to remind my constituents to contact me. I can tell you that I was disappointed that I couldn't keep my same — and I found this out and I'm sure some of my fellow colleagues on this side have been emailed to their original e-mail address and it didn't go anywhere, because we had to change to @yla.gov.yk.ca.

Again, for those who are listening out there, on my fliers and all the brochures and newsletters that I put out, my new contacts are on there. Please feel free to contact me at any time. They do at any time — trust me. It seems like there are many time zones in the riding of Kluane, because sometimes my phone rings at 3:00 a.m. But that is what I signed up for.

In conclusion, I believe one of the biggest reasons that I was elected to this Legislature a second time is from growing up in a small rural town. I owe my family and community — growing up — for their guidance, for many hard lessons learned — from my teachers, from the local RCMP, and community and volunteer members within the community who have guided me on my way.

I think, like the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin said — the Leader of the Official Opposition — this is a pretty lackluster budget. I see that with the growing government it will only get harder for rural Yukon to get things done — more rules and regulations. I see many broken campaign commitments and uncertainty for the residents of Kluane. I sure hope I am wrong, but I will fight for the residents of Kluane every day.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the 2018-19 Yukon government budget presented last Thursday in this House by the Premier. I rise for my second opportunity in this Legislative Assembly to speak to a budget, and it is my honour and privilege to do so.

The Yukon Liberals have said repeatedly during the election, as a government during all of our work and in this House, that we intend to work collaboratively with all members of this House to make the lives of Yukoners better.

Despite the fact that there was a lot of laughing today with respect to questions — and the disruptions, to that end — I thank the members of this House who have spoken and who will speak to this budget for their thoughtful comments and ideas.

The people of Riverdale South have sent me here to represent them. They are an amazing and rather unique group. It is an amazing and unique place to live and to call home. It is in the Yukon an established neighbourhood; yet it is very diverse. The people who live there are like Yukoners from any other community. There are lots of children, single parents, multi-generational and smaller families. There are elders, new Canadians, old-time Yukoners and there are newcomers. Every one of them will be touched by something in this budget. A large part of my job during the budgeting process was to represent their interests, their concerns, and to give them a voice in determining how government needs to work for them. I have promised and have been sent here by my constituents to work hard on their behalf. I am very proud of that commitment and their confidence in me, and I work hard every day to meet their expectations.

The preparation of this budget, like all of our work as a government, takes a one-government approach. Many of the issues we work on cross over more than one department, so we work together to avoid duplication, to share resources, to avoid isolated decisions that are not in the best interests of innovative solutions. We are breaking down silos and working as one team for all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, you have already heard that our spending priorities reflect our government's vision for Yukon — despite some comments today to the contrary — and continue to guide us in the 2018-19 budget. Our budget decisions support Yukon's priorities. They are a people-centred approach to wellness that will help Yukoners thrive. They are strategic investments to build healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities. They are strong government-to-government relations with First Nations that will foster reconciliation and, lastly, a diverse, growing economy to provide good jobs for Yukoners in an environmentally responsible way.

This budget builds capacity and plans for a prosperous future for all Yukoners while putting the government's finances on a more sustainable path. This budget is clearly influenced by the recommendations of the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel. Those recommendations were formulated with the extensive and valuable input from Yukoners. We've heard from several members today about their respect for that process. I say to you, then, that we therefore must trust it as well.

Many of the ideas from the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel will take time to thoroughly evaluate, but we have begun with three key initiatives now. We will conduct a comprehensive review of Health and Social Services program and service delivery — a key recommendation from the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel.

We will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of delivering programs and services to Yukoners, and we will embrace our maturity as a government and consider how our

government can stop doing work that elsewhere in Canada is done by the private sector.

Earlier today, we introduced our performance plan for the next four years. This plan identifies some of our accomplishments to date and the priority actions needed to fulfill our commitments to Yukoners.

It's disheartening, I would say, to listen to comment after comment from the opposition that indicates that not only have we not kept promises, but we haven't met any of the promises we've made, we haven't done any work, we haven't consulted with anyone. These are simply not the facts. Yukoners are telling us that. They're telling us that they are pleased with the work we've done. We are nowhere near the completion of any of that work, but this is a long-term evolution of the work. The work of government will never stop. We will never achieve every possible goal, but we will not stop trying.

We have set some ambitious goals for ourselves. It will take dedication and hard work to realize our priorities, along with the engagement and collaboration with other governments, communities, the non-governmental sector, First Nation governments and individual Yukoners and industry.

As you have heard, we will be measuring our progress on achieving the commitments that we make in this plan and publishing a report every year. I invite all Yukoners to share their views on how we are doing. We want to make sure we are making a tangible, positive difference in Yukoners' lives.

Mr. Speaker, I'll take a second to highlight two other particular items that are in the budget before I move on to some comments with respect to the departments for which I am responsible.

The first highlight that I would like to draw to the attention of members of this House is the \$4.6 million that is identified for the environmental cleanup of the Marwell tar pits. In June 2010, the governments of Canada and Yukon reached a financial agreement for the assessment and remediation of this site. Federal funding was received but previous governments in the Yukon did not act upon the obligation. This is certainly an odd practice and one we will not be continuing. Again, in the interest of transparency in public finance, it is time to account for that cost and get the work underway.

We've heard much about health care costs and how they are on the rise. The single-biggest item is a \$24-million commitment to operate the new Whistle Bend continuing care facility — a cost that was not built into the long-term projections in the past. It is simply not feasible how plans for a building cannot include what it will cost to run that building — particularly when it is a large increase in workers here in the territory. The days of building new facilities and not including the O&M into the future is another practice that we will not be continuing. I know Yukoners will support this.

I'm particularly pleased that the budget fulfills a number of commitments that we made to Yukoners during the 2016 election campaign — again, despite comments to the contrary today. These include our commitment to developing an annual list of seasonally dependent contracts and getting them out the

door by March 31. We have heard much about that today. We have delivered, with \$46 million ready for this year.

We committed to making the Yukon Now tourism marketing permanent, and we have delivered. This is a \$1.8-million annual commitment. Advancing the fibre optic redundancy project was another commitment, and we have delivered. We look forward to sharing more details, as the Premier said earlier — and this in the very near future. We committed to allocating — again, we've heard about this — up to \$30 million a year in energy retrofits. We are well on our way to that target, and over \$11 million is allocated this year. We are also negotiating with the Government of Canada on a substantial increase to this amount. We committed to expanding campground infrastructure. There is \$1 million to do that in this year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, our mandate letters continue to guide our work in departments. While the work continues on all of these initiatives, I would like to emphasize that the implementation of a new program or a decision about how government does things does not end the work. So a new program or a new plan certainly does not end the work. Funding for a new program or a new plan does not end the work.

Services to Yukoners are an evolving commitment and require evaluation and ongoing evolution. If it's not working properly, we need to change it. Our programs must be committed and defined, but they also must be nimble enough to be responsive to the needs of Yukoners.

Priorities from my mandate, where we have achieved those goals or made significant progress in the Department of Justice, include the announcement of a sexual assault response team, to work with community partners to improve services for victims of violence and sexual assault. There is \$215,000 in that for the initial work with respect to the SART — the sexual assault response team. We know that the response by the first person who a victim discloses to — particularly victims of sexualized violence — dramatically affects the trajectory of the situation and how a victim experiences the days, weeks and months to come, and ultimately how they recover and seek justice and peace. We must address this with a one-government approach so that, no matter where a victim turns, she or he finds comfort, empathy and meaningful assistance.

Mr. Speaker, we committed to a full review of legislation, policies and practices to ensure non-discrimination for the LGBTQ2S community. The first pieces of that puzzle will be introduced as a bill in this Sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

Despite criticism that we have not shown leadership, I have used a never-before section of the *Corrections Act* to direct an inspection of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre to learn what we do not know about how the programs and services can better serve and enhance correctional and therapeutic environments for individuals with disabilities, mental health and addiction problems.

We have improved access to justice and legal services and the protection of the public's interest by passing a new legal professions act — a priority of Yukoners that was ignored for some 14 years.

The Land Titles modernization project will be completed in this year — a mandate priority achieved. It is essential to note that, for the first time ever, our Land Titles Office will issue a certificate of title for Kwanlin Dün First Nation category A and category B settlement land as a result of a consent amendment to the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Self-Government Agreement*. We are working with other First Nations who may find this to be a useful option for some of their settlement land.

There is funding in this budget for the continuation of the Lynx project — a project that supports children who come into contact with the court system, be it as a witness or as a victim.

This budget also supports and provides additional funding for the Human Rights Commission and Yukon Legal Aid — two organizations that provide Yukoners with the highest of quality and professional services, often when they are most vulnerable.

Other investments include the Community Wellness Court and the Wellness Centre, which started as a pilot project back in 2007 — and a good one — and has been running on insecure funding for almost 10 years. I am very pleased to say that stable funding will now be provided for this extremely successful court, which has resulted in almost 70-percent reduction in recidivism rates for offenders who have gone through this program, helping those Yukoners to change their lives and reach their goals. While that is not a program that was started with respect to this government, we certainly see its success and will fund it going forward.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to my mandate in Education, it is a department that touches each and every Yukoner. Whether they have children in the school system, whether they work in government, whether they work in the private sector, whether they have grandchildren or nieces and nephews in the school system, it is clearly a department that touches us all.

Initiatives for the Department of Education will be to continue our work to implement the new student-centred Yukon school curriculum for kindergarten to grade 12. Kindergarten to grade 9 was implemented this year in the 2017-18 school year. Grade 10 will be introduced next year, followed by grades 11 and 12.

The work has been completed with respect to the functional and conceptual design for the planning of the new French first language high school. As you are well aware, there is \$3 million dedicated to that project in this budget. This project has been delayed somewhat by ground contamination and by the completion of an appropriate and acceptable design to the entire community. Careful planning with our partners takes time, but this work being done up front will save Yukoners money in the long run and aims to make this project successful for our entire community. As part of that initiative, we have promised to properly complete the F.H. Collins high school, remedying significant deficiencies that still exist. For some reason, the grounds work at the F.H. Collins campus was either not done at all or completed with serious problems. The completion of that work must be done as soon as possible, and we have dedicated funds in this

budget to that end. Those projects include an outdoor classroom, a basketball court, the sport programming building and space for that program and, of course, a track and field of proper dimensions and proper requirements for our community. You have heard about that from one of my colleagues already.

With respect to work going forward on schools, much has been left unanswered and undone. There has been poor maintenance and upkeep over the years. There are things that must be addressed with respect to schools throughout the territory. I have had an opportunity to partially answer a question with respect to that today and look forward to discussing it more through the concept of debating this budget, as well as questions from the opposition.

Going forward, it is critical, in my view, that the Department of Education is seen as a support for the schools in our communities; that we manage to integrate services, listen to our school communities, listen to our school councils, listen to our administrators and teachers and improve the system every day for every student. We have discussed publicly and otherwise the concepts of school as a community hub. We all know that to be true in our hearts. We have heard the Member for Copperbelt North discuss the importance of the school community in his neighbourhood with respect to his family and others, and we all feel similarly with respect to the schools to which we are attached, and we want those services to be the best possible.

I would now like to turn to some questions about the budget that were raised by the Official Opposition. Firstly, I would like to address cannabis. On October 18, 2017, this House debated a motion that urged the Government of Yukon to work with the Government of Canada to legalize cannabis use in the Yukon by the summer of 2018. It was an obvious opportunity for the Official Opposition to express their support for the private sector and that they should take the lead for cannabis sales here in the Yukon Territory. The lone Yukon Party member who spoke to that motion did not even mention it. Yet on the eve of this Spring Sitting after remaining silent on the topic for over 14 months, it is suddenly one of the local Yukon Party conservatives' top budget issues. On the topic of legalization, the Yukon Party has been pretty clear that they don't support it. All of the Yukon Party MLAs voted against legalization last October 18, with the exception of the MLA for Copperbelt South.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of who is allowed to sell doesn't really matter if your view is that it simply shouldn't be happening anyway. I will note for the record, given the Official Opposition's newfound interest in this topic, that the cannabis control and regulation act has been drafted to enable our government to consider and adopt a wide variety of options for the sale and distribution of cannabis. We did so, Mr. Speaker, because we undertook wide and diverse public engagement and listened to Yukoners and they told us they wanted options.

With respect to the capital budget, Mr. Speaker, we have outlined a \$280 million capital budget this year and going forward in the future. We have also gone back and looked at

the previous government and what they were actually able to get out the door, because this was an important factor in determining what that amount of money should be. It was certainly a big difference between what was promised in the spring under the Yukon Party and what was delivered over the course of the year on many, many occasions, certainly on every occasion in the last six years of their mandate.

In the spring, there were photographs and boasts about a record capital build, but the reality, Mr. Speaker, was the previous government never even came close to spending what was announced in a main budget. As an example — one year, 2014-15, the government didn't spend \$100 million of the announced capital projects. It is one thing to announce projects; it is another to actually get them started, the money spent, the money in the pockets of Yukoners and the benefit of those builds to the community of Yukon.

There were different occasions over those years — I have the figures; we don't need to necessarily refer to them — but over the years, there was an \$84-million lapse, there was a \$73-million lapse; there was a \$58.8-million lapse — the same pattern every year, Mr. Speaker.

For the year 2017-18, our first budget, we have reduced lapses to \$30 million due to the improvements in forecasting that we have initiated. We are trying to get the numbers to be realistic for the purposes of Yukoners and their knowledge about what capital builds mean, and in particular for the business community and for government.

This year, we hope to do even better, and we are starting with a realistic approach to what we believe the Government of Yukon has the capacity to actually get out the door. Over the term of the last government, the most it ever managed to spend, despite all of the big numbers at budget time, was \$238 million in 2015-16.

Mr. Speaker, with all the criticism over how the capital budget is too low, I believe Yukon contractors will see the benefits of our approach of actually getting what we announce out the door.

With respect to deficits, with regard to the small deficit this year, the main reason is obvious: the massive increase in spending required to open Whistle Bend. This year, it will be \$30 million in operation and maintenance, and this is not even a full year of operations, Mr. Speaker. This will be an ongoing cost, one not budgeted for by the previous government.

I will note again for the record that the most recent deficits in the Yukon were both under Yukon Party governments. The Yukon Party government ran deficits in both 2010 and 2011. In 2010, it was \$25 million; in 2011, it was \$6.6 million. It is clearly political that the message from the Yukon Party in response to this budget is again disingenuous. They are saying to the public that deficits under Liberals are bad; deficits under Conservatives are not really a problem.

With respect to the gateway project, again, a political response that is not in the best interest of Yukoners. The former government simply did not get the project done and are now critical of us not getting it done fast enough. To be clear, we secured the funding from Ottawa and we are having

discussions with First Nation governments and mining companies about how it will all unfold. The members opposite do not have good relationships and often took a "start building and talk to First Nations later" approach, which was clearly proven to be a failure — the Peel watershed and the Bill S-6 issues, just to name a few. We are doing it properly and Yukoners will see benefits from this project.

With respect to seasonally dependent projects, the interim Leader of the Official Opposition has also complained about the seasonally dependent projects commitment being fulfilled by our government. It is not enough, he says. I went back and looked at some of the previous Yukon Party budgets over the last 14 years and looked for comparables to see if there was any validity to this criticism. I did not find any. The Yukon Party didn't do much seasonally dependent contracting at all. So there is no validity at all to the criticism on this aspect of the budget.

We are getting about \$46 million out the door by March 31 — you have heard lots about that today — of this year and we are happy that we have been able to achieve that.

I have tried to cover the main concerns that the members opposite have raised and I know that my colleagues on this side of the House have addressed other things that have been raised by the Leader of the Third Party and by other speakers.

I have covered those main points that have been raised with respect to my portfolios and the comments I have made today. The criticisms are clear, but they are not supported by the facts. Our government will do what we said we would do with real measurable results for Yukoners and, as the Leader of the Third Party so aptly says on many an occasion, actions speak louder than words. We agree. Thank you for this opportunity.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take some time today to thank the people of the Watson Lake riding for their continued support in granting me the privilege of representing them in this Yukon Legislature. It is an honour. I thank all those residents who take the time to have discussions with me wherever we are. Some of the best discussions happen at Watson Lake Foods.

I want to thank the mayor and council for all their hard work on behalf of the citizens of Watson Lake and for working with me to advance those issues that are of importance to Watson Lake.

As we have heard, this budget is the largest in Yukon's history, and I look forward to listening and participating as we debate the many government departments and the government's spending priorities. It will certainly be interesting to match up the government's public statements with seemingly conflicting information contained in this budget.

As I have said before, this new budget format makes it nearly impossible to find where the money is being spent. A case in point is the five-year capital plan. There are projects underway that are not contained in the capital plan, but some are, and that is just weird. Identified future projects for municipalities are not in the five-year plan. Does this mean

that they have been denied? Municipalities do not know. I hope we can get the information from the ministers when we get on to departmental debate. I have responded to many budgets and I, like many Yukoners, really enjoy budget day. It is an opportunity for us Yukoners to find out what is in that budget for us and what is in it for our municipalities. That is of great interest to a lot of folks in the territory. The documents themselves do not tell us that. I am hoping that through debate we will get the information that we need as Yukoners to determine for ourselves how well we are being served and not have to rely on government telling us how well we are being served.

Ms. White: I thank my colleagues for the opportunity to respond to the second budget put forward by the Liberal government. There is a certain amount of disappointment that I have, and it is not about the budget. It is actually about how we are doing business again in the Legislative Assembly because we have a lot of “they said, they said” happening again. We have the new government again pointing out what was not done by the Yukon Party government and we have the Yukon Party saying, “Well, you are not doing this now.” I really thought that when the Public Accounts came forward last year — and it did say that this government was starting with a deficit — we would close that chapter and move forward. My greatest hope was that this was the first budget where we were going to see a progressive budget tabled by this Liberal government.

In all the time I sat when the Yukon Party was in government, I have to say that I never agreed with the budgets, but there were things in them — there were times when people who were coming in the gallery would react. When I sat through the reading of the budget last week, what I was struck by was the kind of neutrality of it. There were things like the innovation hub that was announced, but it was my understanding that CanNor was prepared to announce that funding months ago, but waited so the Liberal Party government could announce it. There is the line item that talks about \$6 million in affordable housing, and I believe that is going to be the Challenge project.

I don't disagree with the Challenge project, but when we have a community — and when I say “community”, we have a territory — that is maybe not quite the crunch of 2011, but we're facing a lack of accessible and affordable housing. There was the thought that at one point in time with the building of new houses there would be a trickle down in the housing economy that people would be able to upgrade or there would be more movement. One thing that I think was missing in the budget was any kind of acknowledgement of the Vimy project because we have seniors who live in houses that are bigger than they want to be in, that would be great for a family, but these seniors don't qualify for social housing because they don't require the services of social housing. What they require is a place where they have access, so you're removing the barrier of stairs and you're removing the barriers that hinder people from being able to age in place.

Going through the budget, looking for things — it would have been amazing to have an announcement on home care. If we wanted to talk about progressive health care, extending home care to be 24/7, 365 would have been an indication for that. We know that there are seniors right now in the hospital, who, with many home care supports, so more than a daily visit — multiple times a day — would be able to be at home. So to me that would be progressive health care.

If we want to talk about progressive health care, we would talk about — you know, it's great to hear that there are going to be 10 new beds again in Thomson Centre, which was originally designed for continuing care, but had the original purpose of being palliative care. If we wanted to talk about progressive health care, we would talk about palliative care next to the hospital. We would talk about the ability to die with dignity in the place that health care professionals have said would be the best location. Palliative care without access to a pharmacy up at Whistle Bend place — it's not the answer. It's not the answer, especially when people's needs can change on the minute, on the hour, regularly. Having to go down to the pharmacy to get those changing prescriptions to make people more comfortable — well, that doesn't sound ideal to me.

I have had the opportunity — it's a weird one, but I would say that it was a real blessing to be able to participate with someone as they accessed assisted dying and to see the care and to see that, but to know that this is something that needs to be closer to the hospital as opposed to another part of town. If we're looking toward progressive visions for health care — well, those are palliative care and palliative care next to the hospital are one, but the biggest one I would say would be access to home care and broader access to home care.

On Thursday, when we were sitting here, we could look up into the gallery and know that there were seniors here who have been working for years on the Vimy housing project. These are seniors who are able and prepared to pay for services, but what they need is the access to the funding to secure the loan that they will pay off. They are not looking for the money to build the project; they are looking for a piece of land and the guarantee that they will have the ability to borrow — the guarantee so they can borrow the money so they can build their project. It's interesting to note that this wasn't included.

Knowing that the members across spent a lot of time looking at the Budget Address before it was read, they might have missed why we are concerned about the reflections to our aging population, because there are two mentions in the Budget Address — one is on page 4 — and this is a quote: “These costs are presently on a steady upward trend that we must bring down to align more closely with the government's ability to pay. This upward trajectory is due to an aging population and an increased demand for public services.” Then, again, we mention the aging population in the conclusion: “There are changes, such as an aging population, on our horizon.” I don't disagree that our population is changing and that we have aging, but I would hesitate to say that the people who built and designed our facilities, who

wrote our legislation, who put policies in place, who pay taxes, who volunteer and who are vibrant members of the community should ever be referred to twice in a budget — whether it was intended to or not — as sounding like a burden.

Our population is changing. When I was a child, people didn't retire in Yukon. You went down to the Okanagan. What a glorious thing it is that people want live here, that they want to die in the territory — that they are prepared to live out their lives in the territory. So how do we do that, and how do we make that better? I would suggest that I maybe wouldn't reference them twice in the Budget Address as being a burden of the aging population.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that there were comments that housing is a human right — because for five years, I couldn't get anyone to say that, so I appreciate that. But for five years prior, there was even small talk about climate change, but climate change was mentioned; it was even mentioned in Budget Addresses, which is kind of insane, when you think about it. But this Budget Address doesn't talk about climate change. There is no mention of climate change, there is no talking about — I mean, I hate talking about adaptation to climate change, because that is saying that it's going to happen and we are just going to have to live with it. I want to talk about mitigating climate change. I want to talk about what government's vision is to tackle the problem of climate change and how we reduce it.

It is not that I disagree with the programs that exist already in the Energy Branch. I don't at all. Retiring appliances for more energy-efficient ones, light bulbs, energy retrofits — those are important, but those programs already existed. It is not \$11 million in new money. I looked around. There is the home repairs loan program in Yukon Housing Corporation, and I wasn't sure if that would be included in the \$11 million. There is also a line item for energy retrofits, but that is \$1.4 million. There is the rebate program from the Energy Branch, and that is at \$1.7 million. I was looking around, and if we wanted to talk about really making that available, there are bigger strokes that can happen. I mean, the community has been talking about the word "energy", and renewable energy for a really long time.

When I look at the Budget Address, there is no celebration about what we could do. The announcement with Kluane Lake and wind — that has happened before. Old Crow — it has happened before. The cool things happening at Mount Lorne happened before, but there is nothing in the Budget Address that says that these are the really forward-thinking things that we are going to build on top of that, and to me that is a missed opportunity.

The minister was just talking about the importance of the LGBTQ, trans, asterisk — how important it is including them in legislation, and part of what we are going to be debating this spring is changes to legislation to make sure that those populations are more included.

In that same breath, I know that a health curriculum was rolled out in elementary schools that alienated trans students. That is a concern to me because, if you tell a child that they

are abnormal, how do you even build on that? How do you even look forward? How do you even tell them that they have value when you have told them in grade 2 that their parts don't meet what they have learned in health class and, therefore, they aren't who they are. That is a concern to me.

There are other things that I was looking at that I hold near and dear. I looked through housing, and I think it is fantastic that there has been an announcement made about Housing First. I think that is great, and I look forward to having more conversations about that. But I know that the Salvation Army building that was touted as being the next-best thing to happen to the community is not living up to our hopes. When the Salvation Army is offering meals seven days a week, which is fantastic — but people have been banned from the facility, and now that the only access to food that they have is through the Salvation Army where they have been banned, I have concerns. I have concerns when I have people telling me that they went and were turned away because someone spilled beer on their jacket. I want to know how we are going to make sure that the money — the \$1.2 million that we are putting into that each year — we all want to make sure that the programs that we were told would be given there are being given.

I am looking forward to the tabling of the cannabis legislation because I only had the pre-talk about it, and I have questions on how that is going to roll out. That is something that is tied into the federal legislation and I appreciate that. I appreciate the work that the minister has done. It made me smile a bit when she pointed out that, in the original conversations, the Yukon Party did not want to be involved and now it is a big deal. You know, things change. Our interests change. I would say, though, that my colleague and I from Whitehorse Centre — our interests are pretty much stock standard. When I was interviewed going into this Spring Sitting, they said, "Well, what are you going to focus on?" I said, "Well, what we always focus on — health care, housing, minimum wage."

It was great there was an announcement before the House sat about a minimum wage review, which is great because the minister saved himself a question on the first day. But I don't think a lot has changed between when I was asking about minimum wage and a review of minimum wage last fall to now, except for the fact that we were destined to fall down in May. But it doesn't mean that people are living any tougher now than they were three months ago, because poverty is poverty and people in our community are dealing with poverty on a daily basis.

There are all sorts of things that I wish had been included in this budget. It's not to say that it's all bad, because I'm not saying that. I would be hard-pressed right now to celebrate something because I wasn't looking at it in those terms.

We talked about this originally last year — how we all come from a different set of values and different things that we think are important. Last year I said, "Okay, Liberal government, this is your opportunity to raise your values and to make sure that your budgets are addressing that and your opportunity to set out programs and policies and opportunities

for community people that represent your values.” I appreciate that the second attempt is that, but there are a whole bunch of things that members opposite have talked about that aren’t included.

When I go through the department budgets, I look forward always to the briefings because it’s when I talk to the officials that we can really get down to understand the numbers better. But some of those things that have been celebrated here by members from all sides of the House are not included in this budget. So for me, it’s one of those things where I want to know. Today in Question Period, there was — I can’t remember who said it, but someone said that five out of 11 mental health workers for the communities have been hired — five out of 11. That’s not even five and one-half out of 11 — because we could say it was 50 percent, you know? We’re not there. To know that this has been talked about for a really long time and this is when we found out that it was five out of 11 was today during Question Period — mental health continues to be a concern in the communities. Any death at one’s own hand is a tragedy that I would like to think that we would try to stop it.

There are things where previous announcements, platform commitments and all those things have happened, but it doesn’t mean that they are laid out here in this budget. I think that is where we come from. My colleague from Whitehorse Centre really dove down into it and talked about a lot of things that they were missing. It’s just because those are ongoing issues within the community — there are still things that people need.

The review of minimum wage is great, but it doesn’t change — even if the minimum wage is increased by \$1 or \$1.50 or \$3, there is still a huge gap between that and what a living wage is in the territory. Then again, the calculations from the Anti-Poverty Coalition are about two parents who work. I can tell you that as a single person, you pay all those. So what is a living wage for a single person and what does that mean and what do they need to earn to be able to survive in the territory — of course, keeping in mind that CMHC says that affordable housing is only 30 percent of what you take home?

There was an example today of accommodation for \$1,500 a month, and it has two double beds and a single bed in it and, if you want access to the kitchen, it is going to be an extra \$50 a month. I wonder if that is the housing that we want to talk about. Is that affordable?

There are a whole bunch of things. Like many other members, I look forward to budget debate, because I actually look forward to exchanges with the ministers when they have their officials here, because then we can get down to where we are going. I like budget debate better, because the ministers are able to talk more about what their vision is for their department and that kind of thing. I appreciate that.

I also think that there was the missed opportunity with the Financial Advisory Panel and some of those recommendations, that they just did not exist in the budget document, but I think that one of the things that is truly disappointing is that there was no mention of the electoral

reform and how that non-partisan committee was going to be geared up and things were going to happen prior to the next election. When that is not mentioned in the speech that sets out the next year of government, one has to wonder where it is going to be, because I would celebrate this. I would expect that the Liberal government would celebrate that as well, because that was something that they said they would do.

It just wasn’t a barn-burner, you know? I had hoped that there was going to be some exciting announcements about renewable energy or that we were really going to tackle energy retrofits in a different way or that we were going to talk about health care and where people were for when they needed it. That is not what I saw in the budget.

I look forward to department debates. I really look forward to the department briefings. Ministers need to know you have excellent departments and fantastic officials.

I can say some nice things — I will say some nice things. Something that I really appreciate in this year’s budget compared to other years is that I appreciate that the estimates are more realistic than they have been. So instead of being too low and it coming much higher later on — loan programs, for example — access to loan programs or the energy retrofit programs — they’re based more on last year’s numbers than just a random number. I appreciate that. When we got the briefing from Finance, there was talk about how there was really a big effort in departments to have more predictable numbers. I appreciate that in the budget. I did. I appreciate those numbers.

I look forward to department debate. I especially look forward to briefings, and I look forward to hearing in the next couple months about electoral reform and how we’re going to set that up. I look forward to hearing about home care. I look forward about how we are going to talk about affordable housing. I guess I have a lot of things to look forward to. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 206 adjourned

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled March 5, 2018:

34-2-49

Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees Sixth Report (January 8, 2018) (Adel)

The following legislative return was tabled March 5, 2018:

34-2-105

Response to oral question from Mr. Istchenko re: Yukon Housing Corporation strategic planning meetings (Frost)