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HANSARD

Tuesday, March 6, 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

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

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Yukon Liberal Party

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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North

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New Democratic Party

Liz Hanson	Leader of the Third Party Whitehorse Centre
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, March 6, 2018 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Arctic Inspiration Prize recipients

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It is an honour to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to congratulate two groups of dedicated Yukoners who have been awarded the 2017 Arctic Inspiration Prize.

The Arctic Inspiration Prize recognizes extraordinary contributions by teams of people who value Arctic knowledge and who have concrete plans to use it for the benefit of the north and Canada as a whole.

The Arctic Inspiration Prize awards up to \$3 million in prize money annually and specifically rewards team efforts that enable northern-based projects. The co-founders of the Ottawa-based organization Sima Sharifi and Arnold Witzig describe the intention of the prize this way — and I quote: “It is our dream and hope the Prize will create an ever growing network of individuals and organizations with a compassion for the North ... which together encourages, enables and celebrates the many achievements of the people of the North.”

By the way, the Premier was there in Ottawa this year when Arnold and Sima announced that they were donating \$60 million to the Arctic Inspiration Prize fund, which is simply amazing.

First off, congratulations to the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, whose passion, dedication and hard work went into developing “Our Families, Our Way”, the peacemaking circle, which was awarded \$500,000. We are all so proud. The peacemaking circle project was one of just three \$500,000 prizes awarded across Canada’s north. The money will be used to carve a meaningful path into the future for many Yukon families by revitalizing the practice of peacemaking circles. It will introduce a fundamentally different approach to children and families at risk. It empowers the community to resume their traditional responsibility for families. The prize enables training for a host of skilled facilitators and one day those skilled facilitators will train others.

I’m honoured to have the opportunity to congratulate Carcross/Tagish First Nation and the team members who made this happen on behalf of our community. The team was led by Lori Duncan and includes Mike Birkett, Ashley Carvill, Corinne Carvill, Dina Delaronde, Ann Raider, Susannah Robertson, Bev Sembsmoen, Thomas Shepherd and Judge Barry Stuart. The team couldn’t be here with us today,

as they are currently in initial training sessions for this great project. Thank you for their work and commitment to revive the past and to create a new future for our community.

Also winner of the 2017 Arctic Inspiration Prize in the youth category is Rivers to Ridges, a Whitehorse-based organization that operates a preschool and summer camps and provides land-based programming to many other organizations. In 2014, Erin Nicolardi and Emily Payne had a vision to lead young people to form meaningful connections with the land. From their passion for working with children and their connection to wild spaces, Rivers to Ridges came to life. Rivers to Ridges was awarded \$100,000 to create a forest school for young folk. With the intention of fostering a deeper sense of empathy, awareness and community, this initiative will provide children with access to experiential learning in outdoor spaces and to connect with the land.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations and our gratitude to both of these teams for their work to drive change in our communities. Mr. Speaker, I would like us to congratulate the founders of Rivers to Ridges, Emily Payne and Erin Nicolardi, who are here in the gallery with us today.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I am pleased and honoured to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to tribute the recipients of the Arctic Inspiration Prize for 2017.

As immigrants to Canada, Arnold Witzig and Sima Sharifi wanted to share their philanthropist ideas, and they have many. They started projects in other countries; however, the Canadian north and its people drew their attention. They wanted to give back and contribute to their adopted country that they now call home.

In 2012, the award was administrated by ArcticNet, a northern science research group with much of their activity in the eastern Arctic. I received a call late in 2012 asking if I would be interested in sitting on a national committee called the Arctic Inspiration Prize committee to hand out \$1 million. With only an outline of what it entailed, I said “Sure.” I became one of the founding committee members. The real drawing card was the names on the committee. My former colleague, Her Excellency the Right Hon. Michaëlle Jean, Susan Aglukark, Sheila Watt-Cloutier and Peter Mansbridge — to name-drop a few.

Contributing to both the preselection and selection committee for close to five years, it was harder work than one would have thought. At times, we found it very difficult to hand out \$1 million to worthy and — keynote — workable projects. During those growing years, the award ceremony was hosted in conjunction with the ArcticNet forum held each December. In Vancouver in December 2012, I was asked to be the guest speaker at the first ceremony. That was easy — my favourite topic, the north.

In Halifax in December 2013, Peter Mansbridge was to be the MC. However, because of Nelson Mandela’s funeral, I was brought in to cover. I joked that I knew there was disappointment in the audience as they were expecting Peter Mansbridge; however, I was his understudy.

At the Shaw Centre in Ottawa in 2014 and 2015, the awards ceremony and artist presentation had grown by a huge margin, and the awareness across the north had grown as well. It was so exciting. At this point, due to health concerns and the prize taking so much of his time, Arnold approached Governor General David Johnston. An agreement was reached to settle a prize as a trust under the Rideau Hall Foundation, with the Rideau Hall Foundation covering all operational costs associated with the prize. The prize — Arnold Witzig and Sima Sharifi donated \$60 million of their personal wealth to benefit us in the north. They are truly remarkable.

I am pleased to say that Arnold asked if I would sign the papers of the trust while it was transferred from one entity to the other — the S. and A. Inspiration Foundation to the Rideau Hall Foundation. It was one of my last functions on the committee, and I was honoured.

Yukoner Patti Balsillie is now chair of the board of trustees, and she is working to ensure the trust remains viable. As the trust grows, the ability to hand out more prize money has grown. This year, that total of \$2.4 million was awarded and shared among eight teams from across Canada's north for their work and dedication to projects that each contribute to improving the lives of us in the north. The prize is only awarded to teams, and not individuals.

Among these winning teams, I am proud to report that the team based out of Carcross/Tagish First Nation has received \$500,000 for Our Families, Our Way: The Peacemaking Circle. This team, led by team leader Lori Duncan, revitalized the practice of peacemaking circles to provide an approach to family and children at risk. I commend them for their initiative and wish them luck going forward.

Under the youth category, Rivers to Ridges brought home \$100,000 in award money to open a land-based education initiative in Whitehorse that will provide learning opportunities to Yukon children in nature. I would like to thank team leaders Erin Nicolardi and Emily Payne for their work and congratulate them on their win.

Thank you to the following Yukon groups that support AIP: Air North as the airline partner, Yukon First Nation Culture and Tourism Association as a media partner, and the City of Whitehorse and Government of Yukon as prize partners.

Please continue to think of innovative ideas to bring forward. This is money that can help many groups and communities move forward with their initiatives. Again, congratulations to our 2017 Yukon finalists and to all previous Yukon recipients. To all who continue to support proposals: Well done.

Ms. Hanson: It is a pleasure to pay tribute today to the Arctic Inspiration Prize — to the concept, to the donors and to Yukon recipients.

Until a few years ago, I had not much more than a vague understanding that my now-colleague from Porter Creek North was involved in this initiative but knew nothing about it. It wasn't until I got an e-mail from Patti Balsillie, one of Yukon's not-so-secret powerhouse women, asking if I would

be interested in meeting with Arnold Witzig from the Arctic Inspiration Prize. By then, having read what he and his wife Sima Sharifi had set up, I thought: "How could I not want to meet this person?" As it turned out, he was invited to speak at an Association of Yukon Communities meeting in Watson Lake that I was also attending, so we had breakfast together.

Mr. Speaker, it is rare that we meet a person who genuinely believes that they not only can but also have an obligation to contribute to the well-being of their fellow human beings. Arnold Witzig and his wife Sima Sharifi are, in the truest sense of the word, philanthropists. As immigrants to Canada, they made a decision a number of years ago that has the potential for transformative change across Canada's vast north. Where many bemoan the problems of the north — whether they be geography or demography or socio-economic problems — Witzig and Sharifi saw and see potential — not the potential that so many other southerners see; their focus was not on the potential wealth to be extracted from the north's non-renewable resources. To Mr. Witzig, it was and is on the boundless potential of the people of the north to seize the opportunities that accelerate changes in the arctic and the northern environment — that changes in culture, technology and economy require now and will require into the future. Through innovation, teamwork and across sectors, they saw the potential.

Mr. Witzig described being at first inspired and awestruck by the land and then by the people. Mr. Speaker, most of us plan for our retirement with hopes of travelling a bit and doing a few projects, and perhaps sharing a bit with others. Arnold Witzig told me that he had been lucky to have had a successful career, one that he had enjoyed. He had travelled extensively and been involved in development projects around the world, but he was drawn back to the north.

Rather than setting up a trust fund for their kids, they chose to put their money — ultimately, as we've heard today, \$60 million — into an Arctic Inspiration Prize. That prize, which is stewarded now through a trust relationship and partnership with the Rideau Hall Foundation, is not a prize for a job well done — it is not a reward, but it is one that recognizes the potential that community initiatives have to effect real and lasting change. We salute those community initiatives that we have heard about that, to date, have been recognized by the Arctic Inspiration Prize and have been recipients of money to help foster and grow their projects.

In addition to the two wonderful projects that received money in 2017, I think we also should make mention that, in fact, in 2015 — and this is really neat about the pan-northern nature of the Arctic Inspiration Prize — a pan-northern initiative, the tri-territorial recreation training project, shared in the \$1.5 million that was made available in 2015. That was led by team leader Anne Morgan from RPAY.

So again, Mr. Speaker, we offer gratitude to Arnold Witzig and Sima Sharifi for choosing to make Canada their home and for their desire to leave a lasting legacy in their chosen land.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It is an honour and a privilege to get to introduce two of Canada's hockey legends here today. We have with us Mr. John Chabot and Mr. Reggie Leach, who — I remember having his hockey card when I was a young boy. I'm wondering if we could welcome them here today.

Mr. Speaker, they are here in Yukon for the 2018 NHL Indigenous Alumni Tour, presented by the Council of Yukon First Nations, and they are here to inspire our young, and not so young, athletes in the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament. I thank them for coming today.

I would also like to again welcome Emily and Erin to the Legislature. Thanks very much to them for the work they are doing on Rivers to Ridges. By the way, they mentioned to me, when I was talking with them earlier today, that next year, the Arctic Inspiration Prize will be hosted here in Yukon, so it is exciting that the event will be coming here, so I am very proud to have them here as Yukoners.

Applause

Mr. Gallina: I would like the members to help me in welcoming back to the gallery a Porter Creek Centre constituent and member of our deaf community, Gerard Tremblay.

Applause

Ms. White: Although she has been welcomed before, I would like the House to join me in the gratitude that I have for both Erin and Emily. Erin and I met at the gender diversity conference, and I think that this bears mentioning because she did that partially to understand better how to deal with people with all sorts of different experiences and backgrounds — so thank you, Erin, for being here, and Emily as well. You've come to my workplace so maybe I can get invited out to yours.

Applause

Speaker: With respect to Mr. Leach, I would say that I have some good Philadelphia Flyers friends in town, and I would also note that I don't think the Flyers have won the Stanley Cup since your time with the Flyers — coincidence, I don't know. I know they have been close, but I don't think they have won since the mid-1970s. It is an honour for us to have you here today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 17: *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I move that Bill No. 17, entitled *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate that Bill No. 17, entitled *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and reading of Bill No. 17 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse to enable Yukon residents to pay City of Whitehorse parking tickets at the Motor Vehicles branch or at territorial agents in order to allow them to renew their vehicle registrations.

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

THAT this House supports the Employment Standards Board reviewing Yukon's minimum wage, given the fact we will see Yukon's minimum wage drop to seventh place in Canada by May 2018.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Liberal government to live up to its campaign commitments by conducting meaningful consultation with local residents and the general public on its plan to put a group home in Porter Creek.

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

THAT this House urges the federal government — and in particular, the Minister of Justice — to partner with provincial and territorial governments to:

(1) implement changes to the discriminatory use of peremptory challenges during jury selection; and

(2) increase the participation of indigenous and racialized persons in the jury process.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to meet with the Town of Watson Lake, the Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce, and other stakeholders, as he committed to, to talk about emergency medical services in the community before March 31, 2018, in recognition of the time-sensitivity of the issue.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier to explain why he announced the addition of 11 mental health workers last year and, according to his statements in the Legislative Assembly on Monday, March 5, 2018, has only filled five of the 11 mental health positions.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

RCMP Historical Case Unit

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank all Members of this House for the opportunity today to inform them and Yukoners about the creation of a Historical Case Unit, which will expand the RCMP's capacity to investigate unsolved homicides and missing person cases investigations.

Our government will be providing an additional \$442,000 for each of the next three years under the 2012 to 2032 *Yukon Territorial Police Service Agreement* to fund the specialized work of this unit. These resources will support three additional full-time RCMP officers in Whitehorse. The dedicated officers will investigate historic homicide cases and missing person cases as well as be available to support the Major Crimes Unit, if needed, when suspicious deaths occur. This unit will also be the liaison with families who are looking for support and closure with respect to these historic cases, including the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, to liaise with victims' families, Yukon First Nations, community groups and other partners.

We are sensitive to the pressures put on the RCMP and other service providers due to the very unusual number of homicides that have recently occurred in the Yukon. There are currently 12 unsolved homicides that are the subject of ongoing investigations and we want these cases to be brought to conclusion. We want grieving families to be able to find answers and some peace and for those responsible to be held accountable. We have worked closely with the RCMP to craft a solution to provide the RCMP with meaningful resources of officers and funding to address unsolved historical cases. These resources will go a long way to helping the RCMP conduct their investigations effectively and efficiently.

The Yukon government is committed to working with the RCMP to understand and identify ways to address resource pressures and to ensure funding is in place to effectively solve crime. This funding and future work of the Historical Case Unit contributes to the policing priorities that I communicated, as the Minister of Justice, to the RCMP. The priorities are: to direct the RCMP to enhance prevention, investigation and enforcement activities related to violence against women; to proactively respond to emerging public safety issues and trends in criminal activity; and to contribute to improve the community response to vulnerable populations and foster

strong relationships with First Nations, communities and partner agencies.

Thank you to the Department of Justice staff for the extensive work done on this new initiative and thank you to the Yukon RCMP for their commitment to delivering professional police services and for working collaboratively with the Yukon government, First Nations and other community safety partners to make Yukon a safer and healthier place for all.

Mr. Cathers: As Official Opposition critic for Justice, I'm pleased to rise in support of this announcement. We do welcome this investment in the RCMP and in fact the only criticism that we would offer is that the minister has been slow in acting in this area. We first raised the issue of the pressure placed on the RCMP with the minister in May of last year and I raised it again through a letter written in July, recognizing that because of the recent spike in the number of homicides, it is placing an unsustainable workload on the RCMP and its members — but again, we do welcome this announcement.

Our hearts go out to the family and friends of victims of all homicides, including — and especially in this case — those which have not yet been solved. We recognize as well the importance of solving homicides and prosecuting the offenders to public safety. So we do welcome this announcement, but again, we would just note that we are a bit disappointed that the minister and this government have taken a long time in responding to the pressure. We have raised it on a number of occasions, beginning in May of last year and through a letter to the minister I wrote on July 14, which I will table a copy of.

Mr. Speaker, just before I conclude, one thing — I would ask the minister to provide an update in her closing remarks about the expected time involved in staffing any new positions created by this announcement.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for her announcement of additional resources to assist in the resolution of outstanding homicide cases in Yukon through the creation of a Historical Case Unit.

Each unresolved homicide — the sudden, violent death of a member of our small Yukon community — resonates deeply. Many of us are touched, whether it is directly or indirectly, in ways that we cannot or could not foresee. On a personal note — because these things are personal, Mr. Speaker — I hope the 12 unsolved homicides currently subject to ongoing investigation includes that of my friend and colleague who was murdered in her home near Crag Lake at the beginning of March 1992. Her name was Krystal Senyk.

Yes, it is the family who are most directly and immediately affected; it is also the circle of friends and colleagues who grieve, who relive the signs they may have missed, whether it is warranted or not. Parents should not be left to explain what murder is — the impossible questions of why — and to reassure children in situations of domestic

violence that it is always right to help, that they won't be victims for trying to help, and hoping that is true.

We look forward to the successful resolution of the work of the Historical Case Unit and of the reporting of that success to this House.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to respond. Thank you to the members opposite for their comments on this important new initiative. This is a personal issue and it touches us all in different ways. I certainly take to heart what the Leader of the Third Party has said.

The unusually high number of recent homicides in the Yukon is of great concern to everyone in our territory. We want those responsible to be held accountable for it and for the families who have lost their loved ones to be supported in their efforts to find answers and to seek justice. I believe we all agree that it's important that the RCMP is properly supported and has the resources necessary to address this issue.

When I first became the Minister of Justice, one of the first issues I asked about was this. We met with and listened to many parties interested in community safety, including First Nation governments and families and friends of missing and murdered loved ones, and we worked closely with the RCMP to craft a Yukon solution. This funding will expand the RCMP's capacity to investigate unsolved homicides and missing person investigations. While working with the RCMP, I asked them: "What do you need to try to solve these outstanding cases?" There is much work to be done and our conversations continue.

I was told by the officers and the leaders of the RCMP during those conversations that there was work to be done, but they needed resources and officers to carry out that work. There was much more discussion and much work followed and we are proud today to be announcing the creation of the Historical Case Unit, but it did take some time.

This unit will contribute to the policing priorities, which I will take the opportunity to remind everyone comes from our communities through the work of the police council. It will help the RCMP to conduct their investigations into unsolved homicide cases effectively and efficiently. Our Liberal government is committed to working with the RCMP to address resource pressures and to ensure funding is in place to effectively address and solve crime in our territory, and we will continue to do so.

We have been working on this initiative for some time. I very much appreciate this opportunity to thank once again the families who bravely told us their stories and the Department of Justice staff for the extensive work done on this new initiative. Again, thank you to the RCMP for their commitment to delivering professional police services in our territory and for working collaboratively with the Yukon government, with Yukon First Nations and their governments and other community safety partners to make Yukon a safer and healthier place for all.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: School replacement

Mr. Kent: Yesterday, I asked the Minister of Education about capital plans for a number of schools here in the territory. I asked about the criteria by which identified schools on the minister's list are prioritized for renovations and replacement, and based on the minister's comments yesterday, it seems like they are still developing that criteria.

If the minister cannot share the criteria at this time, can she at least tell us what consultations took place with the various school communities and when those consultations happened?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yukon government, as I noted yesterday, is developing a long-term capital plan that will include Yukon schools. The long-term capital plan for the government will be a five-year capital plan, but those involving schools and the Department of Education will in fact be a 10-year plan to ensure that all buildings are safe and available for use and in good repair for many, many years to come.

We have identified, as the member opposite notes, several schools for renovation or replacement over the long term of this capital plan. I have asked the department to return to that capital plan to provide reasons and criteria for those schools being on that list, in that order and that work is ongoing.

Mr. Kent: I would hope that the Minister of Education does take the opportunity — or have her officials take the opportunity — to reach out to those various school communities. A number of those schools on the list are in need of renovation or replacement.

Mr. Speaker, another question I asked yesterday about school infrastructure was with regard to the Ross River School. As I mentioned, engineering reports for the Ross River School call for a long-term strategy to ensure the continued structural safety of the 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. The minister didn't answer the questions yesterday, so I will give him an opportunity again today.

We did not see any money allocated for the Ross River School in the budget. Has this government identified the long-term strategy for the Ross River School and is the minister willing to table the most recent technical inspections on the floor of this House?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and once again, I thank the members opposite for their interest in this very important topic of the Ross River School.

I want to reiterate that the health and safety of our students and staff at our educational facilities is of the utmost importance, and I want to assure the members opposite that the school in Ross River remains safe to this day. We continue to monitor and keep an eye on that school. We have some money in the budget for maintenance on the Ross River School, but we are working with the community to develop

that long-term plan. I'm not going to announce it on the floor of the House without actually speaking to the people of Ross River and actually working with them on this plan.

I will certainly inform this House when we are prepared to move forward.

Mr. Kent: Can the Minister of Education or perhaps the Minister of Highways and Public Works let us know what the plans are to hold a public meeting with families, students and staff to provide them with the latest information from these technical inspections and the monitoring that was to take place last fall?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I will be absolutely more than happy to share those plans with the members opposite in due course.

Question re: Highway maintenance

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I have some questions regarding highways in the Ross River area. We've read in the news recently that the Liberal government is seeking a significant amount of money from the federal government to upgrade roads in the Premier's riding; however, we have not heard of anything similar for roads in the Ross River area. We do know that the functional plan for the Campbell Highway is finished, but we don't see anything in the government's five-year capital plan.

Could the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us today if there is any money allocated to upgrade the Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River in this year's budget? Can he let us know if there are any plans to invest in this road in future years as well?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Work on the Campbell Highway this year is expected to expand Yukon's GDP by an estimated \$2.9 million and potentially provide for more than 29 jobs over the course of the 2018-19 season. It is also going to make the road safer for all Yukoners.

Reconstruction of the Campbell Highway is currently focused between the Watson Lake Airport access, kilometre 10, and the Tuchtua highway maintenance camp at kilometre 114. However, I will tell the member opposite that, as I said last year, the stretch of road from Faro to Ross River is of utmost importance and I am happy to announce to the House today that work on that stretch of road is proceeding in fine order.

Mr. Hassard: We're not sure if — "in fine order" obviously is not in the next five years. Let's try another road that is important to the community of Ross River, and that's the North Canol. We know that this road is especially important to many exploration companies. They use it to get to and from their projects. Obviously it is very important to the community of Ross River, and last year the Liberals shut down the bridges along this road pending repairs. Again, we look through this year's budget and the five-year capital plan and I can't find any money specifically allocated to this road or bridges on it.

Could the minister let us know why the North Canol bridges aren't identified in this year's capital plan?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm not sure if this is a new question or not, but I will answer it. I would be happy to answer it in any case.

We have met with the mining companies doing work on Ross River. We had great conversations with them. We have spoken about their needs this year and I'm more than confident that we will be able to meet their needs to actually get construction equipment and people up that highway this year. They know the financial pressures that we're facing because of the rampant spending we have seen over the last 15 years depleting our reserves, and they are more than happy to work with us to get the resources up the North Canol as efficiently as possible within the means of this government.

Mr. Hassard: But out of all of that rhetoric that we heard from the Minister of Highways and Public Works, we certainly didn't hear — is there any intention to spend any money in the —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I think the term "rhetoric" has been decided by this House to be inappropriate and I would ask the member to rephrase his question.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I will review the historical interpretations of the word "rhetoric", take it under advisement and report back to the House but, for the purposes of the proceedings today, I would ask the members to avoid using it.

Mr. Hassard: So the question is: Is there any money in this budget to repair bridges on the North Canol Road?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The answer to that question is that we are working with the company to make sure they can actually get the resources they need to the places they need to work in fine order. We have reviewed the bridges on that stretch of road and the company seems to be fairly confident that they can work with us to get the job done. I'm happy about that.

The member opposite did talk about Ross River, though, and I do want to return to that because it is an area of high interest, and I know that the members opposite ignored the problem for five years. I mean, the members opposite didn't do any work on the road from Faro to Ross River, and I'm happy to say that clearing and design work has started between kilometre 114 and kilometre 232 to the BMC access road, and also we are starting design work for the space between Ross River and Faro. The people of Ross River are elated that we have actually started work on something that they have been asking for, for so long. We're more than happy to fulfill that commitment, and I'm sure we'll talk about it more into the future.

Question re: Electoral reform

Ms. Hanson: Last fall, this government voted in favour of a Yukon NDP motion to create a non-partisan commission to consider matters related to electoral reform in Yukon in time for the next election.

Given how quickly this government set up the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel, Yukoners expected to see the electoral reform commission appear in the 2018-19 budget. After all, by the end of this fiscal year, we will already be two and one-half years into this government's mandate, but, surprisingly, the electoral reform commission is not mentioned anywhere in the budget.

So Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier pretend to be serious about electoral reform when his budget doesn't allocate a penny to the electoral reform commission that he agreed in this Legislative Assembly to set up?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm not sure about all of the preamble to the question about this being an NDP idea but, again, what we will give you is some information about our campaign commitment for democratic and electoral reform — electoral reform being a very important issue for Yukoners and other Canadian jurisdictions. As part of our work to explore possible options for electoral reform in Yukon, we will be reviewing efforts being made in other jurisdictions and the issues that have been raised here as well. Yukoners can expect an open consultation process that engages Yukoners in a transparent review and consideration of Yukon electoral reform options. Part of this work will be setting up a commission to consult with Yukoners, and we remain committed to doing that work.

Ms. Hanson: Words are good, but a commission needs money to operate. It needs to actually be established, and there is not a penny in this budget — it's that simple. If this government doesn't know how to get serious about electoral reform, they just need to look south to our neighbours in British Columbia. The BC NDP government launched a consultation on electoral reform within six months of being elected. They delivered on their commitment. The consultation had record input by citizens and a referendum is now planned for November 2018, a year and a half after the BC NDP was elected. That is a government that truly cares about electoral reform. In comparison, this Liberal government did absolutely nothing on electoral reform until the NDP brought a motion forward and now, with this budget, they are saying they won't lift a finger until, at best, two and a half years after their election.

Why is electoral reform not a priority for this government?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, it is nice to see the NDP congratulating other NDP governments on their progress. We remain committed to our election campaign. A little bit of context here — we made this commitment regarding electoral reform and setting fixed election dates, and there have been access to information requests on that issue from the opposition, so we know that it is an important issue for the opposition, as it is an important issue for us as well.

The federal government announced that it would not be reforming the first-past-the-post electoral system prior to the next elections, and we here believe that we need to have a committee selected. We want to take a look at other jurisdictions and see the improper way that other jurisdictions have done things and also the good work that other jurisdictions have done in this really important, topical conversation.

Again, it is an extremely important issue on this side of the House, and Yukoners can expect an open consultation process that engages with Yukoners in a very transparent process to consider these electoral reform options. Part of this work is setting up a commission that will consult with Yukoners. We're not getting it out the door quickly enough for the Leader of the Third Party, but we remain steadfast in our commitment.

Ms. Hanson: The Premier has been to Ottawa so many times since his election that he is starting to sound a lot like his federal Liberal cousins. At least on electoral reform, it looks like they will deliver just about as much as the federal Liberals — which is to say, absolutely nothing. After extensive debate last November in this Assembly, this government did commit to appoint a non-partisan committee to engage with Yukoners on electoral reform and fixed-date elections, yet there is not a penny in this budget for such a commission — a commitment that was in their own platform.

I ask again: How can Yukoners believe that this government is serious about electoral reform when they have taken no action to give Yukoners a say on potential changes to our electoral system?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is interesting — the personalization of the debate and then followed with a quote by the NDP leader here, which is the exact same quote from the NDP national leader, so I do not know who is sounding like their national counterparts, but I am going to leave that to the NDP's dialogue. I am going to stick to the issue. We are very interested in electoral reform. It is part of the work to explore possible options for electoral reform. We are going to do this. We are not going to be bullied by the Leader of the Third Party into getting things done quicker, but what we will do is stay steadfast with our commitment.

Question re: Land use planning

Mr. Kent: I have some questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order. The Member for Copperbelt South has the floor.

Mr. Kent: I have some questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources regarding the decision announced yesterday for the tote road into the Rackla mineral belt. As we know, the YESA board issued a favourable recommendation last May for this project. Yesterday, the proponent's CEO mentioned in the *Whitehorse Star* that he did not expect construction to begin this year. In fact, the government's news release stated that the Yukon and Na Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation governments would endeavour to

complete a sub-regional land use plan for a portion of the Stewart River watershed by March 2020. Can the minister please confirm for this House that, at this point, there is no guarantee that construction will take place and that the start will not be until after this land use plan is estimated for completion in two years' time?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to thank the member opposite for this question. I am quite excited about the opportunity to speak to the decision that was posted on Friday and then the subsequent information that was out yesterday. I think that since we are touching on the fact — and sort of paraphrasing or quoting the individuals involved. I think it was Mr. Graham Downs from ATAC who was quoted. I have another quote: "... a positive joint Decision Document between the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun and the Yukon government is a major de-risking milestone for the Company and all three projects within the Rackla Gold Property..." I had an opportunity to meet with both ATAC and members of their investor group from Barrack Gold. Everybody is quite excited about this process.

To get down to some of the finer points that were asked by the Member for Copperbelt South — yes, we are looking at a two-year time frame — absolutely — where we will go through a planning process. This is respectful work. I have to thank my colleague, the Minister of Environment, for integrating some elements of chapter 10 and chapter 11 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* as well as the self-government agreements, which are leveraged and are there. They are constitutionally ingrained tools that have not been used to do this good work. Hopefully I will get a chance to speak a bit more about this for questions two and three.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for confirming that construction will not be guaranteed to take place and it will not be started for at least two years. There were some mixed messages that we were hearing back from members of industry on this. So I thank him for his clarification.

Mr. Speaker, the land use plan for the portion of the Stewart River watershed could have, of course, a broader impact than just this project. We understand that the two governments will be appointing a committee to develop this plan. So can the minister tell us when the committee will be appointed, what the makeup of the committee will be and when we can expect to see a work plan or terms of reference for that committee?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you again for giving us an opportunity to speak to this, Mr. Speaker.

Just some broader pieces on this agreement — the Government of Yukon and First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun have reached an agreement and issued a joint Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board decision document that may lead to the construction of the all-season tote road.

Now, it's important to identify the fact that many elements of the agreements that seem to be discussed with ATAC — and the way that ATAC wanted to approach the relationship, which has always been a fantastic relationship and I really commend them, and that's part of the reason that

Barrack has seen them as a great partner — are the elements that were the foundation of this document.

The agreement between the Government of Yukon and the First Nation, again, was signed on February 21. Now that work is beginning, and we can discuss that as we go along.

I do think it's important and I would like to know — although I understand the process here and I'm answering the questions. But at another point, I really would like to see my critic and his colleagues go on the record on how they feel about this agreement. The overarching feeling at PDAC — which is the Prospectors and Development Association of Canada, of course, which I have just come from — is that this is great work. I want to know if the Yukon Party, and specifically my critic — I would like to hear if he supports this kind of process. This is the right way forward. This gets us out of legal challenges. So I hope I hear that in the near future.

Mr. Kent: This is certainly a new way of doing business. Some of the mining and construction industry individuals whom I have spoken with over the past couple of days are concerned that this has the potential to set a precedent for future projects. Can the minister let this House know: Are there any other sub-regional land use plans being considered at this time for other mining projects in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Absolutely, this is a new way of doing business. This is actually how you get business done.

What we're seeing here is not a series of legal challenges. As we talk about other issues, we're taking those legal challenges and we're putting them aside. We're having respectful dialogue with our First Nation partners. We're using the agreements. I hear some heckling from the NDP. I think what I usually hear is the NDP saying, "Please integrate and implement the final agreements." That is what this is. It's great work from my colleague using chapter 10 and chapter 11 to do this type of work. What we see is that this is the path forward.

In closing, I will just say that we absolutely have not had any discussion — I will go on the record here — no discussion about other plans of this type. This was a good process for this particular project, and I'm happy that the First Nation is comfortable. I think we can address the concerns from the outfitting association. We can also support the companies that are involved in this.

It's interesting — it seems that the only concern on this at this particular point may be coming from across the way, but most of the stakeholders — and it's a very complex conversation — are quite happy with the way we're moving forward.

Question re: Destruction Bay Marina

Mr. Istchenko: At the beginning of January, I wrote the Minister of Community Services for an update on the maintenance work needed for the Destruction Bay Marina. The minister responded that he had met with the Kluane Lake Athletic Association and, in a subsequent e-mail on January 31, he responded — and I quote — re: timelines — "I don't

think the project's scope has made it back to us yet. Not sure if I have a concrete timeline as of yet but will check with the department to find out." I do thank the minister for actually going and meeting with the association and community members, but I haven't heard anything since.

This work needs to begin now. Time is of the essence before we lose another season of access for locals, for the First Nation community, the community events that happen there, and search and rescue. So does the minister have an update for this House today?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really do sympathize with the people up on the north highway. The changes in the Slims River drainage patterns have lowered the water level of Kluane Lake. We have been talking about this now for a year. That lower water level, through many changes in our climate and our environment, makes it more difficult to design and implement improvements to the Destruction Bay Marina. So we will be doing more analysis of the lake levels this year, but there will be no design or physical work at the marina before the assessment is complete.

Mr. Istchenko: I can say that residents of Kluane, my constituents, will be very disappointed in that answer from the minister. This is a very busy lake. Locals have been calling on the minister to take action to dredge it since December 2016. They probably spent a lot of money on looking at it.

A lack of appropriate lake access is not only a convenience issue. It impacts business, recreation and, of course, safety. Due to the low water levels, which we've heard about, the Destruction Bay Marina requires dredging, which is just maintenance that has been done before there. When the minister met with the Kluane Lake Athletic Association community members, he heard loud and clear that this was a priority for the community.

Will this government commit to finishing, dredging and upgrades to the Destruction Bay marina this year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, we will be doing more analysis on lake levels this year, but we will not be proceeding with any design or physical work at the marina before this assessment is complete. This is a constantly evolving, changing ecosystem and we're not going to put a bunch of money into fixing a marina and find that it is dry next year — so no, Mr. Speaker.

I do have some good news for the people of the north highway — and I wanted to reassure the member that Sheep Mountain boat launch is also in need of repair. An assessment to identify options for long-term improvements is ongoing and improvements amounting to approximately \$40,000 will be undertaken in May and June after the assessment is complete. That will be happening this year. It will give some access to the lake to residents of the north highway and I'm happy to do that work.

Question re: Francophone high school

Mr. Kent: On October 10, 2017 the Minister of Education told the Legislative Assembly that the new francophone high school would be completed by the end of

2019. However, the minister has now indicated that construction will not be completed until the end of 2020.

The soil contamination issues were well-known and reported in the media before October 10, so I'm wondering if the minister can explain what changed between October 10 and today that would so drastically impact this timeline.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am very pleased to have the opportunity to reiterate our commitment to building the new French first language high school in Whitehorse. It is in my mandate. There is money in the budget. We have had many public conversations and conversations here in the Legislative Assembly with respect to that.

The ground mitigation where the old F.H. Collins High School was has been tested since we talked about this last fall. There have been some test results come back in January and they indicate that they want to continue to test through the spring of this year. I can also indicate that we've worked very, very closely with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon and they are pleased with the current schedule with respect to the completion of the school.

Mr. Kent: The engineering study that the government included with their YESAA submission for this project indicates that the new school will have major impacts on traffic in Riverdale. To address these traffic impacts, the study suggests either an additional lane across the Yukon River be provided on Lewes Boulevard or another bridge crossing be constructed to reassign traffic away from Lewes Boulevard.

Can the minister tell us if the government will be undertaking any of these recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have heard there are concerns over the increased traffic to Riverdale as a result of the francophone school location. Highways and Public Works has hired a traffic engineering team to study the impact of the school on Riverdale traffic and they found no noticeable difference. The reason is because the daily variation in traffic flow along Lewes is less than the estimated increase in traffic resulting from the new school. There will be no increased bus traffic as a result of the school, as students will be able to catch existing buses.

Mr. Kent: That's interesting, given the YESAA submission for the project with respect to the engineering study and the traffic impacts suggesting, again, additional traffic access into Riverdale. So Mr. Speaker, of course this project is to receive federal funding in the amount of \$7.5 million.

Can the minister confirm whether the budget will be affected due to the delays in construction? Also, does the minister have written assurance from the federal government that those federal dollars allocated to this project will be protected and still available to Yukon even given the delays that the project is seeing at the moment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member opposite for the question. We do have confirmation from the federal government that the \$7.5 million that has been granted to the Yukon for the purposes of enhancing this project with some elements of the new school will in fact be unaffected by the new schedule with respect to completion of the school. Much

work has gone into conversations with the federal government. They are supportive not only of this particular project to the tune of \$7.5 million, but also certainly supportive of the fact that there have been some changes with respect to the location selection and completion of the functional and conceptual design. As a result, there is no issue with the federal government and that funding.

In addition, there has been much work done with the partners on this project to maintain the maximum current budget, which is \$20 million from the territorial government and \$7.5 million from the federal government, for a total of \$27.5 million. Because of changes in the schedule ultimately some adjustments were made to the design, in conjunction with our partners, for the purposes of keeping it on budget, and we expect that to be the case.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of government private members to be called on Wednesday, March 7, 2018. They are Motion No. 229 and Motion No. 230, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North, and Motion No. 233, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

Speaker: Thank you, Government House Leader. I am just checking the Standing Orders and my records here — just for the record, I believe it is Standing Order 14.2(7). I can confirm that with Mr. Clerk, but I believe it is (7). Is that correct, Mr. Clerk?

Clerk: You are indeed correct, Mr. Speaker; it is subsection 7 for the government and it is subsection 3 for the opposition.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 204: *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*— Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 204, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to begin the debate on the second supplementary estimate for 2017-18. Supplementary estimates are an exercise in accountability. They are an opportunity to further clarify Yukon's fiscal situation. They also provide insights into the

government's approach to fiscal planning. Outside of exceptional circumstances, supplementary estimates should not be very far from the main estimates. When they are off, it is harder to determine what the fiscal plan is for the government.

Our government is committed to ensuring that government finances and government actions are clear and understandable to Yukoners. This work begins with presenting a sound fiscal plan that is credible, informed and realistic. Yukon's government cannot just plan our public spending year to year. Yukoners who pay taxes, the partners that we work with and the investors who come here all want to see a plan for the future. By having that fiscal plan, we give more value for money, Mr. Speaker.

When anyone sits down to plan spending and savings, they are looking at ways to increase income, if possible. They look for several ways to save and they choose investments carefully to maximize benefits to themselves, their families, or their businesses. Now that is the same — that holds true as well for the territory. Yukon has a lot of potential. We are in a much better position to fully realize that potential when we plan our spending and our investments carefully and thoughtfully. That is why our government has made a commitment to develop more realistic plans for government spending and to produce more informed revenue forecasts. We believe main estimates should provide as clear a picture as possible.

The supplementary estimates should bring that picture into sharper focus, not present a completely different picture. The 2017-18 budget tabled last April was developed as a more comprehensive view of Yukon's finances. I am pleased to report that the supplementary estimates we are debating today are very close to the 2017-18 main estimates. An annual surplus of \$6.5 million was projected last April. The surplus as forecasted today is \$6.3 million.

There is very little change overall to tax and other revenues. Yukon's forecasted accumulated surplus is \$1.37 billion, roughly the same as forecasted last April.

The biggest change in the supplementary budget overall is the refinancing of the \$39.2 million to the Yukon Development Corporation. This is necessary because of the decisions made by the previous government. They allowed the Yukon Energy Corporation to convert a significant portion of the loan to a grant. This left the Yukon Development Corporation unable to fulfill the terms of the original repayment schedule. Under those terms, the Development Corporation would have been required to repay \$39.2 million by March 31, 2018. Our government refinanced that loan to allow the Yukon Development Corporation to better meet their obligations.

Allow me to provide some details on areas where some changes have occurred. As members know, our government presented our first supplementary estimates in the fall. In my remarks today, I will focus on any additional changes between the first supplementary estimates and the second supplementary estimates. Revenues, which include recoveries of operation and maintenance and capital costs, are down by

\$4.9 million. There is an increase of \$8.1 million in expenses. Transfers from Canada are up by \$2.1 million. Net financial assets increased by \$18.9 million since the first supplementary estimates were presented last fall. This is a significant figure, but it was the result of several projects that were delayed. Because they were delayed, cash outlays were not required in this fiscal year, which increased net financial assets. These projects represent infrastructure that Yukon needs and projects will go forward.

The growth in Yukon's capital assets has also created a responsibility to fully account for the operation and maintenance of those assets. In recent years, as Yukon's capital base grew, these costs were not always fully accounted for in the main estimates. This must change, and our government is doing so. Capital assets can include infrastructure related to transportation, energy, water and other services. It can include the long-term care and health care facilities that will be in greater demand as our population ages, as well as the schools our children need. When not consistently accounted for, operation and maintenance costs can contribute to structural deficits, which then have to be addressed by future Yukoners at higher costs. So our government has made a deliberate choice to be realistic in budgeting for operation and maintenance in the main estimates.

In 2017-18, new unanticipated costs were generally being managed within the departments' existing budgets. The two exceptions were in Education and in Health and Social Services. In Education, main estimates cannot fully capture exact needs. Precise enrolment figures can only be known once a new school year begins. Enrolment impacts operation and maintenance needs, particularly in hiring educational assistants. In these supplementary estimates, our government is investing \$2.3 million in additional educational assistant resources and coverage for teachers on leave in our schools. This is due to increases in enrolment. These supplementary estimates also include additional funding for Health and Social Services, particularly in the area of legislated programs such as social income support, Yukon seniors income supplement and insured health services.

I want to talk a bit about recoveries. Cost recovery is another area where circumstances change during the year. There are a number of new agreements that provide new investments with costs fully recovered from Canada.

One of the most significant is the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, which has been finalized recently. It provides \$7.1 million over three years for early learning and childcare in Yukon's communities. This funding is fully recoverable from Canada. The supplementary budget for 2017-18 now incorporates nearly \$800,000 invested in early learning and childcare for children up to five years old. In total, there is \$2.1 million in recoveries accounted for in the 2017-18 supplementary estimates under this agreement.

Various other recoveries relate to social income supports, workers' compensation and agreements on labour, courtworkers, cannabis, and victim services.

I would like to also highlight some of the details regarding gross capital spending. It is expected to be about \$25 million less than planned at the time of the first supplementary estimates last fall, with a corresponding decrease in recoveries of \$14.4 million. In total, gross capital spending is \$29 million less than it was in the main estimates.

In short, a number of projects have been deferred to the 2018-19 capital budget. They might be construction projects that could not yet be completed or purchased, such as aviation equipment that is yet to be delivered. For example, to ensure that flight operations were minimally impacted during runway repairs at the Erik Nielsen International Airport, a paving project will be completed this summer instead of in this fiscal year.

As members know, the Yukon government recoveries costs from Canada are after the fact. We recover those costs after the fact. As capital expenditures decrease, so too do the amounts recovered. Capital decreases are offset by corresponding decreases to capital recoveries. This affects recoveries related to clean water and waste water and small community funding agreements.

Now, the 2017-18 supplementary estimates provide Yukoners with further clarity on public finances. Such clarity is more important than ever. Clarity in public financing helps people understand the choices that we need to make. The long-term challenges facing Yukoners require clear-eyed, shared decisions made by all of our people. That is why our government has set up new methods of consulting Yukoners.

The Yukon Financial Advisory Panel was one of these processes. The input they received and the insights they provided are informing our budget process. One key focus for this upcoming year will be a comprehensive review of Health and Social Services, as the panel suggested. We will also increase the efficiencies and the effectiveness of delivering services to Yukoners and we will look not just at what the government does, but also how it does it.

This government also needs to get out of the business of doing business. There are opportunities to consider how this government can get out of doing work that elsewhere is done by the private sector. As we do this work, we will continue finding ways of engaging Yukoners throughout our mandate. We are acting on our commitment to form true government-to-government relationships with First Nations and their governments, which will help with long-term planning that is mutually beneficial.

We are asking Yukon communities and non-government organizations to help develop and deliver programs that Yukoners need. We are looking to the private sector to make investments that will benefit the territory's economy.

When you commit to engagement, you commit to transparency. Citizens and partners need the clearest possible information to provide their best input. To move forward together, Yukoners need to know where we stand right now.

Credible public finances are also the basis for evidence-based decision-making. Evidence-based decision-making is about setting clear goals and measuring progress. Collaboration or incorporating a diversity of ideas begins with

common understanding of the fiscal reality. Our government believes that the public budget process should be providing that shared credible base of knowledge.

Simply balancing the budget is not an achievement. We need to be measured on how the budget is enabling achievements out there among Yukoners. This is how our government will be making its budgets, and this change in approach is already being reflected in our supplementary estimates. Yet Yukoners will be able to have more confidence in future plans when the current year is fully accounted for without major surprises.

Mr. Speaker, let me close by saying a word about certainty. Yukon, like any other place, is impacted by forces outside the territory, perhaps more than many other places, but there are actions and principles that are always within our control. Accountability and transparency are within our control. We can make cautious and realistic assessments of potential revenue. We will seek to fully account for expenses that we know will occur. These are choices that our government is making. Our budgets are not founded on hoping for the best. Our government will develop budgets with the best possible information.

Today our government presents supplementary estimates that do not vary greatly from the 2017-18 main estimates. It is an important step toward certainty and long-term fiscal planning, but there is still much work yet to do and we look forward to working with all members and Yukoners to make the necessary steps toward securing Yukon's financial health now and well into the future.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to this supplementary budget — first of all, since it's my first speech in the Legislative Assembly this Sitting, I would like to begin by thanking my constituents in Lake Laberge for the continued opportunity and honour to serve them and work with them as MLA for Lake Laberge. I would also like to thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for the opportunity to represent the Official Opposition as Finance critic as well as critic for Justice, Protective Services and Sustainable Resources. I thank all of my caucus colleagues and staff for their ongoing support and assistance in performing my duties, both as an MLA and on behalf of Yukoners, as the Official Opposition.

I would like to — in beginning to speak to the supplementary estimates — note that while I will be critical of some of the approach taken and decisions made by government, we do appreciate that government has continued with a number of the initiatives that we began during our time in government and has not taken the approaches that we have seen in some southern jurisdictions where it appears that governments were focused on tearing down work taken by predecessors, rather than recognizing good work that had been done and continuing those programs.

That includes, of course — I'm pleased to see the continuation of support for the rural well program, the energy rebates under good energy and those types of initiatives. I'm not going to talk a lot about those types of details at this point.

I want to focus more on a few of the issues with the budget itself.

The Premier had a very nicely written speech, but it's another area where the words of this government and the actions of the government do not always line up — and, in fact, increasingly so.

At the beginning of this mandate and during the campaign, we heard quite a bit about grand commitments by the Premier and some of his colleagues on how they were going to improve their approach to budgeting. We heard the excuse provided by the Premier at the beginning of the mandate that the reason that, he claims, he waited longer than any Premier in Yukon history to convene the first real Sitting of the Legislative Assembly was because they were trying to get a handle on the budget. We heard grand claims about how their budget was going to be more accurate than any budget before. In fact, in this budget — despite the Premier noting — the Premier compared the projected year-end position with the actual in terms of the size of the deficit, but failed to note that, in fact, if government had delivered on what they claimed they were going to do in the spring, there would be a deficit for this fiscal year.

The balanced budget at the end of the fiscal year is due in largest part to the lapse of over \$30 million in capital spending. In laymen's terms — for Yukoners who are not familiar with the term "lapse" — what that means is money that the government said they were going to spend on capital project and wasn't able to deliver.

There is also — coming along with that — a decrease in revenue from the federal government for any projects that received funding from the Government of Canada. Those, of course, are delayed until a future year.

Again, we're seeing government, in grading itself — they appear to be lowering the bar significantly from their commitments during the campaign and I would note that, as they are more than 25-percent through their mandate, their time is running out and Yukoners are expecting action, not just words.

The Premier claimed there was further clarity provided in these budgets than previously. In fact, since he referenced changes in both the format of the supplementary budget and this next fiscal year, I would note, as I did last year, that changing from having 11 pages of budget highlights to a mere four that are very heavy with infographics provides less information to Yukoners. I appreciate the acknowledgement by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the previous format of budget highlights — while she didn't always like what the previous government was saying in those highlights — did actually provide more detail than this current Liberal government.

The previous budget highlight format — for those who do not look at the budgets on a regular basis — basically used to provide a list on about 11 or 12 pages of the significant projects and activities, by department, in a fiscal year. This current government has stripped that out. It has also been removed from the budget speech, so we have less information about the project spending in individual departments than we

have ever had before during my 15 years in the Legislative Assembly.

I will give credit to officials for the fact that, at the briefings, they have been providing details, but those are details that used to be provided on budget day by the Premier and not matters that would be left to officials to explain at a later date.

Again, while I am pleased that there is a balanced budget at the end of the fiscal year, I would note that it is due primarily to the Premier failing to deliver over \$30 million in capital projects — or I should not say the Premier and his ministers failing to deliver.

One of their keynote commitments from last spring was the announcement of 11 new mental health workers. As the Premier himself acknowledged yesterday, they have failed to deliver on most of that commitment. Roughly a year after the commitment was made, their score on that commitment is less than 50-percent.

In the new performance plan we saw released yesterday, it provides a very nebulous, subjective list of criteria for government to assess its performance. If I may say so, it provides a list of unclear terminology that gives government the ability to give itself an A grade no matter what it actually does or does not do.

Among the increases in the last fiscal year, we see an increase of roughly \$2.9 million in social assistance costs. We have yet to receive an explanation from government of exactly why there is that significant an increase in the cost of social assistance at a time when the economy is purportedly doing well. That significant spike in social assistance costs is a concern. In the past year, I would note that we have been critical of the fact that government was very slow to act on pressures in areas such as health care. They failed to provide funding that had been requested by the Yukon Hospital Corporation to meet bed pressures. They were very slow to respond to the RCMP cost pressures and are just beginning at this point in time. While we do appreciate that there has been action in these areas, at a time when Yukoners are bringing forward priorities such as that, and expressing concern with government's decision to remove one-half million dollars in funding for road safety in the area of vegetation control, some of the other choices where government did find money have caused concern among Yukoners.

Making the point very clearly, the time when government is unwilling or unable to find money for hospital needs, for continuing care needs, for the RCMP and for vegetation control, here are a few of the priorities that they did find money for in the year and a bit that they have been in office.

This includes, upon taking office, that Cabinet chose to spend \$100,000 on cellphones and electronic devices for ministers and Cabinet staff when the old ones were nowhere near the replacement schedule date. This includes the decision to spend \$200,000 on the ill-advised plan by the Minister of Highways and Public Works to spray water in the air at Dawson City, hoping for ice. I appreciate that they did have the sense to cut that project short and apparently only spent \$120,000 on it. It includes, as well, the government's decision

to spend purportedly \$500,000 on a new logo and website, when they were literally telling us they couldn't afford to give the hospital the money they needed, although we do note that with that number, the government does not appear to include some of the costs of staff time involved in that work or list the costs of changing over everything from business cards to letterheads to signage and vehicle signage as a result of choosing to move to a new logo model.

The government was also able to find money for renovations to the Cabinet offices. The government spent \$308,000 on the Financial Advisory Panel, which was, ironically, for something they budgeted \$250,000 for. The Financial Advisory Panel, according to information we received from officials, went \$58,000 overbudget. While there was some interesting information that came out of the Financial Advisory Panel, what has been somewhat concerning is that it appears that the government is focused on cherry-picking certain recommendations while ignoring some of the other important recommendations that were made by the panel. I would note that the panel actually recommended more than once in its report to "improve comprehensiveness and transparency of territorial budgeting to include fully consolidated books and projections." Just for the records of Hansard, that is a quote from page 15 of the Financial Advisory Panel's report, and the government chose not to do that either in the supplementary estimates or in the budget for this coming fiscal year.

The government was also able to find money for a new Supreme Court Judge, which was low on the department's priority list, and came in at an estimated cost of in excess of \$500,000, when staff time and renovation costs were considered.

Mr. Speaker, just adding up that list that I mentioned — all in all, that is spending in excess of \$1.5 million. Again, this is at a time when we are hearing concerns from Yukoners who are not receiving the support for their children with special needs in school and were contacting us after being turned down by the Minister of Education and her department for the support they requested.

That includes a time when Yukoners are coming to us with concerns about medical travel and surgeries being cancelled due to bed pressure at the hospital. Government was unwilling to find funding for the hospital, but they were able to find money for all this list of other priorities. While some of those priorities have some merit in a time of wealth, perhaps, during a time of fiscal restraint they should not be higher on the list than funding for the hospital, funding for continuing care, funding for the RCMP and funding for road safety. Those are among the priorities we hear from Yukoners, as well as others — as I mentioned, support for children with special needs — that government was also unwilling to fund.

Now the Premier noted in his introductory speech that it is time to get government out of the business of doing business. That is a nice statement, but we've seen the government — again, their words not matching their actions. In the case of their plans for implementing the legalization of cannabis, government has so far not listened to Yukoners in

the private sector and not listened to the opposition when we have urged them to set up a model where government focuses on public safety and on its core responsibilities of regulating, inspecting, enforcing and public education. We have argued — and hope that the government may have a change of heart — that rather than spending millions in getting government into the business of retail and distribution of cannabis, they will see that public dollars are better focused on maintaining public safety and allow the private sector to spend the capital, take the risk and then take whatever opportunity comes as a result of that structure.

Again, in making that statement, I do want to note for Yukoners who are opposed to legalization that the Official Opposition recognizes and will continue to recognize that the debate over legalization of marijuana or cannabis is one that people have strong feelings on. We recognize and respect the views of all Yukoners on this issue, but have taken a position — and will continue to — that since legalization is occurring, it is up to government to minimize the cost to the taxpayers and to focus on public safety.

Again, moving to another area in this budget, we would note that in a time when the government was preaching a mantra of fiscal restraint, the decision to increase the number of government employees by 206, according to the government's own numbers, is a significant increase in the size of government. The numbers of those positions that are outside of core areas, or are in areas such as health care where there are genuine pressures reflect a choice of government not to restrain spending nearly as much as their words would suggest they are.

I note that the government has appeared overly focused on optics, photo opportunities and platitudes and those in fact do not reflect the core interests and priorities of Yukoners. I mentioned — and will recap again — the fact that in choosing to remove details from the budget, they have actually removed by their own admission 70 pages of detail from this year's budget and the supplementary estimates themselves contain less detail than they did before.

I would note, in talking about the financial trajectory, that while we are going to be focused mostly on holding the government to account for its own commitments and on the future, it is important to correct the record when the Premier makes some incorrect statements about the spending trajectory under the previous government.

I would note in fact that the Financial Advisory Panel that the Premier appointed agreed with statements that the Official Opposition has been making and acknowledged the fact that, as they recommended government table its budget showing the fully consolidated books and projections, that in fact if the budget is looked at on a fully consolidated basis — and that is in laypersons terms, including all of the government entities, not just the government entities that are typically part of the main estimates — the financial picture actually looks better both going forward and in the past number of years than one would believe from looking at the government's main books. I would note — and before I quote the reference from the Financial Advisory Panel's report that in fact, if you look over

the past seven years, you will see that during that time period, contrary to the government's rhetoric — I should say seven years prior to them taking office — that in fact the growth of government revenues —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Hon. Premier, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, Mr. Speaker, the second time today, we have heard the word "rhetoric". We would like to get a ruling on whether or not that word has been deemed unparliamentary — using unparliamentary language — 19(h).

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I think the House has heard from me on this. I am going to review the record on that term and I will get back to the House.

What I personally think is probably unimportant, but the term itself — for me, I think it is borderline but I will confer with the Clerk and I will provide guidance. But for the purposes of this sitting today, I would ask that members use their abundant vocabulary and creativity and use other words in lieu of "rhetoric" today. As I said, I promise I will return to the House with my views.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will rephrase that, as you have requested, and note that there are a number — the financial picture and the government's assertions about the financial picture do not line up. I would encourage any Yukoners who are trying to determine in a debate between elected members who is reflecting the accurate picture, I would encourage them to look at the audited Public Accounts, which are audited by the Auditor General. His review of those Public Accounts will demonstrate — in fact, if you look over the fiscal years encompassing 2010-11 to 2016-17, you will see that for five of those seven years, government revenues across government on a consolidated basis grew more than expenses.

There were only two years where expenses grew more than revenues. I will move on as well to a quote by the Premier's own Financial Advisory Panel and note a segment from page 38 of the report: "But, one must interpret these numbers cautiously. The financial health of the Yukon government is stronger than its headline deficit projections suggest. There are a variety of entities that are excluded in such calculations. The full consolidated budget balance is typically stronger when net income from these entities is included.

"There are multiple entities included in the consolidated budget excluded from the non-consolidated one. In particular, Yukon College, Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon Housing Corporation, and other entities each generate revenue that typically exceed expenses. But this revenue sometimes takes the form of an intergovernmental transfer from the Yukon general government to the entity in question. Of the \$170 million in other entity revenue expected for 2017-18, \$120 million is a transfer from the Yukon government. With

other entity expenses of just over \$140 million, there is an overall surplus of close to \$27 million. Combined with the small surplus for the general government of \$6.5 million in 2017-18 the consolidated surplus becomes over \$33 million. This is the difference between the red and blue bars below. Over the past five years, the consolidated surplus was just over \$30 million larger than the non-consolidated.” That, again, is from page 38 of the *Yukon Financial Advisory Panel Final Report*.

That no doubt underlines why they recommended twice in the report that government — and I quote: “Improve comprehensiveness and transparency of territorial budgeting to include fully consolidated books and projections.” Again, I would note that this is an area where government seems to be cherry-picking which recommendations they are choosing to follow from the Financial Advisory Panel report.

I would note that, in concluding my remarks today, in addition to continuing some of the programs that I have referred to, I do recognize that there has been good work done by government and government employees. I would note, as an example of that, the action that has been taken in moving forward on civic addressing. I would thank both the Minister of Community Services and staff of his department for their work on that file. I would note that I do have constituents who have concerns with the structure and I expressed those to the minister. While those changes were not incorporated, I do appreciate the dedication of staff to advancing this file and recognize the benefit that will come from it.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I could go on at length, but I think that has largely summarized the most significant concerns with the budget. Again, in summary, I would note that the budget would not be balanced if government had done as they said they would and delivered the capital spending they promised. If they had implemented the other areas such as actually delivering on the mental health workers they had promised, this would be a deficit position for the fiscal year-end, not a surplus.

Ms. Hanson: In speaking to the supplementary estimates for 2017-18, there are a number of remarks I thought I would make this afternoon in that regard.

The minister, in his opening comments, spoke about this being an exercise in accountability, and I would agree that this is in fact what the whole budget process is — an exercise in accountability. I will repeat again — and I will not stop repeating it — that we have made it clear that we don’t believe that this government and its predecessor have been able to demonstrate that they can manage what they don’t measure. Accountability is not just the numbers. The Finance minister may be pleased that they have come squeaking close with a smaller deficit than they had anticipated.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, over the years we have seen governments find ways to expend to the limits and beyond of what was approved by the elected representatives in this Assembly. True accountability is being able to answer questions with respect to how the money was spent. What were the objectives for the expenditures? How were the

objectives developed? How was the achievement of those objectives measured?

We expected more of this government, not just because modernizing accountability is the right thing to do, but because they said they were going to do the business of government better. We expected the government to provide data with analysis of main and supplementary budget estimates to assist MLAs in understanding what we are approving — data to corroborate how these expenditures are being implemented. Instead, we have less information and, to top it off, yesterday the Minister of Finance tabled a performance plan, and despite his comments after his ministerial statement, he made the comment in this House yesterday — and I quote: “With the performance plans today as a ministerial statement, we’re not necessarily asking for comments from the opposition.”

It may come as a surprise to the Minister of Finance, but the opposition members are also elected by Yukoners. We are obliged to hold this government to account, and we will. So if he is serious that his ministerial statements are merely announcements, then perhaps he should more correctly use a press release as a means of making it, because as the MLA for Whitehorse Centre and the Leader of the Yukon New Democratic Party, I do take seriously the responsibilities vested in me.

The minister said that in the document he tabled yesterday — and I quote: “... out of 2017-18 alone, we have delivered on eight commitments...” So let’s look at the minister’s performance plan. He says this on the front sheet: “... our plan identifies territory-wide indicators...” and “... we’re gathering... data”. I began to look at the performance plan and I have a number of questions for the Minister of Finance with respect to data and indicators. I hope he will answer them.

In 2017 — I’m presuming it is 2017 because, curiously in this performance plan, there are no targets, there are no dates, and there are no timelines. That’s the beginning of not being able to measure — by not establishing those. But we’ll just go through the document and its nice colour coding.

Starting with page 2, we talk about developing teams of health and social service providers in communities. Well, what’s the number? Which communities? Where? When? When were they achieved? When will they be achieved? I’m just trying to choose the ones that, off the top, refer to 2017-18.

We will provide services to allow seniors to remain in their own homes. How many seniors? Where? How will that be done? What are the performance indicators?

Increase affordable housing for people across Yukon — what is the number of units? Where across the Yukon? What types of housing? What are the criteria being used to establish affordability? How will you know you have succeeded?

Respond to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission — so three years on, which of the calls to action? When? What was done in 2017? How, by whom and how much?

Remediate contaminated sites in communities across Yukon — which communities, which highway camps along the highways of this territory? How many of them were remediated? How many were new ones over the course of the last year? What is the cost?

Reduce diesel used in off-grid communities — what are the targets for reduction? Which communities? Which are priorities? How are those established?

There are many.

We have funded 21 projects to explore and plan business opportunities to the regional economic development fund. Which projects? What did they achieve? Who were they for? What were the measurable outcomes of those projects? What are the targeted outcomes?

We have funded the continuation of the First Nations housing program. How much? How many units? Where?

We completed a Yukon asset construction agreement with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. How much? How many jobs did it create? Where is that recorded in the budget documentation that is provided to the elected members of the Legislative Assembly? Mr. Speaker, it is not provided to the elected members of the Legislative Assembly in any of the documents tabled in this legislative assembly.

Developed joint force management plans with First Nations — which First Nations? When? When will they be completed? How many have been completed? Where is that information, Mr. Speaker?

Increasing local employment opportunities by working in partnership with Yukon First Nations on wildland fire service contracts. How many contracts? Which First Nations? Where is that information in the budget documents? How many employment opportunities and how many months of employment has that created, or employment weeks?

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, because the document is full of broad statements. We are going to do this, we are going to do that, we are doing this, we've done that — but nothing that quantifies, nothing that says what is achieved, nothing that says this is what we are working toward, and this is the outcome that we expect for the expenditure of the monies that this government has asked us to approve in this budget and in the past budget, and in this supplementary estimate. Until this government gets serious about providing accurate data forecasts based on accountability for the actual expenditure and whether or not it is achieving any objectives — because you can tell me that you have spent the money. I can see that the money has gone out the door. What we are elected to do, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that it actually achieves something on behalf of all citizens of this territory, now and into the future.

We will come back many times, no doubt, to this bit of PR, and I expect of course that it will show up on our doorsteps in another glossy piece. I do recall the Minister of Finance in the previous government castigating the previous government for similar PR efforts.

As I said at the outset, they said they would do it differently — they would do the business of government differently and more effectively — and, unfortunately, the

track record so far has been that we are following the same pattern. That is unfortunate.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would like to thank my colleagues on the opposite side of the Assembly here for their comments here today. I was glad to hear the Member for Whitehorse Centre finally mentioning the supplementary in the last 30 seconds of her speech, and I do want to address a couple of the issues that she did bring up about how the money was spent.

We heard a lot of talk about interest in how the money was spent, and then a focus on something brand new, which is more information on the performance plans. I will address what the performance plans are for but, before I do that, it is as if this is the member opposite's first time in the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, which we all know is not true. We know that the member opposite knows that the details of every one of those questions that she has asked will come out in Committee of the Whole.

We will be absolutely thrilled to have those conversations with all of —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think the member opposite still wants to talk here, but I believe it's my turn. I sat here very politely while I listened to her. She could do the same for me.

Mr. Speaker, we have the ability to put all of that information up front in these documents, but I tell you, Mr. Speaker — I don't know if anybody would get past page 200 if that was the case.

What we have is — we put out the performance plans. I'll talk about those. But again, every single one of those questions that the member opposite asked is a legitimate question. I believe that these are questions from Yukoners who are concerned about how we are spending our money. I will make sure, as the leader of this party, that if these questions are not answered in Committee of the Whole where the line items live — in the main budget, not the supplementary budget, which is, again, confusing, and I don't know if the member opposite really understands that we're doing the supplementary budget — then we will definitely make sure that these questions get answered, because they are important questions.

Now, as we talk about the performance plans — as a government, we do want to change how the conversation works and what we're doing to accomplish new work. This is just one of those processes. What we want to talk about as a government is how we are making real differences in the lives of Yukoners. In the past, governments reported on the operational inputs and outputs, such as the number of projects delivered or the dollars spent — to answer two different questions. I mean, that's what the Member for Lake Laberge wants to see back — the dollars of specific projects that were listed before this government came in, with the Yukon Party. That's how they used to do it.

This report goes beyond that type of traditional government process and reporting and makes a connection between what we are doing and how our activities translate to real impacts and real outcomes — and, ultimately, meaning for Yukoners. Now, our initial goals have been to highlight steps that we are taking to move the territory forward to a more just, economically prosperous and sustainable future. It is a comprehensive but not exhaustive list of actions that we are taking to make future progress.

Further, it contains an initial set of key indicators that establishes a baseline on critical issues such as environmental stewardship, improving wellness, and driving economic prosperity. Every measure and every action outlined in the plan is intended to drive action on our core government priorities while also building on the mandate letters presented to each Cabinet member in early 2017.

Now, this report is not coming at the beginning or the end of a conversation about policy approaches or outcomes. There is considerable work to be done to evaluate whether we are succeeding in that mission. We must continue to review whether or process, our programs, our policies and our relationship-building activities — to make sure that we're determining that we're actually getting genuine advancement of our goals. That is what we're doing.

Again, with the performance plans — it's a beginning indicator. It's a new approach. On this side of the Legislative Assembly, we believe that this feeds into being more transparent and more accountable. We're going to make sure that every single one of the issues that the member opposite, the Leader of the NDP, asked for — which were specific to the mains — I'm guessing in Committee of the Whole, we'll address that. I will take a look as well through all of those questions to see if there was anything specific to the supplementary budget. If there was, I will get back to her on those. But there was a lot more toward the mains, in my opinion. So I hope that she does ask these questions to the members responsible, because that's where they should be directed.

I will turn to the Member for Lake Laberge to address some of the issues that he brought up. He started by — I think — giving me some flak for having a speech written, so I do want to reach out and say thank you to my speech writers. I think they do an excellent job of listening to a whole-of-government approach, whether it is from me as Minister of Finance or all of the other ministers, deputy ministers and the assistant deputy ministers who put together this herculean effort. I tell you — if they are going to be writing down these eloquent words for me and I am not going to say them, that would just be disrespectful to my speech-writing team. I assume the member opposite writes everything for himself, and he must have done the same thing when he was a Cabinet minister — to be surprised by the fact that I have people who help in writing speeches. But I digress.

I think this is an interesting theme that we have been hearing from the Yukon Party a couple of different times about our \$30-million lapse when it comes to the capital projects. I am floored that this is something that the Yukon

Party wants to debate, seeing as I am looking at the numbers of the lapses that the Yukon Party has done, and they have not come even close to \$30 million. There were: \$101 million in lapses in 2014-15; in 2015-16, \$74 million in lapses; in 2016-17, \$58 million in lapses.

So for the members opposite, it is intriguing to us on this side of the House that we have done so much work to narrow the gap between forecasts and actuals — and I know the member opposite is laughing over there. It makes me laugh too. I do not know why this would be a narrative that the Yukon Party would bring up time and time again when really they have not done a great job in the past with these lapses.

In our budget, it was \$30 million. We are hoping that the plans and the work that we have done on this side of the House in this year to get that number down as far as possible continue because it would not be great to go back in time and to go back to a time when \$100 million of taxpayer money that was being touted in a mains gets lapsed. I am not really sure why this is a narrative that we keep on hearing from the Yukon Party, but keep going. That is an interesting one.

We have heard a few different times from the member opposite that he wants to see the highlight format back, and he believes that we are curtailing a lot of information. I would disagree. I would say with the four pages of budgets highlights with our infographics and 32 pages of a fiscal outlook that is put into the mains, which has not been done before — I do not think the Yukon Party actually had a theme as to when they were doing economic forecasts. They just kind of came out every once in a while here and there.

We also have added for the first time in Yukon history a five-year capital plan, which is another eight pages of information. Added to that is having the performance plans as well. I think we are adding information for the consumer.

We could go through a list where we are listing off all of the individual line items and put those dollar values in there, but we really believe that we want to show the theme. We want to show the budget highlights. We want to show the fiscal outlook. We want to show a five-year capital plan, and we want to show that our supplementary budgets are smaller because they are not being used as a budget light, or a secondary budget consideration, to try to balance the budget.

Let's see — there is so much to go on here. Again, we keep on hearing from the Yukon Party about a lot of the failures of our campaign promises. This is budget number two — it's the second budget of a five-year mandate. I believe the Yukon Party started in year 4 touting that they had accomplished all of their goals. So it took them four years out of their mandate — again fibre optic not completed; mining in the municipality — still a lot of issues there and not a lot of leadership being shown by the Yukon Party on that; Dawson infrastructure in my town and the waste-water treatment facility was not necessarily something that they could brag about, to use their words. They have been using the word "brag" a lot lately this session. Bed pressures — again at the hospital — something that wasn't dealt with and also Whistle Bend. To go from a 300-bed facility to a 150-bed facility and to have the member opposite taking a look at the new hires

that we have done to actually make sure programs and services go into Whistle Bend and to say that we're growing government — it's a very mixed message.

I'm not really too sure where the member opposite is going with this, or the Yukon Party is going with this narrative, but I tell you, he used the words "cherry-picking" — those are interesting words. He also mentioned the \$250,000 for the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel that then went up to, I believe, another \$58,000 more. I would love to speak to this. The reason why this money was added was because the campaign — the consultation process — was so successful that they felt that they needed to continue down that road. So we had to put more money into this because we really believed that Yukoners needed to be heard. We needed to make sure that the success of those engagements were working, so we did make the decision to put more money into the Financial Advisory Panel and I believe that this is an important piece. I think it's really important to actually do that because we believe in consultation and we want to make sure this is happening.

We keep getting criticized by the Yukon Party for a lack of consultation. Now, because we actually did more consultation, they are not happy with that either. So which is it? You talk about cherry-picking on consultation. The Yukon Party who went to the Supreme Court of Canada because of their lack of consulting is sitting on both sides of the fence when it comes to this issue.

Let's continue here on mentioning special needs not being met — in this supplementary alone there is \$1.8 million for additional education assistants. I believe that is 35.4 new hires there.

So again, just correcting the record alone, Mr. Speaker, is going to take all of my time here. I apologize for that, but the list is long.

New Supreme Court Judge — again, we keep on hearing this narrative and this siloed narrative from the member opposite. Just so he knows — and I believe he already does, but he is still trying to make fodder here — new Supreme Court judges are the responsibility of the federal government, as are the salaries, training and travel. So again, I don't understand how he is adding together these numbers as somehow on us, but again, that is part and parcel of the federal government's budget.

We talked a bit about the consultation that goes into the budget process. Again, the Financial Advisory Panel — a very successful campaign, a third-party or non-partisan approach — feeding into the financial considerations we have done. There have been over 107 community visits by this team to all the communities outside of Whitehorse in the year leading up to January alone. We had an opportunity as well to get out there with the Yukon Forum — lots of great conversations with the Yukon Forum; attending First Nation meetings in Pelly Crossing, Carcross, Old Crow, Watson Lake; meeting with community associations in Faro and Ross River; attending municipal council meetings in Watson Lake and Teslin; meeting with industry associations, placer miner

associations, chambers of commerce; and the list goes on and on.

It is always interesting to hear that we are not consulting on the budget when really this government has done a great job of getting out into the communities, engaging with people, invoking non-partisan reviews, taking a financial approach that involves evidence-based decision-making. I am proud of the work that has been done on this side of the table when it comes to that.

It is very interesting that as we are addressing all of these issues from the member opposite, the Yukon Party — the Member for Lake Laberge — did not mention once the main piece of this supplementary budget, which was the loan to YDC. It is very interesting that the member opposite spent no time in his deliberations talking about the most substantial piece of this supplementary budget, and I wonder why that is, Mr. Speaker. We do know he was the minister responsible for YDC when this loan was granted. We do know that there were some serious fiscal concerns and considerations that happened because of it, and yet not a word on that at all from the member opposite. I am not going to speak too much more about that. Maybe we will see more conversations. I think that is what is happening, Mr. Speaker. He is waiting to have this conversation with the minister responsible. I look forward to that. I relish that opportunity, actually.

We have been told a few different times — we keep on hearing this from the Yukon Party about the sitting days, and how we took 138 days to sit at our first main budget. Now this is interesting, because the Yukon Party in their last budget governed for 134 days without calling the Legislature back, not in their first year — this was their 14th year. I guess that extra four days is what they are so irate about because, again, just in the previous year, they waited 134 days without calling the Legislature back while they figured out when and where and how to call an election. It's very interesting that this is again a criticism coming from the Yukon Party.

We did hear from the Member for Lake Laberge his consternation when it comes to the legalization of marijuana. It is interesting that we are still not sure where the Yukon Party stands on this. We had a vote in the Legislature where one member voted a certain way on this and the rest voted against it. We tried to parse out today whether or not the Yukon Party is for or against the legalization of cannabis nationally. We did not hear that. We heard a lot of words, but we did not hear yes or no to that question.

The member opposite brought the question up and I think the Minister of Justice did a fantastic job of outlining the great work that Health and Social Services has done and the great work that the Department of Justice has done in making sure that the legislation that we put forward here recognizes the intent of this government — the intent being a hybrid model for all things marijuana. Now here is an interesting piece — if the member opposite knows some private sector folks who want to get involved, who want to do the distribution, who want to do the warehousing and want to do more in this pursuit as Canada goes down this road, then by all means, give me a call. Give the Minister responsible for the Yukon

Liquor Corporation or give the Economic Development minister or the Minister for Justice a call and we will absolutely set up that meeting.

If the member opposite knows, as he talks about us growing government from a federal campaign that makes sure that every jurisdiction in Canada needs to have access to cannabis when this legislation comes forth — if he or his party knows of a private sector interest out there that wants to be involved in these pursuits, please — we would love to talk with them.

Until then, we have an obligation to Canadians and we have an obligation to Yukoners to make sure that this federal legislation is succinct, and I have to tell you — big kudos to my Attorney General for the hard work that she has done to make sure that this legislation is succinct — as we watch Ottawa — but also has the flexibility to allow for private, public or a hybrid model moving forward.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker. I will leave it there. There is a lot more, but the record seems to be skipping a bit on the other side there. I'm sure I will have an opportunity again to clear the record and to continue to advocate for the great work that not only the caucus here — my colleagues here in the Yukon Liberal Party and all the work that they do — but also the public servants and all the work that they do, knowing full well that we need to turn the ship around for fiscal prosperity. Again, any time that I have an opportunity to thank the public servants for that good work I will and I look forward to more conversations as we get into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yea, eight nay.

Speaker: The ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 204 agreed to

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Before we proceed, I have the benefit of my very able Clerk and Deputy Clerk, so I'm going to — the House has heard about “rhetoric”, which I'm sure is Latin, but in May and November of last year, I think the observation is still applies — if you'll just indulge me for about two or three minutes so we can at least temporarily put this to rest one more time.

This is from the second edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 619: “In dealing with unparliamentary language, the Speaker takes into account the tone, manner and intention of the Member speaking; the person to whom the words at issue were directed; the degree of provocation; and, most importantly, whether or not the remarks created disorder in the Chamber. Thus, language deemed unparliamentary one day may not necessarily be deemed unparliamentary the following day. The codification of unparliamentary language has proven impractical as it is the context in which words or phrases are used that the Chair must consider when deciding whether or not they should be withdrawn. Although an expression may be found to be acceptable, the Speaker has cautioned that any language which leads to disorder in the House should not be used. Expressions which are considered unparliamentary when applied to an individual Member have not always been considered so when applied ‘in a generic sense’ or to a party.”

The challenge for the Chair is to determine whether the word “rhetoric” in the context in which it was used today constitutes unparliamentary language. Having considered the utterances today and the use of the word “rhetoric” in both circumstances, the Chair concludes that there is no point of order. The Chair does not sense a high degree of provocation in the statements made by the members today, nor did the statement create disorder in the House. Had the term “rhetoric” been accompanied by one or more derogatory modifiers, the degree of provocation might have been higher and disorder may have resulted and it is possible the Chair may have ruled differently on the point of order.

I would imagine in the fine Westminster tradition, you would have things like “inflammatory”, “bland”, “ineffective”, “pabulum”, “fiery”, “incoherent”, “partisan”, “self-serving” — those types of words — which would probably raise the temperature in the House if those were all attached to “rhetoric”. In my view, “rhetoric” is certainly a critical term. It's a critical term; it's not a friendly term — but that's not the test.

In my view, having reviewed this ruling from November and from May of last year, the term “rhetoric” is not unparliamentary per se, but it is certainly contextual. I thank the Member for Lake Laberge and the Hon. Premier for their interventions on this point today and I thank the members for your attention to this matter.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 204: *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*.

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is my pleasure to address members during Committee of the Whole. I would like to welcome Kate White, my Deputy Minister. It is kind of neat to be able to say “Kate White” in the Legislative Assembly, so I am going to say it a few times. Help me welcome Kate White to the Legislative Assembly. Katherine White, my Deputy Minister of Finance.

The 2017-18 supplementary estimates have clarified Yukon’s position for the fiscal year. The annual surplus of \$6.5 million was projected in the main estimates. The surplus forecast in the supplementary estimates is \$6.3 million. Yukon’s forecasted accumulated surplus is \$1.37 billion; however, there are changes to note for both the main estimates and the first supplementary estimates, which were presented in the fall of 2017.

Net financial assets at the end of the year will be up significantly from \$9.5 million forecasted in the main estimates to \$30.1 million at the end of the fiscal year. Compared to the main estimates, operation and maintenance costs are higher by \$51.8 million.

In comparing these second supplementary estimates with the first supplementary estimates, there is a \$48.1-million increase in operation and maintenance costs; however, much of this is accounted for with the \$39.2-million loan to the Yukon Development Corporation, which represents about 81-percent of the overall increases.

This is necessary because of a decision made by the previous government. They allowed the Yukon Energy Corporation to convert a significant portion of the previous loan to a grant. This left the Yukon Development Corporation unable to fulfill the terms of the original repayment schedule.

Under those terms, the Development Corporation would have been required to repay \$39.2 million by March 31, 2018. Our government refinanced the loan to allow Yukon Development Corporation to meet its obligations. Two areas in particular did have higher operation and maintenance costs. That was Health and Social Services and Education. These supplementary estimates include additional funding for teaching assistants and other costs relating to higher enrolment in schools, legislated programs such as social income support, and Yukon seniors income supplement and insured health services also had higher costs than predicted. These are both growth areas, which are consistently a challenge in estimating.

Some operation and maintenance costs were lower than anticipated in areas related to deferrals of work on well abandonment projects, slower progress on the Kluane First Nation windmill project, and a number of position vacancies throughout Highways and Public Works.

Increased costs in operation and maintenance were offset by significant changes to recoveries, resulting in no change to the government’s bottom line. Since the first supplementary estimates, recoveries have increased by \$7.2 million.

Mr. Chair, gross capital spending is expected to be about \$25 million less than planned in the first supplementary estimates, and \$29 million less than the main estimates. Most of this change results from less progress in Community Services under the clean water, waste-water and land development programs.

Highways and Public Works is also expecting to lapse capital funding, primarily in the transportation envelope. Much of this is the result of delayed projects or decisions to reschedule work to the summer months of 2018. When less is spent on projects, there is less to recover from Canada. As a result, there is a corresponding decrease in recoveries of \$14 million since the first supplementary estimates.

Close and continued attention will be needed to ensure our financial situation remains strong.

A lot of my notes here are based upon information that we already talked about in the second reading, so I’ll end my comments short there so that we can get to the general debate conversations and hopefully get to some of the particular line-item items as well.

So with that I’ll take my seat. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to this, I appreciate some of the information that the Premier provided. I’m not going to spend a lot of time commenting on some of the Premier’s closing remarks at second reading, but I do have to ask a few questions related to that, as well as pointing out that as many times as the Premier may try to claim that by including the economic outlook as part of the budget, government is really providing more information. That doesn’t account for the fact that under the previous government the economic outlook was released — it was separate from the budget — but the

information was still released. In choosing to remove — according to government's own information that they provided to the Official Opposition and Third Party — some 70 pages of information from the budget this year, it has provided less information. They have indicated that the information is available online, but as we have learned and as the Third Party has learned, not all that information is available online, or if so, it is certainly not easy to find that information.

Again, the government obviously is not going to reprint and re-table the current budget, but if the Premier is truly even at all committed to the statements that he and his colleagues make about improving transparency and raising the bar in democracy, I would encourage them to ensure that in future budget years, that information is once again included in the budget and the budget contains more detail — more numbers — not just platitudes, because this budget and the budget speech are very heavy on platitudes and very skimpy on detail.

I will again make the point that under previous governments, the budget highlights actually used to tell you something about what departments would do. In the last year's budget that we're currently debating — *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* related to — and in the upcoming fiscal year budget that was tabled recently — both of those have stripped out a lot of that detail about major projects and activities that will be undertaken by individual departments. Providing that information — maybe — at a later date during a briefing by officials or during debate in the Assembly is a poor substitute for the old practice of actually releasing the key details on budget day in the Assembly tabled by the Premier and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Chair, one other point I need to note is that when the Premier very defensively explained why he took so long to call the first real legislative Sitting under his watch and pointed to — bizarrely — a gap between legislative Sittings under a previous government, what that failed to take into account is the simple fact that no Premier upon taking office with a new government has waited so long to convene the first Sitting of the Legislative Assembly. As well, no Premier has done what this Premier has the record for, which is spending close to one-half billion dollars through special warrants. A special warrant, for those who are not familiar with the technical term, is money that is spent without the authorization of the Legislative Assembly.

So between the two special warrants — the record special warrant of \$427 million, coupled with the first special warrant this government used of some \$29.4 million in total — the net total was over \$456 million in special warrants that the government chose to spend before calling the Legislative Assembly.

We have heard the narrative in both the Premier's introductory remarks on the supplementary estimates and in his response to the Leader of the Third Party and me — the continuing narrative that basically boils down to this: every spending decision we make that is controversial or unpopular is really the previous government's fault. But the details of the

plans for operations of any of the facilities that were underway under the previous government, such as Whistle Bend continuing care facility, the Premier and his colleagues chose the details of the operational funding to approve, the staffing plan and so on and so forth, and this is not something that you can continue to point fingers at someone else for your choices. As anyone who has ever dealt with staffing — even a small enterprise within government knows this — it's not black and white — what resources are required. There is room for decision by the duly elected decision-makers of whether they approve the Cadillac option or approve a more modest option.

Mr. Chair, I'm now going to move on to a few questions, but I did have to point that out as well as pointing out that arguing that providing less detail in the budget is really somehow providing more detail is somewhat — I'm trying to think of a term that isn't unparliamentary — a rose-coloured-glasses view of the world, if I may say so.

When we're talking about the \$30 million in capital spending that has been lapsed by the Premier and his colleagues and when we're talking about the failure to fill most of the 11 mental health worker positions they announced, the Premier keeps trying to cherry-pick from previous decades and come up with an excuse of why his activities might not be worse than someone else's, but this is a government that was elected on promising to raise the bar. They spent both the election campaign and their early mandate talking about how they were going to improve budgeting and not continue lapsing millions of dollars of capital dollars like they have been critical of previous governments for, and then the Premier has turned around and we have seen in fact \$30 million in capital lapses and a budget that would in fact be in deficit were it not for the failure to deliver on capital projects, the failure to deliver on promised mental health workers and other areas where government didn't meet commitments and didn't fulfill commitments that they made.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to move on to a few specific questions here and I would ask in terms of the — the Premier made reference to money in the supplementary budget for additional staff for Education and these were his remarks at the close of second reading, so it's possible I might have misheard what he said, as I don't have a written transcript yet. But I believe the Premier indicated there were 34 additional staff members for the Department of Education. Can the Premier indicate if that is 34 FTEs in addition to the 206 FTEs that the government previously announced as positions being added during the 2017-18 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will start with the 70 pages that were, to use the opposition critic's word, "omitted". On the contrary, they're still there. They are online. Those 70 pages were provided to the minister himself and to everybody in the Legislative Assembly. We believe on this side of the House that you have to take a look at the amount of paper that is going out and take a look at the costs that are associated with that and ask whether or not this is a good use of taxpayers' money.

It is available online. Our website is now more succinctly orchestrated for online users for the taxpayers to use. If anybody listening to this debate or reaching out to the MLAs has said, "I want to see those 70 pages", we will provide those pages for anybody else as well. This is a way of being better with the taxpayers' money. We believe that this was a good initiative for these 70 pages to be available online for all Yukoners. Again, those 70 pages were given in full to all members of the Legislative Assembly.

When it comes to the actual economic forecast, I think the big difference between the way the Yukon Party did it and the way that we are doing it is that, when you don't have a set date for the forecasts, for the outlooks, then they are not integrated. They are not part of the budgetary process. They do not have a narrative that comes into that actual budgetary process. We did not think that it was a good way of spending time and effort on the forecast. We believe that having the forecast integrated into the mains, the budget speech and all of the materials does provide more information and more forecasts that are integrated based upon the spending in this mains.

I am not going to address the issue on special warrants. We have gone over that ad nauseam in the Legislative Assembly. We are standing by our side of that story, but it does not relate to the supplementary budget so I am going to keep my comments to the supplementary budget.

We had the member opposite talking about \$30 million in capital as if we are somehow failing where they maybe succeeded. I am not sure, but if we were talking about a golf game and if, at the end of the golf game, I got 100, and in the next shot I got an 80 — these high numbers — and then I got a 30 — well, I would say that was a remarkable improvement. Do we have more to do? Yes, we do — absolutely. What I really want to see in this year's budget and this year moving forward — and we have talked to all of the members here in the Legislative Assembly. We want to do more work with the private sector to make sure that even that 280 number that we put out there — that is a more realistic number.

If you noticed, Mr. Chair — if you look into all of the different forecasts moving forward, it is 280 right across the board on our five-year capital plan. Does it stay in stone? No, this is breathing, living document. But we really believe that accurate forecasting of what we can actually get out the door now makes sense to Yukoners when we say how we are going to spend their money. In the last five years of the Yukon Party government, they did not come near to \$30 million in lapses. They were way over. Is \$30 million something that we are going to be bragging about? No, it is not something we are bragging about. We want to get better at this. We want to make sure that the projects that we say are going to come on to that five-year plan and are going to be in our budget actually get out the door. We want to make sure that we are creating a capitalistic model in all of our communities so that we have competitive private sector engagement in the tendering process. We have just begun to do the good work that really is necessary in these departments.

The Yukon Party typically budgeted for over \$300 million and rarely spent more than \$200 million. I am not sure if the member opposite wants to go back to that time again, just like he wants to go back to the budget highlights, but I think what we are doing here is a remarkable improvement to the way that capital tenders get forecasted for. I think that is it relating to the supplementary budget.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier did not answer the question I asked about the additional staff added in Education. I will turn it over to him. I think he has an answer there.

Hon. Mr. Silver: My apologies. In the supplementary, the \$1.8 million is for additional education assistants — additional.

Mr. Cathers: I think the Premier is saying that those are on top of the previously announced FTEs. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Silver: "Additional" means added on to — so, yes. The answer is yes.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that clarification from the Premier. I'm going to talk briefly about the information taken out of the budget. I would note that the Premier had indicated that the opposition has received the information contained in the 70 pages that used to be in the budget. We actually haven't yet. There may be the intention to provide it, but I haven't seen a copy of it, unless it was just recently passed on to our office, and I would appreciate it if they could provide that, either in paper or in electronic form, as expeditiously as possible.

In fairness to the Premier, if all the information is there and we have missed something in not finding it online, then I won't go after them too much for failing to release information, but I would note that, while the choice has been made to add the economic outlook to the budget — which also increases the printing costs and pages to be printed when the budget is printed — the statistical information was in fact more useful as part of that in trying to understand what the budget actually does and what has changed.

Without spending too much time this afternoon debating this, I would just encourage the Premier and the government to look, in the next fiscal year, at putting that statistical information back in the budget and potentially, when they are printing copies of the budget for the wider public distribution, to have that as an addendum or information that people can either request or get on line, but in the interest of providing members of the Assembly that information within the budget so we're able to see that succinctly in one package, without having to search for it on the Internet.

I'm going to move on to the question — when the Premier is talking about government out of the business of doing business. Again, what we have been concerned about is that, while it is a nice talking point, in the area of cannabis as a glaring example, it seems that government's words and actions are miles apart. What we have stated as our position for the Official Opposition is that we recognize that the issue of cannabis legalization is one that Yukoners have very strong feelings on either side of but, since that is happening because of the federal government moving forward with legalization, we believe it is incumbent upon the Government of Yukon to

take the necessary steps to responsibly manage it and to mitigate risks, as well as ensure that they do their utmost to protect public safety, including ensuring that the government fulfills its responsibility to regulate, inspect, enforce and educate — related to cannabis.

But we disagree with government's view that the hybrid model — with public sector dollars put at risk in cannabis retail and distribution through purchasing and retailing cannabis — is a good use of taxpayers' money. When we get into debate on the mains, we will certainly be debating that point further. Since the Premier did mention it in his comments on the supplementary, I did want to note that. I would also note to the Premier that he may not have talked to some of his ministers about Yukon small businesses that have reached out to members of his Cabinet, but there are private sector interests here in Yukon, Yukon small business owners who are interested in being involved in both the retail and production of cannabis.

They are credible private sector proponents, and I would note that it is not my job — nor is it the Premier's — to stand here and actually deal with the application process for licensing a retail or production establishment, but I would note that they do appear to have a well-thought-out and well-developed approach toward the opportunity to, as the case may be, either grow or retail cannabis once it becomes legal.

I would urge government to focus on its core responsibilities, rather than on either competing with the private sector or risking taxpayers' dollars on those areas.

Before I move on, I would just give the Premier a heads-up that we will be asking the government to come up with a timeline for when the private sector will be able to legally operate in the area and also whether government plans on the government entry into retail and distribution of cannabis being temporary or permanent, and how they plan to manage that.

Another area in the supplementary budget that we mentioned in my second reading remarks but I haven't received an explanation on is: Can the Premier explain why, in a year where apparently the Yukon economy is doing well and unemployment is among the lowest in the country, there has been such a significant increase in social assistance costs? The numbers, as we understand it from the budget information we received, show that there has been a \$2.9-million increase over what was budgeted for social assistance in Whitehorse and in the rest of Yukon — collectively, \$2.9 million in total.

Can the Premier provide an explanation for how many additional cases was that? What makes up that rather large increase in social assistance in supposedly a time of economic success?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'll start from the last question and work backward.

The increase in the funding pressures from social assistance isn't necessarily from the current economy. It is from weaker economies in the past as well. These things aren't instantaneous. They roll in as the economies move. We are hoping to see a better trend in that, moving forward, as long as our economy stays in the good shape that we find it in today.

You can get more information on this conversation through the Minister of Health and Social Services, but again, there is going to be a lag when it comes to statistical analysis like these things and the ability to get that money out the door, and I think the member opposite knows that.

There are a couple of different answers to the questions that were asked. So again, I apologize — if the member opposite looks into his binder, the very last tab — those 70 pages should be there right now and, if they are not, then Management Board Secretariat will definitely get a copy to him.

From conversations that I'm seeing over here, it looks like it was in some, but not in the others. That's too bad — it should have been given out. That's in my briefing note — that it was given out to all members of the Legislative Assembly — so we will make sure that it happens and I'm apologizing if it didn't. Again, our intention was to make sure that it was given to all the members opposite.

Again, when it comes to the cannabis issue — the member opposite is saying that he is mentioning it, because I mentioned it in my response. No — I was responding to his original question in second reading when he brought up cannabis.

So again, the overall concept of getting out of the business of doing business — this is the narrative. We're looking where, in other places in Canada, the private sector can do something better than the government. So this is uncharted territory — the cannabis legislation and the legalization of cannabis. I would say — as I take a look across Canada and meeting with the other premiers — that New Brunswick would be the most public and Alberta would be the most private. We're looking at a hybrid model.

We agree that we want to get out of the business of doing business. Again, with that narrative, if the private sector can do it better — absolutely. I'll say it again: If the member opposite wants to be helpful to the private sector, we would love to engage with anybody local who believes that they could do warehousing or distribution, retail sales, in a more efficient manner — then, please, if the member opposite knows of any organizations or companies that can do that, we would love to have that conversation.

So again, we are designing our legislation to have the flexibility in the interim. I see the Member for Watson Lake shaking her head. I don't know if that's a shaking of head to the private sector or they are involved in cannabis — I'm not really sure. Maybe they can talk to me about what they didn't like about my answer.

Basically, the legislation that we're moving forward on right now allows flexibility in this in-between stage. My big concern is the price point of the illicit market. We've seen other jurisdictions go through concerns with that, so we're going to continue to monitor and make sure that our legislation is set for all options, whether it be private or public or a hybrid of options.

Mr. Cathers: Just in the area of cannabis, I would encourage the Premier to talk to some of his ministers. There have been Yukon members of the private sector who have

spoken to them about the potential for becoming able to sell and to produce cannabis once that is legal. I would encourage them to follow up on that.

Again, just to reiterate for those listening, that the central argument that we are making as the Official Opposition is that, while we recognize that the issue of legalization is one that people have strong feelings about, since it is happening, since the federal government is moving forward with legislation, we believe that the responsible action of the Yukon government is to minimize the cost to taxpayers, to protect public safety, and to engage in public education, and we believe that logically includes avoiding getting into the business of retail and distribution when there are private sector companies that are interested in doing so. We believe that government would be better to focus only on setting the framework for the private sector to operate and provide those services, as well as ensuring that government is prepared to regulate, inspect and enforce.

Moving on to other areas within the supplementary budget — the social assistance costs — I appreciate the answer from the Premier, but it doesn't, quite frankly, compute. The Premier was indicating that those costs in the last fiscal year are due to lag time, but the social assistance costs are dealt with on a month-by-month basis, based on the needs and the pressures. So I don't understand the claim that the pressure in Yukon can be based on previously low economic years. I would note that, in fact, as a side point, despite the Liberals' claims during the campaign that 2016 actually turned out to be a year of economic growth, according to Statistics Canada in the Yukon.

I would ask the Premier to provide some clarity on how those increased social assistance costs can somehow be due to previous years' economic situation in the territory, when in fact social assistance is supposed to be dealing with the actual costs being dealt with by people who can't afford — or pardon me, who can't find gainful employment and need to rely on social assistance at that current time.

In addition to that question, I would just ask the Premier whether the decision to provide \$600,000 retroactively to child care centres and day homes — we understand that is not included in this supplementary budget, though it's being made retroactive to April 1, 2017. Is that correct? Secondly, why was the decision made to provide money retroactively, and were there any criteria placed around that contribution, or simply cheques cut to day homes and daycare centres that had been operating since April 1?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm here prepared for the supplementary budget conversations. I just talked to the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services. If this \$600,000 that the member opposite mentions is part of the main budget, then we would be happy to discuss that during Committee of the Whole.

When it comes to the lag between social assistance and the economy, it's pretty easy to spell out. Things don't happen instantaneously. The economy comes online while you're still — you won't automatically, as of that day, see a remarkable

effect to the social assistance that has to be provided at that time.

A good way of describing it would be to describe the difference between a fox and rabbit population. Trends that happen in one will affect those other ones, but there will be a lag time in those things.

I don't know how else to describe it other than GDP and the effects of the economy, and that's great that we have a booming economy right now. It's great that we have a low unemployment rate. Those two statistics alone aren't going to overnight change the fact that we haven't always had those great statistics and there have been people in need, because the economy has not always been doing well.

We have had a GDP that was one of the worst in Canada for a while and, you know, it takes a while for things to move forward. We would be happy to take a look at the statistical evidence to show that trends in the GDP and the trends in the social assistance being doled out at the time are not instantaneous in their changes.

Mr. Cathers: I agree and I understand the fact that changes in social assistance do not happen immediately once the economy has improved, but what we are talking about here is, after a year in 2016 that had strong economic growth in the territory and a strong growth of GDP, and after 2017, when we also saw economic growth, to see in the 2017-18 main estimates an increase of \$2.9 million for unbudgeted social assistance costs that the government had not predicted and projected — to hear the explanation that somehow that is supposed to be due to economic pressures from a couple of years previous to that, that is an awful lot of lag time to swallow, in terms of an explanation, that it's just due to lag time on the system.

The applicants for social assistance are required to demonstrate — unless they have some long-term disability — that they are attempting to seek employment. In times where employment numbers are strong and unemployment is low, to see not just maintaining social assistance volumes, but in fact a significant increase in those numbers — an increase of almost \$3 million — we are going to have to get a little more detailed explanation from the Premier before we are simply going to accept the statement that it is all due to economic pressures from a couple of years previous.

We would appreciate that detail, including the number of increased recipients on social assistance broken down, as SA numbers normally are, by the Whitehorse region and regional social services, and also an explanation of whether government has changed any policies or criteria for reviewing applications for social assistance that might have led to this increased number in some way, shape or form.

The Premier attempted to take the fifth on the \$600,000 retroactive for childcare funding on whether it was or was not included in the supplementary budget. Again, that is actually my starting question: Are we correct in understanding that the \$600,000 the government is retroactively providing to childcare centres and day homes in the Yukon is not included in *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* and is retroactive to April 1, 2017?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will apologize, because I did hear from the member opposite that he said that money is not in the supplementary, and now he is asking me if it is in the supplementary. He was right on his first guess — if it was a guess — that \$600,000 is not in the supplementary budget — it is not. It was absorbed within the department. I apologize. I thought when he first spoke that this was the first thing he said — that this \$600,000 is not in the supplementary. He was correct.

Here is what happens after a recession. The social assistance cases that happened, happened in a lag and they happened after a recession. So a weak economic 2015 — economic growth today is now that hopefully we're going to see that population go back up. So the cases did go from 800 to 1,200, but here's the thing: People don't want to go on social assistance. You are going to bleed your resources first before you go on social assistance. For a lot of people in a recession, it's a last-resort effort that they want to do. So yes, there will be some lag time between the 2015 recession under the Yukon Party to what we're seeing now. Again, you imagine as well the social issues, mental health issues — different things — when you are being put on social assistance when you otherwise would like to be working.

So I don't know what else to say to draw the picture for the member opposite, but there is a lag. I know that the member opposite would not want to find himself in a position where he is on social assistance and that he would do everything in his power to make sure that he bleeds his resources before he has to do that. So again, this is the response for the lag. We're hoping that the cases are going to decrease. Again, you can take a look nationally, internationally or here locally about those trends. We would be happy to provide statistics to show that these numbers are not instantaneous.

Mr. Cathers: I agree with part of the Premier's statement about social assistance, but again, when you're seeing a spike from 800 social assistance cases to 1,200 coming a year and a half to two years after a year of economic downturn, it seems a little bit questionable to think that there would be a 50-percent increase all due to that lag time.

So I'm sure I'm not going to get the detail from the minister here today, but I would ask him to provide later not only the statistical information on the total number in a year, but more detailed information on — of that 50-percent increase in social assistance cases from 800 to 1,200, how many of those were short term and how many were long term? People, as the minister may know, can go on to social assistance for a very short period of time. It might only be for a month or two, depending on their situation. There is some ability to seek emergency funding in those situations — again, more detailed information on what made that up and how many of those are long-term recipients of social assistance versus short-term, because the explanation that there has been a 50-percent increase in the number of cases and it's all just due to lag time, a year and a half after a year of poor economic performance, just doesn't quite add up. So I would appreciate that more detailed information. Perhaps the

minister can provide it either later in debate or via a legislative return.

Just on the \$600,000 — I appreciate the answer from the minister. I think he may not have realized I was actually asking a question about where that money was shown. Could the minister then confirm, of the \$600,000 retroactive for childcare centres and day homes — the minister said it's not included in the supplementary budget, but was it absorbed within the Department of Health and Social Services budget for the 2017-18 fiscal year, so included within the 2017-18 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, it was included in the fiscal year 2017-18, including the recoveries all absorbed in that financial framework and in that department. Again, I'm not going to belabour this issue as to the member opposite's opinion as to how quickly people rebound off of social assistance. I will say that the deputy minister who is sitting beside me did her thesis on this. The thesis was about the economic and political determinants of social assistance and I think we share an opinion here as to the lag time. We can get the member opposite a copy of that thesis if he wants to see it, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I will not break privacy issues, and I will not give details about why people are on social assistance to the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate part of that response, but I would point out to the member that if I ask to be provided with statistical information, I'm not asking for any information on individual case files, the reasons somebody applied, et cetera. Of course, that is protected by ATIPP. As the minister should know, not only was I formerly the Minister of Health and Social Services, but was the minister the last time the social assistance system was actually given a significant review, and we did look at those factors. But the same level of information that I was provided back in that time period is information that government can certainly provide to people other than the minister without compromising personal privacy. I am talking about the statistical information on case volumes month-by-month in Health and Social Services that would allow us to see not who anyone is, not where they live, not why they applied, but to understand on a purely statistical basis the length of time that recipients were on social assistance within that fiscal year. Again, we are talking about the 2017-18 fiscal year.

While the minister may not see this as being of value, not only the members of the Legislative Assembly, but the public have a right to answers about where this pressure occurred from, the extent to which people are on for a long term versus a short term and more detail, but detail that doesn't contravene the individual privacy of individuals. I have seen that type of assessment done before and I know that it is perfectly possible for government to look at that and share that information with members.

I would actually be interested in seeing a copy of the deputy minister's thesis on this subject. I will be interested in hearing those views, but I would note that as much as the theory of the matter is interesting, we are talking about the specific situation, not the theory of what may occur after

recessions and the lag time. I am simply after information about how the public's money has been spent and information on what made up that 50-percent increase in social assistance recipients and whether those were long term or short term in nature.

Mr. Chair, in the interest of time, if I receive a satisfactory answer from the minister at least, I will wrap up my remarks in the interest of expediting debate, and I would just thank the official for coming in this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Silver: We would be happy to give statistical aggregate information to the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: I will just thank the Premier for that response and look forward to receiving it. With that, I'll turn the floor over to the Leader of the Third Party.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on the supplementary estimates?

Hearing none, we are going to move into general debate on departments.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote No. 3, Department of Education.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education.

Department of Education

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I welcome Rob Wood, Deputy Minister of Education, and Cyndy Dekuysscher, assistant deputy minister — one of them — at Education. I welcome them here to the Legislative Assembly today.

Mr. Chair, I rise in the House today to speak about the Department of Education's second supplementary budget for 2017-18. We want to ensure the public education system supports Yukon's social, economic and community goals for learners of all ages, whether they are in elementary, secondary or post-secondary school. We are delivering educational programs focused on student outcomes, student outcomes that support lifelong learning.

The work of the Department of Education in Yukon schools develops the skills and knowledge of Yukoners. Education helps them to lead healthy, productive and happy lives and contributes to a thriving local economy and community.

In this supplementary budget request, the Department of Education is requesting a net increase of \$2,946,000 in funding. This includes a \$3,131,000 increase for operation and maintenance expenditures and a \$185,000 decrease for capital expenditures. The overall change in expenditures requested for 2017-18 reflects increased supports for educational assistants in schools and increased funding from the Government of Canada for labour market programs. I will now go over the changes to funding more detail.

With respect to public schools O&M, a total increase of \$2,322,000 is requested for the operation and maintenance and capital expenditures for the Public Schools division. This represents an increase of \$2,372,000 for the division's O&M budget and a reduction of \$50,000 for its capital budget.

With respect to the education assistants increase, one of the more significant changes is to support an increase in education assistants in schools. Yukon students have diverse learning needs. We work with schools to provide the appropriate supports, strategies and resources to meet those needs. Education assistants are one of the several resources that a school can use to support students — one of many. Students' needs can change throughout the school year. Yukon schools identified a need for additional education assistance resources during this current school year, and we are meeting this need by increasing FTEs allocated throughout Yukon schools to 245.41 FTE, Mr. Chair, stands for full-time equivalents, but I am trying not to use acronyms in the Legislative Assembly, so I will just repeat that. We are meeting the need by increasing full-time equivalents, also known as FTEs, allocated throughout Yukon schools to 245.41 from the original 239.16 FTEs allocated at the end of the 2016-17 school year.

You may recall, Mr. Chair — although I don't know why you would — that education assistants at the end of the 2017 school year — in the summer of June 2017 — were 210, so the allocation has changed by some 35.4 FTEs. To support the increase, an additional \$1.8 million is requested.

An increase of \$20,000 is also requested to the funding formula for the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon to support the increase of 0.5 of a full-time equivalent for its education assistants.

The Government of Yukon is known for its excellent leave benefits for employees, and this includes school staff. An increase of \$500,000 is requested to address additional needs for various types of leave for school employees. Several staff require leave due to life circumstances such as illness, parenthood or workplace accommodations. While school staff goes on leave, the important work of educating students, of course, remains the same. This increase will support the additional needs identified for leave arrangements with staff throughout schools in the territory.

There have also been rent increases for departmental staff, which is 100-percent recoverable from teachers using staff housing throughout the territory. An increase of \$20,000 is requested for staff housing in Beaver Creek, Pelly Crossing and Old Crow. The department works with Yukon Housing and property owners to provide options for housing for teachers in some rural communities. This helps ensure qualified teachers can relocate to remote and rural communities to work with our rural students.

With respect to French monitors — on the programming side, there are some requested increases as well. An additional \$14,000 is requested for an additional French monitor for the 2017-18 school year.

French monitors support French language activities for Yukon through the federal Odyssey program. In addition, with

respect to the Science Adventures program — Science Adventures is also being restructured. Programs like the bridge building contest, the Yukon/Stikine Regional Science Fair and scientists visiting classrooms will now be coordinated through the department's existing resources rather than through Yukon College, where it has been done for a while.

There is also work to do to integrate these types of project-based, experimental learning activities with the overall implementation of the redesigned curriculum in Yukon schools. We are requesting an additional \$11,000 to transfer science adventures program funding from Yukon College to Public Schools.

With respect to school-based program funding, we have also made changes to some accounting practices for school programs, which require an increase of \$7,000. The superintendents now approve and oversee the funding from the following programs, which were previously spread among school trust accounts — the superintendents are now responsible for the home tutor program, the innovation fund, Yukon First Nation cultural inclusion, community-based orientation and Elders in the School programs — all of which enhance our students' education throughout the territory.

With respect to capital, I would like to address some of the requested changes to the capital budget for Public Schools. With respect to the F.H. Collins Secondary School technical wing — for the renovation work, a decrease of \$25,000 is requested. This project is now complete and the project's costs were lower than anticipated. Through this project, we have installed a new heating plant at the wing, a new pedestrian entry with barrier-free access, upgrades to the building's insulation and siding, and washroom improvements.

Again under capital, with respect to the Hidden Valley School capital maintenance repairs, an increase of \$100,000 is requested to replace the light fixtures at Hidden Valley elementary school. This represents a transfer of available funding from the Department of Community Services and is not new overall funding for the government.

With respect to school-based information technology, a decrease of \$125,000 is requested to defer funding for the Aspen student information system project to 2018-19. The department's student information system is currently being used throughout Yukon schools. Aspen provides administration and teachers with access to information that they need to address student needs. In 2018-19, the department is developing a new teacher, student and parent portal through Aspen that will better connect families to what their child is learning and achieving at school.

With respect to the Advanced Education operation and maintenance, I will now address those changes. In Advanced Education, a total increase of \$1,010,000 is requested for their operation and maintenance budget. This increase reflects new funding from two long-term labour market transfer agreements being signed between the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada. This funding is 100-percent recoverable through the Government of Canada and will help strengthen Yukon's labour market through employment and training programs and services for job seekers, employers and

service organizations. The funding will allow the department to deliver more flexible funding programs for the labour market and to help meet the diverse local needs of Yukoners.

With respect to Yukon College O&M and capital, Mr. Chair — for Yukon College, a total decrease of \$580,000 is requested for its operation and maintenance and capital budgets, so in total. This represents a decrease of \$251,000 for O&M and a decrease of \$329,000 for the college's capital budget.

With respect to the targeted initiatives for older workers, funding for the targeted initiative for older workers at the college is changing. This program helps older workers to develop new skills as the demands of the labour market change over time. The funding for this program will now come through the new labour market transfer agreements with the Government of Canada, so a decrease of \$240,000 is requested for this change.

Again, Science Adventures is mentioned because it has been at Yukon College, and as I mentioned, the funding will be transferred to the department's Public Schools division; a decrease of \$11,000 to Yukon College's O&M budget is requested for that transfer.

The department will continue to support experiential science programs for Yukon students. These are incredibly important, and I note here that — in addition to separate experiential science programs, of course — we are growing the experiential model and options in all classrooms under the redesigned curriculum for Yukon schools.

I would also like to address some changes to Yukon College's capital budget. Yukon College infrastructure projects that were identified this year now bring us in this supplementary budget to request a decrease of \$135,000 to defer the college's electrical distribution project to 2018-19. The project was somewhat delayed to provide more time to design and tender the project. This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada's post-secondary institutions strategic investment fund and, when it is completed, the college's expanded power supply will support future growth of the Ayamdigut campus. We expect this project to be completed in the summer of 2018.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, these changes will help the department continue to meet the learning needs of Yukoners of all ages in its programs across the territory. Our investment in education helps Yukoners develop the skills they need to lead happy and healthy lives and to thrive in their careers and their communities, and to become citizens where they are contributing to their communities and to the benefit of all Yukon.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and I would like to welcome the officials here this afternoon who are here to provide support to the minister during debate on Education for the supplementaries.

The minister mentioned EA allocations. That is a significant portion of the O&M increases for Public Schools. I was jotting the numbers down and just wanted her to confirm that there is an additional — just over 35.4 FTEs at

\$1.8 million since the start of the school year. If she could confirm that number for me, and if she has any idea of what schools those EAs went into, I would appreciate that as well.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. To be clear, I want to say it this way — 210 FTEs for education assistants is what was budgeted and, ultimately, we needed 245.407 — I think is the number. Also, to be clear, those are full-time equivalent positions, but there may be more education assistants because of the way they're allocated, and some work half time, some work quarter time, those kinds of things, so there may be actually more people employed, but the 245.407 is the full-time equivalents for ultimately what was needed in the schools. That difference is between 210 — which was budgeted — and 245, which ultimately is the difference of \$1.8 million, which is requested in this supplementary budget.

With respect to where they were allocated, I can provide this note — a version of this note — to the member opposite, if that will be helpful, but if it's of assistance, I could indicate what the initial allocation was at the schools where there was a change and then ultimately what the adjustment was, if that would be of assistance.

For example, Christ the King initially was allocated 10.75, but ultimately has 14; Del Van Gorder School was initially allocated 2.75 but has 3.75, and I'm happy to proceed with the list or I'm happy to provide it to you, if that is of some assistance, which may be easier to digest.

Mr. Kent: Yes, thank you — if the minister wants to send the document over or send it in correspondence. I would assume the Third Party would also appreciate a copy of any of that documentation as well.

Just quickly on student support services — I know last fall, my colleague from Porter Creek North, when she was the Education critic, talked about the wait-lists and some of the timing around receiving and assessment. I wanted to go back with the minister on a couple of those questions.

During the fall, we asked the minister how long it takes for a student to receive an assessment after they are referred and if there are currently — at the time, if there were any wait-lists. I guess I would regroup on that question with the minister and ask if there are any wait-lists for students to receive an assessment and how long it generally takes, once those students are referred.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I truly wish that I could succinctly answer this question. Unfortunately, I cannot, but I will provide the following response, which I hope will add information to the member opposite and provide him and all members of this House with some information that will be useful.

Of course, the Government of Yukon provides special education programs to students with learning needs through a team-based approach where program and school staff work with families. Student Support Services works with school-based teams to prioritize the referrals for formal assessments, but not every matter gets to a formal assessment. The school-based teams might determine that a particular student's needs can be met without a formal assessment, but I understand the

question to be focused on the more formal assessments. Students are considered as a priority when their ability to learn is severely impeded or impacted in some way, as demonstrated by their lack of learning success or by issues that might be of concern to their families, to their parents or to their teachers.

The first step is for a school-based team to informally assess a student's needs based on something coming to their attention, whether it be from a family or from someone who works with them at the school or, as students age, it could be from students themselves. As appropriate, they then request support from the Student Support Services if the school-based teams determine that it would be a proper process or would be of assistance, or they could refer for a formal assessment. So again, a school-based team might ask for a formal assessment or they might ask for some support from Student Support Services without a formal assessment.

In all cases, Student Support Services works with the school to provide learning supports. Student Support Services initiate a response to referrals for formal assessments within four weeks after the initial steps have been taken at the school level.

I think I will end there and I hope that it answers the question, although I appreciate that it is not as clear-cut as how many assessments are we waiting for, or how many have been referred and how many are outstanding, although I will undertake to determine that number for you.

Mr. Kent: I guess the question — perhaps the minister already answered it but I'm going to ask it again with respect with the school-based teams. Are there any wait-lists, or is the minister aware of any wait-lists, for students who were referred, or where the school-based team was asked to take a look at their behaviour? Is there a wait-list there of all students — where those initial requests came in in September? Have all of those students been seen? I appreciate that the minister may not have that information with her now but, if she does, that would be great. We're just trying to get a sense if all the students who have been referred or been asked to be assessed by the school-based teams — if all of those assessments are complete?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the indulgence of my colleagues to get this answer for them. I do have some numbers that will be of assistance. I have them broken down by way of the expertise of the consultant. I have that there are 20 students awaiting assessment with an educational psychologist, of which there are five. I have 18 students — these numbers are about a month old, so obviously they may be somewhat different but they are the ones I can provide today — who are awaiting an assessment with speech-language pathologists, of which there are four. By that, I mean four speech-language pathologists. I have nine students awaiting an occupational therapist assessment, of which there are two occupational therapists. I have eight students who are awaiting assessments by a physiotherapist, of which there is one employed by the department — for a total of 55 assessments, reminding all of my colleagues that there are some 5,200 students in the Yukon education system.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for providing those statistics for us. She did mention the total school population. I guess I have a couple of things — and again, if she doesn't have the information here today, I would welcome it to be provided later or once we clear the supplementary and get into the mains. I'm sure Education will be back, so perhaps we could ask at that time.

Of the 55 assessments outstanding, how many have been completed? Is there a service standard for the department to respond to a referral? Is the department meeting the service standard, given the resources that are currently available?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I noted earlier, the intention is to have those assessments done within four weeks of the referral by the school support team. That is clearly our intention. There are a variety of reasons why that might not happen. I think it's probably fair to say that there may be a backlog with the number of staff I have noted for you, but they are attempting to prioritize those assessments.

There is sometimes an inability to get consent from parents or other unforeseen circumstances — whether it be a family dealing with particular issues with children or the school — all of which is to say that the critical importance is that these assessments are done as soon as possible. What I also want to emphasize is that, even without the assessment being completed, Student Support Services, schools, dedicated teachers and administrators in the schools and the personnel of Student Support Services are not prohibited in any way from providing supports to students prior to the assessment being completed, and I think it's an important note to make that, despite the fact that there are assessments outstanding, no student is sitting waiting, hopefully, for supports that might assist them through that process. The key is that we initiate the assessment within four weeks and it may take more or less time to complete that but it is an important standard that we're trying to meet.

Mr. Kent: As I mentioned in a previous question, I'm sure we will have other opportunities to talk about Student Support Services, EA allocation and other things as we move through this current Sitting.

I just want to switch focus now to a few items that were mentioned in the 2016 Education annual report. I'm assuming the 2017 one will be coming our way sometime during this current Sitting. There are a few things I wanted to touch on in that. The first one is with respect to the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education. I was on the old Education website, I guess now — or the transitioning one — on February 22 and found on one of the sidebars the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education. Just to read a quick thing into the record with respect to this: "In fall 2015, we met with our partners and in January 2016 formed a committee to advise on education in Yukon. Together, we are looking at what's working, what's not working and how we can improve Yukon's schools and education system.

"Through the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education and ongoing work with our partners, we are finding ways to support the success of all Yukon students, from early to adult

learners, in becoming successful citizens, whether they choose to live and work here in Yukon or anywhere in the world."

Some of the work that the committee has undertaken — it says that over the past year they have: "Reviewed past reports and recommendations about education in Yukon and identified key themes and priorities; explored curriculum from across Canada and recommended Yukon use B.C.'s new curriculum with additional Yukon and Yukon First Nations content and perspectives; and provided feedback and suggestions on Yukon's curriculum redesign, the proposed student assessment changes, draft cultural inclusion standards, in-service and training for Yukon educators, Yukon school calendars, school review and growth planning processes and public engagement strategies."

Then, of course, the committee members are listed from a variety of backgrounds — educators, school councils, other members with a good representation of the community.

The last meeting minutes that were posted were from May 10, 2017, and are very brief meeting minutes, but obviously the new curriculum started to be rolled out into the schools. The next meeting was to be in the fall and the committee members were to be contacted in September to schedule it. Can the minister confirm that meeting took place last year? Are minutes available? Obviously there are some important things going on with respect to the curriculum right now so we are wondering if the meeting did not happen, why didn't it happen and when is the next one going to be scheduled?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think what is critically important here is for me to take the opportunity to outline how we are working with our partners to get their input. The Advisory Committee for Yukon Education, I understand, has not met recently, despite my assurance in this House. I understood that they would meet, but that is not in fact my understanding. I will check to see if there has been any meeting since May 2017 or the reference that the member opposite has made with respect to those minutes, and I may have the date incorrect. However, the work has continued with respect to strengthening our partnerships and our relationships directly with each of the partners that are named there to work specifically on their priorities. We are strengthening those partnerships through activities at the Yukon Forum — through the joint action plan. We have worked very closely and continue to do so with CSFY — the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon — with Yukon College, with the AYSCBC — there is an acronym for you, which is the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees — the Yukon Teachers' Association, the First Nation Education Advisory Committee and others. All of those particular members of the former, at this point, have not met recently. The Advisory Committee for Yukon Education sits at other tables. In addition to sitting at other tables, they have input with respect to education here in the Yukon and how important that is, so they have been met with individually and their input is critical. We have maintained that conversation with them, remained open to them coming with their priorities, and we are trying to meet those priorities —

albeit perhaps not through the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education most recently.

Mr. Kent: It is concerning that this is still front and centre on the Education website. As I mentioned, I highlighted the work and the committee members. There is even on the second page a “get involved” portion: “If you have any questions or want to get involved with the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education’s work, please e-mail contact.education@gov.yk.ca” — or there is a phone number here. Then again the meeting minutes are posted and past reports are posted as well, but it does not sound like the committee is very active. As I mentioned in the May 10, 2017, minutes — the ones that were last posted — I did mention that one of the action items was for when the next meeting would be, but there are other ones. The committee members were to review revised web page content. There was a link to a transition table for grades 10 to 12 to be re-shared.

One of the co-chairs who was doing that on behalf of the deputy minister was to set up a meeting with Yukon College to present the curriculum. I know that the minister mentioned some of the other ways they are engaging, but will the minister then endeavour to, if this committee is no longer active or not meeting anymore, have this particular page on the website taken down or revised so that people who are interested in making comments, particularly again on the curriculum redesign and the rollout of that, can find a different place to make those inquiries with the government?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate that is perhaps more of a comment — it’s a question, but more of a comment — and I’m happy to respond. We have heard clearly from our partners in education that they are wanting to not just talk about issues, but to get down to work on their priorities and they are bringing those priorities through the various methods that I’ve mentioned.

In addition to those tables, or those forums, to which they can bring those forward to Education, Education is actually reaching out to those parties to make sure they have meaningful ways to engage with the department. It’s not simply us sitting there waiting for them to come forward. In addition to that, they want to get down to work. Whether or not accurate information is on any Yukon government website is a clear priority for me and for this entire team and we will make efforts to review the accuracy of that information — actually the entire Department of Education website — and make sure that accurate information is conveyed to Yukoners.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that. That will be helpful because when we talk as MLAs to parents or at school council meetings and they want to find out how to get involved or how to make their feelings or any comments that they have with respect, again, particularly to the new curriculum, it would be helpful if they knew where they could make those comments. Again, as I mentioned, the website, as of February 22 of this year, did have this link on one of the sidebars to the advisory committee. If I didn’t have the ability to ask questions here in the Legislative Assembly, as a parent, I would be thinking that this would be an opportunity for me to provide comments on the curriculum redesign.

Again, I did ask a couple of questions on whether or not these other action items were completed that were in the May 10 minutes. The minister can find them on that portion of the website. Again, if she doesn’t have that information here today, I would appreciate getting that at some point in the future.

Perhaps the minister can clarify for me — I’ll move on to a different topic, and that is the Native Language Centre. There was an announcement made recently that the centre’s operations would be turned over to the Council of Yukon First Nations and that the existing staff at the Native Language Centre, I believe, would be hired or absorbed into the Department of Education.

I’ll ask the minister: Are those changes reflected in the supplementary budget or would those changes be reflected in the mains? I’m assuming there is a contribution agreement to CYFN to run the centre — and whether those individuals have all received jobs in the Department of Education, as was communicated through the media when the announcement was made?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and I truly appreciate your indulgence so I can get updated accurate information to convey to this House.

The announcement with respect to transferring the Yukon Native Language Centre from the Department of Education to the Council of Yukon First Nations, under their responsibility, was too late in time, if I can say it that way, in order to change the budget of this year for the 2018-19 mains, but it will appear, presumably, in a supplementary budget, if appropriate to do so. But I can confirm that the funding for the cost of the Yukon Native Language Centre has not been reduced in any way. It is simply being transferred to CYFN for the purposes of them managing and administering all of the resources and programs of the Yukon Native Language Centre.

With respect to personnel, I will be somewhat careful. I understand that there were five employees of this program who were employees of the Department of Education. I understand one or more has determined that retirement was an appropriate remedy for them. I know at least one or more has taken a job in a different department within the government, and we continue to work with the additional folks there who are seeking placement. Their employment was resolved with the Department of Education, pursuant to the employees’ union agreement and the collective agreement, with the assistance of the union, as well as the individuals’ consent with respect to how they were being dealt with, but all were being dealt with through the Department of Education, as well as with the union’s assistance, to make sure that they have a placement where they are happy.

Mr. Kent: So the funding agreement with CYFN for the Native Language Centre — the minister mentioned that would be the same amount that was put in. Is there an escalator? Has the minister signed or has the Yukon government signed a three-year plan or a five-year plan? Is there an escalator through there for inflation or that type of thing? It would be interesting thing to know what kind of a contribution agreement has been signed with CYFN to support

them in taking on the Native Language Centre. I understand that perhaps there are some mandate changes or some different program features that they're looking at, so that was again just what I gathered from the media. If the minister knows differently, that would be helpful.

I guess just one more — and I don't want to get specific on the personnel stuff, but one more question. For those who didn't retire or didn't move on to another department and are being placed in Education, were those individuals placed in vacant positions or were new positions created for them to suit their skillset? Again, that's something that, if the minister has that information, it would be great to hear today.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: There will be a transfer payment agreement — that will be the format, if I can say it that way — in which the Council of Yukon First Nations will obtain the funds for the Native Language Centre. We are currently — departmental officials and Council of Yukon First Nations officials — working together to determine what that will look like. We do not anticipate, and certainly in no way have indicated, that the funding will be reduced in any way. In fact, we will wait and see what the CYFN has indicated to us as an appropriate amount for their programming. They are aware that the cost to the department was \$450,000, and that is the figure that we have been discussing with them obviously.

But I think it is important to take the opportunity to support this change. This is something that the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Department of Education worked on relatively quickly. It is something that the Grand Chief and I discussed. It is something that department officials and his officials discussed in relatively short order. It is the right place for Yukon native languages to be vested, to be determined, for the programs to be set in that forum, and we are more than pleased to be able to have done this.

In the concept of reconciliation, obviously, Yukon First Nations need to be able to determine their language programs, their language priorities, their own priorities for the restoration, maintenance and growth of languages here in the territory, and we are more than pleased to be able to support that.

It is an opportunity for us to show an example of how we are working with our partners, how we are meeting their needs directly, how we are doing that relatively quickly. It was only a number of months ago that I had these first conversations with the Grand Chief. His staff rallied to determine that they were in a position to be able to run the programming and administer the programming at the Yukon Native Language Centre. The department officials also rallied relatively quickly in conceptual discussions with them so that we could make this a reality very quickly. I am pleased to have done so.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for her responses this afternoon and I thank the officials.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Mr. Cathers: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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 5:30 p.m.

The following document was filed March 6, 2018:

34-2-34

Resources for RCMP, Victim Services, and the Coroner's Office, letter re (dated July 14, 2017) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Justice (Cathers)