



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 65

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, March 8, 2018 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2018 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Floyd McCormick
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Harris Cox
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 8, 2018 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Women's Day

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to International Women's Day, which is a global celebration of economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future.

Mr. Speaker, you only have to look around this Legislative Assembly to see amazing women in leadership. In Yukon, we are so very fortunate to have self-government with many Yukon First Nation governments being led by strong women chiefs.

This event was first celebrated in 1911. It honours the work of the activist women and allies who have campaigned for women's rights to vote, celebrated by women's success and held up by women leaders of all levels in our communities. It is also a time to assess and continue to chart a path forward together.

International Women's Day has grown to become an international day of recognition and celebration across developed and developing countries alike.

For decades, the United Nations has held an annual conference to coordinate international efforts for women's rights and participation in social, political and economic processes. Last year, I was honoured to attend and to present on economic empowerment for indigenous women and solutions to address violence against indigenous women and girls. What an incredible opportunity to add our voice — our Yukon voice. The greatest platform that I have ever had in my life was achieved during that time.

Since last year, we have seen grassroots movements bring issues of gender equality and violence prevention into national and global conversations, from the women's march to the #MeToo movement to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and for local initiatives, like the 16 Days to End Gender-Based Violence and the Sisters in Spirit march.

The message of equality and respect is being heard. Today, take the opportunity to celebrate how far we have come since that day was first recognized in 1911. Consider attending one of the wonderful events being hosted by our local, equality-seeking organizations such as the International Women's Day Soirée at Antoinette's, which is happening tonight. This event is being hosted by the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Les EssentiElles, the Yukon Aboriginal

Women's Council, the Yukon Status of Women Council and Antoinette's Restaurant. These and many other incredible and dedicated women's organizations ensure that we keep equality issues top of mind on more than just these marked occasions, but all year-round. Thank you for your tireless work. You are such a source of inspiration to all of us. We have several community leaders here today, and I look forward to introducing them after the completion of this tribute. I just want to take a second to thank you so much, and I hold my hands up to each and every one of you.

I am always frustrated when I hear women's organizations referred to as special interest groups — they are not. I would like to quote Barack Obama: "Women are not a special interest group. They are half of this country and they are perfectly capable of making their own choices about their health." This is also true within Canada and our own Yukon Territory. I expand beyond health to all aspects of mental, spiritual, physical and emotional well-being. On International Women's Day, I encourage all Yukoners to reflect on this year. It has been a really incredible year for women and the movement toward equality. Take the time to look at what we can do better together. Together we can make Yukon a more inclusive and equitable community for everyone.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to International Women's Day. This year the theme highlighted throughout Canada is "My Feminism". The word "feminism" is historically associated with struggle — struggle for equality and freedom of choice irrespective of gender, sexuality or race. Feminism has different meanings to different people.

It has had some negative connotations to many people for many years, and it conjures a number of general associations such as hippie activists and some that I won't mention today. It alienates people who may share the same ideals, but are put off by those lingering associations. There are many more people who generally support gender equality without labeling themselves as feminists.

The "My Feminism" campaign allows people to define feminism in their own way and to celebrate what it means to them. It is a great way to change the way people feel about the word. International Women's Day is a celebration of the achievements of women in all geographic and economic spheres. These achievements are immense: they are political, social and economic; they are personal; they are public; and they are continual. This year's theme celebrates the importance of continued progress in accelerating gender equality. The collective action of countries, groups and organizations around the world has made incredible leaps in the quest for equality and there are still bounds to be made to ensure general parity is achieved.

International Women's Day has been observed globally since the early 1900s. It was in 1908 that 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding voting rights and better working conditions. The historical significance to the day is immense and it has seen an incredible number of

campaigns and successes over the last 110 years. Women's suffrage, empowerment, violence, poverty, hunger, and solidarity have each been at the forefront of International Women's Day.

Today, we have seen many of these issues addressed, at least in part, while others remain. International Women's Day continues to be about ensuring that these concerns remain a priority around the world, and also about highlighting and celebrating the steps taken and achievements made for women and by women.

To quote the official website: "Let's make every day International Women's Day". We should all do our bit to ensure that the future is bright, equal, safe and rewarding for our children.

Ms. White: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate women and all those who identify as women on this, the International Day of Women. As I sometimes do, I'm going to veer out a bit here — but bear with me, because I know that by the time I get to the end, you'll understand.

I remember reading articles about *Wonder Woman* before I saw the movie. There was this one that talked about the Amazons and how they were real women — women who are powerful, strong and able in their own rights. An Olympic bobsledder, a heptathlete, a police officer, a CrossFit champion and professional fighters were just a few. They were women of colour, short women, tall women, big women, small women — all body types, all colours, all strong.

I had no idea how seeing these women charge across the beach in that battle scene would affect me. I had no idea how seeing a superhero movie with a powerful female lead, and supported by strong female characters, would make me feel or how this movie would make women feel. Twitter was on fire. I quote: "I really didn't expect *Wonder Woman* to impact me the way that it did, but seeing a confident, powerful woman save the day was really beautiful." "Still blown away that women watching *Wonder Woman* are feeling something they've never felt before — representation matters." "Just took three 12-year old girls to *Wonder Woman* and they're literally vibrating with empowerment. It was awesome. Bravo, Patty Jenkins."

I was lucky to see the movie while sitting in front of a young girl and her parents, and she squealed with delight and cheered in all the places I wanted to cheer. This young girl is growing up in a time when women are finally being recognized as superheroes. Imagine the barriers that she'll be busting down as she gets older, and imagine the barriers that all kids will be busting down about gender roles as they get older, in part because of movies like *Wonder Woman*.

This brings me to my next point: *Black Panther*. You only need to look toward media sources like *Time*, *Rolling Stone*, the BBC, and *The Root* and *VICE* for articles referencing the importance of *Black Panther* or, better yet, to watch the reactions of people as they re-tell how much the movie has affected them to know that something truly special has been made — a movie with a nearly all-black cast and a

black director set in a world that portrays people of colour in a superior light — heck yeah.

The film is amazing. It isn't just a superhero movie; it's a movie that tackles identity, poverty and colonialism. I watched the reactions of my friends on Facebook talking about seeing themselves for the first time in such a powerful context, and it gave me goosebumps. It's about time that people who aren't white are able to see themselves represented in mass media in a way that celebrates the multi-faceted nature of their humanity, that they are able to see themselves as scientists, as poets, as soldiers, as leading characters and as superheroes — strong male leads, but even stronger female roles. Wakanda's best warrior, their greatest scientist and their ultimate humanitarian were all women.

Again, the Twitterverse went crazy — and I quote: "... the representation of Black women in #BlackPanther made me feel seen. Seen in a way other superhero movies have not done well." Again, "If you don't understand the power or representation, imagine growing up never seeing a superhero who looks you. When American Girl dolls came out I always picked Addy who had to escape slavery. But now kids have #BlackPanther's Nakia, Shuri and Okoye. Dope on many levels."

I have seen this movie twice so far — the first time in Ottawa, where the theatre, with its diverse moviegoers, whooped and clapped at the ending and there were even a couple tears on cheeks. I'm sure you can imagine mine included. Then I saw it again here, when I took a young friend. I only needed to glance over at him watching the movie to see the importance of it because he could see himself in the characters. The drive home was animated and it was awesome. We talked about the characters. We talked about the battle scenes and the women with their spears and how fearless they were.

All of this matters because everyone needs to see themselves reflected in public spheres in powerful, beautiful ways. The power of representation cannot be overstated in the public sphere. These examples inspire and show us that there is so much more possibility around us than we have ever been told before.

Now I am waiting to see an Indigenous female superhero because Indigenous women are so much more than just missing and murdered — or a powerful woman with a disability, or a trans two-spirited woman rule the screen. When I see that happen, Mr. Speaker, I will know that we are that much closer to equality.

This is my point. Women don't need to be portrayed in movies or mass media as sexualized, victimized or weak. We are powerful, intelligent, able and resilient and our time has come. We are the superheroes and warriors we have always needed and we don't need to be saved by anyone, so today I celebrate and acknowledge those strong and able women who came before us, those who surround us now and those yet to come.

Happy International Women's Day.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I am very, very honoured to rise today in the House to acknowledge Adeline Webber — she is the vice-president of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle. Thank you so much for all you do. Doris Anderson, president of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council — thank you. We have Marney Paradis from the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, executive director — thank you. We have Charlotte Hrenchuk, who is the coordinator of the Yukon Status of Women Council — thank you. From the Yukon Human Rights Commission, Jessica Lott Thompson, director; and we have Emmanuel Kofi Owusu, who is the human rights officer — thank you for coming. From the Yukon College, we have Alison Anderson, Westcoast Women in Engineering, Science and Technology, associate chair. We were just speaking about you this morning in our caucus. Thank you for coming today; it really means a lot to us.

From our own Women's Directorate staff we have Shelby Blackjack, senior adviser on aboriginal women's issues; Taryn Turner, policy analyst; Chantal Genier, senior adviser for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; Stephanie Coulthard, our administrative assistant — thank you. From our Cabinet staff, I have Jessie Stephen and Mathieya Alatini. Thank you so much for all that you do.

Thank you so much for coming today. It means a lot to every one of us in the House.

Applause

Ms. White: I ask my colleagues to join me in acknowledging trans and two-spirited women who may not be present in the gallery today who face high rates of violence and are often overlooked. We celebrate you and we celebrate your resiliency.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 15: *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 15, entitled *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 15, entitled *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and reading of Bill No. 15 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 for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the “what we heard” document from the Department of Environment's internal working group on the audit of the permit hunt system, including correspondence from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, Yukon Fish and Game Association and Wild Sheep Foundation.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to give an update to Yukoners on the work done with Alaska and Washington, DC, in lobbying the United States government to reinstate Shakwak project funding.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to renew its support for the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council's Da Daghay Development Corporation's XY Charlie Crew annual Yukon First Nation wildfire boot camp.

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

THAT this House congratulates Victoria Gold for completing a successful construction financing package, totalling approximately \$505 million, that will fully fund the development of the Eagle Gold project through to commercial production.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* to reflect marriage equality for same-sex couples.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce amendments to the *Evidence Act* to reflect marriage equality for same-sex couples.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce amendments to the *Marriage Act* to reflect equality for same-sex couples.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce amendments to the *Married Women's Property Act* to reflect equality for same-sex couples.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce amendments to the *Spousal Compensation Act* to reflect equality for same-sex couples.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Women's equality fund

Ms. McLeod: This year's budget indicates that the Liberals are reducing funding for the women's equality fund from \$300,000 to \$220,000. According to the government's website, the fund is meant to assist Yukon organizations in their work toward women's equality in the north.

Can the minister please explain why her government is cutting the women's equality fund by \$80,000?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you for the question from the Member for Watson Lake.

We are making some changes to the funds that are available. We are shifting around some of the funding to be in position to offer more funding for indigenous women's groups, so there is some shifting around of that funding and I will look forward to further questions.

Ms. McLeod: While I can appreciate that the minister sees fit to fund specifically indigenous groups, the question remains: Why were the Liberals unable to find \$80,000 to fund the women's equality fund?

You know, Mr. Speaker, we looked through the last five years, and it looks like the women's equality fund was always fully subscribed, and if the government is looking at finding savings, there are a lot better places to look.

We can just recall that the Liberals have spent \$105,000 on personal items for their offices. According to the contract registry, they gave out \$100,000 in contracts to Liberal political staff to help with their transition. They spent \$40,000 renovating their offices.

So Mr. Speaker, why could they not find the money — the \$80,000 — to fund the women's equality fund?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you for the question. I'm not going to go into the expenses of our Cabinet offices. That is another question, I think.

As minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, I take responsibility to build safer communities, to increase our government's efforts, and, of course, to reduce violence against all women. We have a particular issue around violence against indigenous women in this country and in this territory.

Indigenous women suffer violence at a much higher rate, and this has been well-founded. I think that, during the last session, there were questions about increased funding to indigenous groups, and this year, we are creating an indigenous women's equality fund, which provides operational support to our three indigenous organizations. We have not provided all of the funding that these organizations have needed in the past, and so we are correcting our path a little bit here, Mr. Speaker, and creating more resources for the indigenous women's groups today.

Question re: Mental health services

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I asked the Minister of Education to review mental health supports for rural Yukon schools to ensure that they are receiving the same services as Whitehorse schools and to provide mental health support staff dedicated entirely to the Watson Lake schools.

The Department of Education has an entire branch with hard-working professionals dedicated to providing these services to our students, and that is why I was really quite surprised when the Minister of Health and Social Services got up to answer the question by talking about the community's wellness hub.

This seems to imply that the Liberal government has made changes at the Department of Education and that they will no longer be providing mental health support to our students in rural schools and Watson Lake. Instead, the school will have to send students to the community wellness hub.

Could the Minister of Health and Social Services clarify if this is the case? Is the Department of Health and Social Services taking over this responsibility from Education? If not, then why did the Minister of Health and Social Services get up and say something somewhat unrelated, instead of allowing the Minister of Education to respond to a question about mental health services in our schools?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: One of my responsibilities as Government House Leader is to determine who gets to answer questions, or who would be able to provide the most appropriate answer in any particular situation, so it doesn't have anything to do with the Minister of Health and Social Services not letting me answer anything.

My answer to the question about whether or not this means that students will be required to get mental health services outside the school is simply, no.

Ms. McLeod: We come to this House to ask questions of the ministers and we expect that they will know their files and that they will provide answers that make sense.

The Minister of Health and Social Services' answer yesterday left the impression that the Liberals were now telling the Watson Lake school that, if it needed mental health support, they would have to utilize the community wellness hub instead of the Student Support Services branch at the Department of Education.

Yesterday, I asked the Minister of Education if she could tell us what the wait time was for a student in Watson Lake to receive mental health support and whether or not it was higher or lower than the wait time for Whitehorse students. The minister was unable to answer this question yesterday and I am wondering if she is able to answer the question today.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I think what we're seeing from the members opposite is not being able to pivot to a new approach. We are taking a whole-of-government approach when it comes to the issues of all the communities. We believe that every community matters. If we are going to be talking about mental health among our youth in our communities, we have information from Health and Social Services, we have information from Justice, and we have

information from Education and from Community Services. We are going to be providing more information.

I believe that, yesterday, there were three questions asked. The member opposite got two ministers to answer those questions — two specific to education and one on the mental health initiatives of the hub communities, one of which is the community that the member opposite is from and represents.

I believe we are giving more information. Again, I will reiterate what my colleague, the Minister of Education, says. Just because the member opposite doesn't like the answers that she is getting doesn't mean we are not answering the question.

Ms. McLeod: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Premier could direct me to, in any of those answers I received, the answer to the questions that I asked about numbers and timelines.

I also asked the Minister of Education yesterday to review mental health supports for rural Yukon schools to ensure that they are receiving the same services as Whitehorse schools. Will the minister commit to this and provide a timeline for when it will be completed?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I said yesterday, the mental health services that are available in schools across the territory are a priority for us.

We know that students require these kinds of supports in varying degrees. Sometimes it is just a small matter, and sometimes it is larger and would require more wrap-around services for an individual student. They are a top priority for us.

The Department of Education is currently reviewing and will continue to review the services that are provided in all schools across the territory.

I certainly take the point that mental health supports are key — they are — but I cannot indicate at this time when that kind of review will be completed because, as I guess I said the other day, these kinds of things are ongoing. I don't ever expect that a department — especially with something as important as the mental health of students — would be able to come to the end of a report and put it on the shelf and say, "That's the end of it. That's what we're doing." These are evolving issues; these are services that we are continually trying to improve in every community.

Question re: Mental health services

Ms. White: Last year, the Premier's Budget Address announced that 11 mental health workers would be hired to work in communities across the territory. The announcement was welcomed by literally everyone, from the opposition to community leaders to mental health professionals. On Tuesday, the Premier announced that a full year later only five of these 11 positions have been filled.

Since the government says that it wants to evaluate its performance, let me simply ask: Does the Premier believe that filling only five out of 11 mental health worker positions in an entire year is a praise-worthy performance?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am very happy to speak to the issue today around mental wellness in our communities. We have taken a very proactive approach in the last 12 months to work with our communities and work with the mental wellness hubs and our teams in our communities. We have met with leadership of First Nation communities, we have met with health directors — so we have worked really hard to ensure that the services that we provide in the communities are well-matched to address the specific needs of the communities, so we have taken a very cautious and progressive approach in designing models.

Yes, we have taken our time to ensure that we get it right, because all Yukoners matter. Our communities matter. The services we provide for our communities have to be aligned well to meet the needs of the communities.

I am happy to say that we have five of the 11 positions recruited and staffed. We have three that are in the reference process — so we have advanced it to that stage — and we have three that are being interviewed as we speak.

What I said is that we would have all of the hubs and the positions filled and ready to put into effect at the end of March, and we still aim to do that.

Ms. White: There have been at least 12 suicides in Yukon in the last year. Those are 12 losses, Mr. Speaker. This is at least twice the national average, and each one of these deaths impacts hundreds of people. It impacts entire communities. Mental health workers are not a luxury; they are an absolute necessity, and mental health has not received nearly enough attention for far too long, Mr. Speaker.

Staffing only five out of 11 mental health workers positions over an entire year shows that this government has not grasped the urgency of the situation.

Mr. Speaker, when will the remaining six positions be filled?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please. The Minister of Health and Social Services has the floor. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the point — I'm kind of shocked, actually, because this government has worked really hard with our partners. We have advanced the interests and concerns of our communities. We have better aligned service needs. We have taken proactive approaches and addressed the mental wellness hubs. I think we have done that in collaboration with our communities. So I'm really pleased and happy to say that we have mapped out the communities needs and concerns, acknowledging that we have had some crises. That's not new. We have had some new pressures in recent months. We know there are major challenges and we aim to address those with our partners — creating service hubs in our communities, and I'm very pleased to say we have filled all the social worker positions in our communities. So we are taking some very progressive approaches in addressing the needs of our communities. I very much appreciate the good work of the department staff and the communities that have participated and engaged with us to address their very specific needs.

Ms. White: Those are still six positions unfilled. If the political will was there, I'm convinced that the 11 mental health worker positions would be filled by now. I mean, government manages to clear thousands of kilometres of road within days of a snowfall; Yukon government keeps track of tens of thousands of mineral claims; and it manages to pay thousands of employees on time every second week. Surely to God, if this government puts its mind to it, it can hire 11 mental health workers in a year.

People who are struggling with mental health issues can't wait another year, or multiple months, for this government to get its act together. Mr. Speaker, what message is this government sending about the importance of mental health when it hasn't managed to fill half of the mental health worker positions it announced over a year ago?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The message we want to send to Yukoners is that we are working diligently and working very hard to get the very specialized positions filled. Everyone knows that it's very difficult to find these specialized services, and we are working to get that done. I'm happy to say again that, by the end of March, we will have all of the positions filled in the Yukon.

Question re: Wildland fire management

Ms. Hanson: On Saturday, the Minister responsible for Community Services and I were among a standing-room-only crowd at a public presentation on the risk to Yukon communities of wildland fire. We heard the message that Yukon has been fortunate to have dodged the bullet that our neighbours to the east, west and south have experienced. We heard clearly that citizens are looking to government for information on how to respond when wildland fire hits our communities. Yukoners are already aware of the risks and are concerned about how this will be addressed.

The minister heard from participants that telling Yukoners to check the government website and having three days' worth of emergency supplies is not tackling the real issues, which include knowing that real, integrated community emergency plans exist and are available to the public. He also heard from citizens that government cannot afford to be complacent in the face of the big one.

My question is straightforward: Is there an integrated Yukon plan in the event of a wildland fire that poses threat to communities?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'll try to give a straightforward answer. Yes, there is an integrated plan, although I also want to say that there is always a risk of wildfire and, regardless of that plan, we need to be continuously working on it. I know that the department is, and it continues to work on it. I don't want to think of it as a static thing. I think of it as continuous work that we are always doing because it is a serious issue and we know its importance.

Ms. Hanson: This morning, listeners of the CBC heard the fire chief of one of the volunteer fire departments talking about efforts he and other volunteer fire departments have made with respect to wildland fires and getting a focus on prevention as well as a comprehensive response strategy. The

fact is that they have been approaching the Yukon government since last fall, trying to initiate a discussion to determine if there is a larger plan for both prevention and response. In fact, the reality is — according to the volunteer fire departments of this territory — that, as recently as at an annual meeting of fire chiefs in January, they got confirmation that little has been done. What had been done hasn't been shared — this is frequently the case, Mr. Speaker — or coordinated between agencies and may be outdated. The eight fire departments asked that those plans be distributed if they are available and consideration to a meeting in the spring.

Will this government show political leadership? Will the minister direct that those plans be communicated and disseminated throughout the territory?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I would like to give a shout-out to our volunteer fire departments. They do great work, and I heard Charlie on the radio this morning as well. In fact, I think the Leader of the Official Opposition and I were sitting right in front of him during the presentation, and he and I spoke again afterwards.

I have spoken with our volunteer fire chief many times over the past year or six months, and our volunteer fire departments, which deal with structural fire and not wildland fire, are an integral part of this coordinated plan. They are an important piece, especially where the interface of wildland fire hits.

I guess the question was: Will I direct that this work be shared across? Sure, I'm happy to do that. I don't want to give a sense that I'm trying to send it out to every Yukoner. This work that is led by the Emergency Measures Organization and the emergency coordination group, which is the umbrella group that oversees all of this, and then underneath that is the Fire Marshal's Office and underneath that are our volunteer fire departments. I'm happy that they are there. I'm happy that the information will be shared across.

Ms. Hanson: The point that the volunteer fire chief was making this morning is just like Fort McMurray — wildland fire hits structures. You need to know where the two work together. That is the interface. The fire season is fast approaching. Yukoners would like to see an emergency plan for every community. They already know about the 72-hour emergency kit — nobody in Fort McMurray was able to access a 72-hour emergency kit — and they know about firesmarting around their homes and properties. What isn't available is how to get information in the event of an emergency.

The minister clearly heard this concern on Saturday night from Yukon citizens who recalled the chaos of September 11, 2001. They want to know about evacuation routes from their communities or neighbourhoods, and they want to know where gathering centres will be. What is the plan and how is it being communicated? Yukoners want to know what their community emergency response is. Yukoners and first responders deserve to know how this government is going to communicate in the event of an emergency.

When and where will Yukoners be able to access these plans?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: When a fire comes and you are trying to respond, it really depends — is the fire coming from up in Copper Ridge? Is the fire coming from the north of town or the south of town? Or is it coming toward Watson Lake? The response depends on the situation. It is not possible ahead of time to give every response, and that is why we encourage every Yukoner to be prepared for 72 hours and to have a kit with them. I am going to go back and check now on Fort McMurray. I think lots of people had their 72-hour kit. I hope they did when they were evacuating — that they took with them their 72-hour kit.

I thank the member opposite for allowing me to raise it again, although she did not want to hear this point. This is an important part of the puzzle. We will actively work to make sure that Yukoners are informed. We will actively work to make sure that all of the integrated pieces of the response, including our volunteer fire departments, are informed.

Question re: Housing programs

Mr. Cathers: I have a question for the Premier in his capacity as Finance minister. Can he tell us how much money is in this year's budget for the Challenge housing project?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We are working actively right now with Challenge, and we are very excited with the commitment to support Challenge and make this project extremely successful. This is one of those projects where the evidence is there for us to move forward on it. We are working closely with Challenge and we are also working with the city to determine how best to provide our support for currently finalizing an agreement. That is where we are right now — finalizing that agreement. This will be a multi-year project as well, so the money that will be in the budget now won't be the final amount for it. Again, we are ensuring that we reach a final agreement in time for the purchase of land with the city, which is a deadline that is soon approaching.

Mr. Cathers: Again, we have seen a lack of detail in this year's budget. The Premier sent out a tweet indicating he would support Challenge. We don't see a line item indicating how much money is being dedicated. We see no mention of this project in the Premier's five-year capital plan, although he indicates it will be included in multi-year funding. There is a growing trend here in this Sitting where we are told that something could possibly be in the budget, but for some reason the government has not disclosed that information and no one, including their ministers, can seem to find it.

If the minister has not finalized an agreement yet, can he tell us how much money the government anticipates will be added to his ever-evolving budget to fund the needs of Challenge?

Hon. Mr. Silver: An interesting tack from the member opposite. I remember being at Roundup when the opposition announced that they were going to pave the runway with no plan or no dollar values and I don't think they ever came to that dollar value.

I believe the number — and the member opposite knows that those numbers aren't necessarily in briefing books for Question Period — I believe it is \$6 million, but I am not sure.

I am going to have to go back and take a look at that number. It is the total envelope. Out of that envelope, we will be working with Challenge to move forward on this amazing project. We are committed to supporting Challenge and to making this project successful. We are working closely with Challenge and with the city to determine how best to provide our support and make sure that we finalize an agreement as soon as possible. There is a deadline pending for the land purchase from the city. A shout-out to the city and the mayor and council and all of the work that has been done by that bureaucracy to make sure that this amazing project moves forward.

Mr. Cathers: This is the problem that results when the government is removing — between the reduction in the budget highlights and the information they pulled this year from the budget, 77 pages of information have been removed from the budget.

I appreciate that the Premier gave us a guess at an answer, but what we don't understand is why the Premier's briefing book, as he indicated, doesn't contain that information, and why the budget doesn't contain more information about projects that are supposedly built into the five-year capital plan — yet we find that, increasingly, the five-year capital plan is, at best, a five-year capital concept.

Can the Premier indicate, if he has roughly \$6 million dedicated to Challenge in the budget, how much is allocated or anticipated for ongoing O&M support to Challenge for this project?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I wish the member opposite would listen to the answers. There's an envelope of money that is about \$6 million or \$6.6 million. Out of that envelope, we will be taking money for the Challenge project.

As far as information in our budget, including forecasts — we believe we are giving more information than the Yukon Party ever did. When it comes to our process here with all the engagement and consultation we have done, breaking records last year with engagement, we believe we're reaching out more. With the change to the website and the change of the stakeholder engagement pieces, we are working to make sure the decisions we make are more honest, more open and more accountable than the previous government.

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Kent: I have some questions about the five-year capital plan and some of the projects contained in it. Yesterday, the Liberals voted against a five-year capital plan that contains real and quantifiable details, while promoting certainty. Instead, they brought forward a document that is vague and seems to be changing every day. For example, we looked through the five-year capital plan when it was tabled last week, and we didn't see roadwork between Faro and Ross River. Then this week, the minister told media that he found a half-million dollars hidden somewhere in the budget for design work between Faro and Ross River. Then he said there is major roadwork planned in the area next year, even though this is nowhere in their five-year capital plan.

The document is only seven days old and the minister is telling us it isn't accurate and it's out of date. If this document is going to change once a week, then it's not much of a plan and all it does it create uncertainty.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us why this roadwork isn't in the five-year capital plan and how much money they are planning to spend in the outgoing years?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to open my remarks this afternoon by thanking all members of the opposition for their support for our five-year capital plan, which was made in the House yesterday in a motion we had. We received unanimous support for that motion, and I really thank the members opposite for their support of our capital plan. Today, I'm a bit surprised to have this come back on us, but I'm more than happy to talk about the fulfillment of our capital plan promise that we made and the certainty that is going to bring to people in the territory.

The member opposite was talking about the road to Ross River. I'm more than happy to talk about that. I actually did answer that question in the House. They can go back through the Blues and see that I actually did talk about the paving and the engineering work we're doing on the Ross River stretch of the Robert Campbell Highway in the House a couple of days ago.

This is a great initiative. The road to Ross River is a great initiative. My question to the House is why this work wasn't done earlier. I mean, it has been sitting there for years and years and hasn't been tackled by any government. We decided we are going to do that. I am more than happy to talk about that at any time, Mr. Speaker.

Our five-year capital plan is being well-received in the town. It was well-received in this House and I'm more than happy to talk about it again on a supplementary.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and in all of that, of course, we didn't get an answer to why this roadwork wasn't in the five-year capital plan or how much money they are planning to spend on it in the outgoing years.

So Mr. Speaker, moving on to another project — and it is one that I pointed out earlier this week — the five-year capital plan contains colour-coding in 2021-22 and 2022-23 for the Holy Family Elementary School.

As has been pointed out by a number of people now, this ever-shifting capital plan that the Liberals have tabled is sorely missing details. We gave the government an opportunity yesterday to enhance the five-year capital plan by providing them more details but they voted against it. Last fall, the Minister of Education provided us a document signed off by her that contained a list of all the schools the department was contemplating renovating or replacing. Holy Family was not on that list.

So Mr. Speaker, how did this school make it into the five-year capital plan when a number of schools on the minister's own list are nowhere to be seen?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Now, Mr. Speaker, the intention of the plan is to create awareness of the Yukon government's capital plan amongst Yukoners, the private sectors, municipalities and First Nations governments.

Communicating capital plans early and allowing all levels of government information toward fulfilling the highest priorities of the needs to Yukoners — well, that is important information for all communities, and it provides private industry to prepare the government for these projects.

It is interesting to hear the criticism that they want more — yet these five-year plans are a lot more than the previous government ever gave.

Mr. Kent: The question that I asked was specific to the Holy Family Elementary School, and how this school made it into the five-year capital plan when it wasn't on a previous school revitalization plan list. I don't know what question the Premier heard or was trying to answer there but it certainly wasn't the one that I asked.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard that the Minister of Highways and Public Works has told media that everything in this five-year capital plan has been approved by cabinet, so that suggests to us that ministers would then have details on the projects contained in it. Could the Minister of Education tell us what work is contemplated for Holy Family Elementary School in the years that are coloured in the five-year capital plan 2021-22 and 2022-23?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The schools that are currently being considered in the five-year capital plan include: Christ the King Elementary School, Holy Family Elementary School, Kluane Lake School, Selkirk Elementary School, Takhini Elementary School, Whitehorse Elementary School and the Wood Street Centre — primarily for the reasons of age of the buildings.

However, as the member opposite points out, with a mind to being fiscally responsible, we have to make replacement priorities. We are taking a holistic approach to addressing the needs of the growing school communities. Holy Family Elementary is at or soon to be at capacity, and it is being considered with respect to a number of other schools in a holistic approach that will serve our school communities well — and primarily, of course, the students of Yukon.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Hutton): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is

Vote 3, Department of Education, in 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, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*.

Department of Education — continued

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm going to be very brief. I did speak to the minister prior to the start today and said I didn't have any additional new questions to what we talked about the other day, but just to summarize a couple of the things. We obviously touched on the Education Advisory Committee; we talked a little bit about changes at the Native Language Centre, as well as Student Support Services.

The supplementary budget — many of those things were talked about previously and were in the 2016 Education annual report. I brought them up at this time; however, they may emerge again in debate on Education when we get to the mains later on in the Sitting. With that, I wanted to thank the minister, thank her officials for attending the other day and assisting her, and I am prepared at this time to clear general debate, unless my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King has any comments.

Ms. White: I have just very short comments. I feel often that, when the money is spent, all the questions I have about process will also apply in the general debate for this coming year, so I look forward to moving on and getting into the 2018-19 budget.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we will now move into line-by-line debate.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried

Chair: Mr. Kent has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.
On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$3,131,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of 185,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$2,946,000 agreed to

Department of Education agreed to

Chair: We will now proceed to Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, at page 6-3.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will not recess.

Department of Health and Social Services

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to welcome Stephen Samis, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, and Brenda Lee Doyle, the ADM.

Today I am presenting Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*, with respect to Health and Social Services. My remarks today will be short, but I would like to start by thanking the staff and the Minister of Finance for tabling this document and bringing it forward to this House for discussion. I would also like to thank the officials from his department and the officials from Health and Social Services for the great work over the course of the year and also for preparing the bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services is requesting a \$10.252-million increase over O&M for 2017-18, bringing the total O&M request to \$375.176 million. Under capital, the department is seeking an additional \$4.736 million, bringing the total ask for 2017-18 to \$99.661 million. This brings the department's total budget ask for 2017-18 to \$474.837 million.

Under the O&M expenditures, the requests are largely for Social Supports and Health Services. For Social Supports in this bill, the department is requesting \$2.95 million for increased costs associated with social assistance. Yukon government's social assistance costs per case and caseload is increasing. This is similar to most other jurisdictions across Canada, as many other provinces and territories are also experiencing increases in social assistance caseloads. In fact, the caseload increase from April 2016 to April 2017 was 115 individuals — an increase from 861 to 967, which is a 13-percent increase over the year.

The total number of recipients on social assistance increased from 1,233 on April 1, 2016, to 1,374 on April 1, 2017. This is an increase of 141, or 11 percent. We continue to look for ways to better support individuals in financial need, including providing employment and training supports. The employment and training services program offers social assistance recipients vocational assessments, help with finding work, on-the-job training and coaching and ongoing supports to both clients and employers.

There are also employment subsidies available to employers interested in participating in the program. We are

currently exploring opportunities for expanding our employment and training services program in order to better support Yukoners in finding jobs. The increase to the social assistance budget is not due only to the increase in the number of social assistance recipients.

In July 2017, this government increased the seniors income supplement to ensure that no eligible Yukon recipient will lose money as a result of changes made by the federal government to the guaranteed income supplement for low income seniors. There were additional program costs due to an increase in the number of Yukon seniors income supplement recipients. This number increased approximately 15 percent between 2015 and 2017. In addition, there was an increase in the consumer price index, which impacted this support program.

Health services — the department is seeking an additional \$5.36 million, largely related to funding insured services. This consists of funding in areas including in-territory physicians, out-of-territory hospital and physician claims, collaborative care, medical travel, extended benefits and pharmacare. As with last year, Mr. Speaker, Insured Health and Hearing Services continues to experience usage and cost increases due to Yukon population growth, consumer price index, expanded utilization of higher cost drugs, and higher levels of available medical care with their associated costs, plus the increased supports that our government is providing to Yukoners.

We know that Yukoners expect us to provide care for our seniors in a sustainable, high-quality way that respects the use of public funds. This is why we look forward to the results of the comprehensive review of the department identifying ways that we continue to provide a high quality of care while doing it in a sustainable manner. Whether it is for higher-than-anticipated costs for drugs, services performed outside of the territory, or extended benefits, we will provide the health services that Yukoners require.

Under the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the department is increasing \$1.1 million for additional investments in accessibility of chemotherapy at the Whitehorse General Hospital and \$100,000 for the First Nation health program.

Under capital, the department is requesting an additional \$4.787 million for Whistle Bend place. These funds are required for construction and equipment to finish the facility and have its planned opening in the fall of 2018. This request has been slightly offset with minor reductions in building maintenance, renovations and space in other areas of the department. This creates a net capital funding request for an additional \$4.736 million.

The comprehensive review of the department that is currently being undertaken will provide us with a client-focused map on the programs and services that the department provides. This will enable us to make decisions that maximize the client-centred approach and wellness to all Yukoners, while unleashing the potential of the staff and officials in the department to provide improved services for our youngest to our wisest Yukoner.

I would like to mention again, in closing, the hard work of the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Justice and other

officials and their respective departments, and the great work of the officials in Health and Social Services in preparing for the discussions today.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the officials for joining us here today. I'm sure they'll be of some assistance for us.

I don't have a lot of comments regarding the supplementary estimates. After all, as has been mentioned, this is money already spent.

I realize that childcare isn't particularly covered in this supplementary; however, the Premier did raise it in his opening remarks. My question is with regard to the retroactive childcare funding under the direct operating grant that is being granted to childcare centres throughout the territory. My question is: What is the value of that? Why is it not in these estimates?

Hon. Ms. Frost: In the submission, we have approximately \$600,000 allocated to childcare.

Ms. McLeod: Could the minister please advise why it is not in these budget documents?

Hon. Ms. Frost: It is in the estimates.

Ms. McLeod: Perhaps the minister could direct me to that. I'm looking at Health and Social Services and it's not listed here. Maybe she could point out where it is.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I said \$600,000 — I would just correct the record to say that, under the Family and Children's Services section of the supplementary, there is \$575,000 allocated for early learning and childhood programming.

Ms. McLeod: So the amount for the DOG back payment was \$575,000 and it is contained within Family and Children's Services, which shows a revote of \$173,000. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Frost: My understanding from the staff here is that the early learning prevention of \$575,000 was the estimate, and below that you see a \$750,000 deduction and then you see it back in at \$275,000, so at the very bottom there is an increase in Family and Children's Services, and it is noted here that it is \$173,000.

Just as a note, the direct operating grant and the increase for the supports retroactive payments have already gone out to all of the childcare centres in the Yukon that were impacted by the adjustments.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that information and I am especially pleased to know that those cheques have gone out to the childcare centres, but I just want to point out again that these budget documents are incredibly difficult to follow and read, with a good deal of the information not included. Maybe next year, we can look forward to some better documents that would lay that sort of thing out so we could follow the money.

I see that there is \$55,000 allocated for Macaulay Lodge and I wonder if the minister could explain what that money is for.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The funds for Macaulay Lodge were allocated for building maintenance renovations for some of the space. The funds requested were directed to fuel tank replacement, partially offset by a decrease in the public address. Funds will be allocated within this budget for the

request to keep the building up to the standards required to keep it open until we have Whistle Bend fully functional.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the minister for that. During the year 2017-18, how many FTEs have been signed or staffed to Whistle Bend place?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We have four FTEs assigned to staff at Whistle Bend.

Ms. McLeod: I wonder if the minister could commit to providing us with a couple of documents. One is a copy of the childcare funding agreement that the minister signed with Canada, and the other is a copy of the funding agreement that the minister has signed with the Salvation Army Centre of Hope.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I will take that under advisement, have a discussion internally and will get back to the member opposite.

Ms. McLeod: I appreciate that commitment. I believe I had already asked for the Salvation Army Centre of Hope agreement sometime last year, so I would appreciate a response on that as early as the minister can manage.

Under Health Services, the minister mentioned that part of that money — of the \$5,636,000 — was for health travel. I realize the minister just provided me with some numbers regarding health travel that were up to February. I believe they were current to February. I wonder how much of this supplementary money is included in that, or if this is in addition to the figures she already provided me.

Hon. Ms. Frost: As the Member for Watson Lake will recall from last year, we had extensive pressures on medical travel. That's no different this year. Historically, I think what we've seen was that medical travel pressures were not allocated for until after the fact, and we would see it then in the supplementary estimates in the future after March 31. What we attempted to do this year was to take the best estimates that we had from historic travel pressures and tie that in, so the estimate here of \$2,057,000 was our estimate to get us to the end of March. My anticipation is that we'll see where that lands, but I'm hoping there are not a lot of changes.

It's very difficult to track that, as the member opposite knows. As individual Yukoners fall ill, they may require special services outside the Yukon or outside their community. We will track that very carefully and be sure to update it as it changes in the future. I'm sure the member opposite can appreciate that.

Ms. McLeod: Certainly I understand how that must be difficult to track toward the end of any fiscal year.

Just to clarify, the portion of the \$5,636,000 that has been allocated for medical travel is \$2,057,000 — and if the minister could clarify if that is included in the figures that she sent me that were current to February 18, I believe it was.

Hon. Ms. Frost: What we have — in-territory travel. The number I just gave was \$2,057,000, and I believe that the overall costs for in-territory is pretty easy to track. What we are oftentimes confronted with are the challenges of external travel outside of the Yukon and the out-of-territory hospital claims. What we have to date for out-of-territory hospital claims is \$101,000, and hospital claims in territory — so

transfers. The Insured Health and Hearing Services and vital statistics legislated increases include the overall of 712, and that ties into the overall cost of \$5,636,000.

Ms. McLeod: So that is \$2,057,000 out of this total for in-territory travel, and I'm asking the minister to confirm as soon as possible what the end-of-the-year figure will be — maybe by the end of this Sitting — so that we can calculate what the end-of-the-year figures are for out-of-territory travel, notwithstanding the out-of-territory medical costs, which don't affect my interest in what medical travel is costing.

Mr. Chair, I believe those are all the questions I have on this file, so I thank everyone for their time and I'll pass it on.

Hon. Ms. Frost: We'll endeavour to get that information as quickly as it becomes available.

Ms. White: Currently at Macaulay Lodge, is it not an above-ground fuel tank? Currently when I drive by — is it not a great big, white fuel tank that is aboveground?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can't answer that question. I don't know the specifics on where the tank is. I just know that we have funding allocated for ongoing maintenance, but I will certainly direct the question to the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Ms. White: My hope is that with the access of the interweb, we could get confirmation that it is currently an aboveground tank. The reason I ask is that, in 2014, I think it was the first time that we brought up that it was an underground tank that was leaking. It is my understanding that it has been replaced since then.

I feel somewhat confident that when I drive past, it is a large, white, above-ground tank, and if it has been replaced since the last time that I can find it in the 33rd Legislative Assembly, which was May 19, 2015, then my question would be: Why are we replacing a fuel tank that we have replaced recently?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I will get that information and respond to the question. I am not sure what was allocated in 2015. I am responsible for what is here today, and I will certainly endeavour to get that information with respect to the \$55,000 allocated for Macaulay Lodge in this particularly supplementary.

Ms. White: Just to clarify, my point was not that the minister should know what money was allocated before, but I can find a reference where we spoke about it in the Legislative Assembly on May 19, 2015, when it was referred to as an underground tank. I can get confirmation at a different point in time, but I just want to put that out there. If the tank was replaced in recent years, I am just asking why we would be replacing it again, but I will move on right now.

Noticing the increase of social assistance, which I don't have a problem with — let me just put that out there. I believe that anyone who is facing poverty or hardship should absolutely have access to the social safety net that is social assistance. I don't believe that poverty is an instantaneous thing and that you feel it one day and you don't feel it the next day. I feel that often people get trapped in cycles, and it is because, if you pay more than you can afford in housing, then

it affects you in different ways. It's a really awful cycle and it is one that is well-known as being very hard to get out of.

The one reason why I want to bring up social assistance and caseloads is that the superhero humans who work within the social assistance office have a lot of work. They always have a lot of work. These are caseworkers who help with anything from accessing health services, mental health services, housing — trying to decide if there is extra money that could be taken from one pot and put in another. The work that a caseworker does within social assistance is a lot. With that pretty steep increase of social assistance numbers, I just want to know if there have been new caseworkers added or a reallocation, or if right now they are able — sorry, Mr. Chair. They are able. They will do the work no matter what happens, but as to whether or not the rest of their lives are not adversely affected by the workload that they have.

Understanding that there are increasing numbers on social assistance, I just want to know that the caseworkers are supported, that they are not so much busier than they already were because they are really busy. I just wanted to know how the caseworkers are faring with that increase.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am really happy to respond to the question, recognizing that we have an increase in the number of social assistance caseloads and the trend is rising upward. We have also taken some very proactive approaches within the department to look at more efficiencies — more effective time allocations. In terms of case management, historically all of the documentation was done by hand — all of the information uploads and so on.

Now that we have this new IT system that has recently been implemented — last year, in fact, it was in the budget — we're seeing more time freed up with our case managers so that they're not doing the administration work. That time is being freed — so better time management, better time allocation to case management, and less time on administration as a result of the new IT system that has been recently introduced.

Ms. White: I think that any time we can reduce the paperwork that our front-line staff have to do, the better off we are. Are there regular check-ins with case workers to be sure that they are feeling that support, that they aren't overrun, that the system is working the way it should — so if the minister could talk a bit about that?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm really pleased to say that the staff are really happy with the new system and, I think, somewhat relieved. They do participate in regular meetings within the department. The ADM is quite active and quite involved with the staff with biweekly meetings and monthly meetings — so a lot of check-in time — but, as we go through the health review, we will look at efficiencies, better aligning service needs with what we have in place. There is always room for improvement.

What we have also done is ensure that all our staff have the necessary training and extensive training that will help them. We're always open to suggestions, and the staff are always keen to participate and enhance skillsets in training.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Again, just the acknowledgement of their herculean work that happens within that office — and unfortunately, I know that there are always challenges, because when people are going into the office, often they may not be happy. It's not the fault of the caseworker, but that is the person who has to try to pick them up and put the pieces back together. So just the acknowledgement that it takes a very special person to do that job — and I'm grateful for the work they do.

In the line items, we have the amount of \$1.1 million for chemotherapy. Some of my questions are: What does this cover? Are we talking about the cost of drugs or the personnel? What kind of increase have we seen in the number of cancer patients, and is this something that has been investigated in other parts of government — if there is a steady increase and why that might be?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The \$1-million request is for the chemo drugs. We are working with the Hospital Corporation and within our department to track the rise and why this is. I think it's a greater ability to target the specific cells that cause certain cancers. The research is happening and there is certainly a lot of work that has to happen, but the chemotherapy treatment request is very specific to the drug itself.

Ms. White: Does the cancer navigator fall within this line item?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I don't believe so, but I can verify that with the Hospital Corporation.

Ms. White: The great news, Mr. Chair, is that I have the opportunity to ask that same question again, so we just put a star on it, and for the officials — I will ask in general debate again.

For the capital spending at Whistle Bend of \$4.787 million, it says that it is for construction equipment. I don't need to know about cases of screws or nails or things like that, but there is a general breakdown as to what that might be for?

Hon. Ms. Frost: My understanding is that the cost was actually for the equipment for the facility itself — not the actual bricks and mortar of the building, but the beds and the supplies needed to open up the facility. It is equipment needed to bring the facility up to a place where we can open it by June.

Ms. White: I was just seeking clarifications because the notes that we were given say "Whistle Bend continuing care facility: funds required for construction and equipment in this current fiscal year," so I was just trying to see other things, so I understand it is beds and such.

With that, Mr. Chair, I look forward to debating this current year's budget and asking questions because then I will ask my questions about programming and direction. Until that point, I thank the officials for the work and, of course, thank their departments for their continued hard work. Today, a special acknowledgement to the caseworkers in social assistance because that is a hard job and not everybody can do it.

So with that, Mr. Chair, I look forward to moving on.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Health and Social Services?

Seeing none we will move to line-by-line debate.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Chair, Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried

Chair: Ms. McLeod has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$10,252,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$4,736,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$14,988,000 agreed to

Department of Health and Social Services agreed to

Chair: The matter before the Committee is now Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in 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, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate in Vote 8, Department of Justice in Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*.

Department of Justice

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the indulgence of our colleagues in opposition in allowing us to call the Department of Justice with respect to this bill prior to the Yukon Development Corporation, based on the availability of personnel. I note that I do not yet have the assistance of the department, but I expect them at any moment, so I will start with my introductory words and then we will get to questions.

I rise today to speak to the Department of Justice, 2017-18 *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*. Over the past year, the department has advanced work in a fiscally responsible manner, and this budget positions us to continue to tackle many important initiatives in the next period.

I might just take a break from my remarks to welcome the department officials rather than have them stand at the back of the room. With your indulgence, they can come in.

I would like to welcome Luda Ayzenberg from the Department of Justice as well as our deputy minister, Lesley McCullough, from the Department of Justice.

Our objectives remain clear. We will continue to work with our partners to administer the justice system effectively, support Yukoners with quality, community-minded programs and services, and to find ways to make our communities safer.

I will highlight the department's supplementary operation and maintenance expenditures and supplementary capital expenditures for 2017-18, many of which are offset with full recoveries from Canada.

We work closely with the RCMP to address their resource needs. We are guided by the provisions outlined in the *Territorial Police Service Agreement*. As partners, we are driven by strong accountability and governance measures to ensure Yukoners receive quality policing services. Regular, ongoing assessments are undertaken to make sure that we are addressing emerging needs and meeting staffing and resource requirements. We saw examples of that earlier this week.

Therefore, as per our funding obligations, this budget provides an ongoing increase of \$457,000 for the RCMP's territorial policing budget for retroactive and ongoing pay increases for regular members, civilian members and public service employees who work with the RCMP.

The department supports projects that are community-driven and that respond to community safety needs through alternative forms of service delivery. One example of this is the funding provided for Kwanlin Dün First Nation security initiatives. A key component of that project includes the community safety officer program, which launched in June 2017. The community safety officers are the eyes and ears of the community and they are building important relationships with citizens, with the greater community and with the RCMP. The officers are liaisons between the Kwanlin Dün community, the Yukon RCMP, the City of Whitehorse bylaw department, and the Government of Yukon's safer communities and neighbourhoods unit — or what is known as the SCAN unit. We have heard that the officers are making a positive impact in the community and taking a preventive approach to safety in a way that is supported by Kwanlin Dün citizens. They are often first on the scene, they are welcomed by community members, and the community is increasingly relying on their good work. This budget allocates a one-time transfer of \$265,000 for this initiative, bringing the total contribution for 2017-18 to \$496,000.

Working in partnership with the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council and in collaboration with Yukon First Nations, Yukon aboriginal women's groups, the RCMP and relevant Yukon government departments, the family information liaison unit, also known as FILU, is supporting family members of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls who need assistance accessing information related to their loved one's case. Members of the House will recall that this service is being funded by the federal government as a

parallel investment to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. A one-time increase of \$285,000 — 100-percent recoverable from Canada — is included in this budget for FILU.

The department took advantage of time-limited funding from the federal government to grow the number of indigenous courtworkers supporting underserved and unserved communities in the Yukon. To access the additional funding, we had to match it. The budget for the indigenous courtworker program received a one-time increase of \$300,000, with 50 percent being recoverable from Canada. These workers are improving access to justice for indigenous people involved in the criminal justice system.

Yukon now has 11 indigenous courtworkers — and just on a personal note, may I say, Mr. Chair, that I worked for many years with many indigenous courtworkers, both here in Whitehorse and throughout the territory at circuit courts, and they play a vital role in helping individuals through a court process, advising them of their options, helping them proceed with discussions with the Crown, being put in touch with legal aid and, overall, assisting the justice system here in the territory and, in particular, indigenous clients as they proceed through what can be a very complicated process. We are pleased to support the growth of that program.

Mr. Chair, we are providing a one-time transfer of \$135,000 to the Yukon Human Rights Commission to cover the cost of outside counsel for hearings that occurred in 2017 and 2018 that they did not have funding for. The number of hearings created operational costs and pressures. The total budget for the Yukon Human Rights Commission for 2017-18 was increased by 19.8 percent, with a total contribution of \$817,000.

Mr. Chair, the budget also provides for a one-time increase of \$129,000 to the deputy ministers office to cover costs associated with the implementation of Bill C-46. Bill C-46, as a bill, is intended to change the laws in Canada, as many of us know, in respect of impaired driving, which is happening alongside the work to legalize cannabis at the federal government level.

The judiciary require a more effective and appropriate system to manage judicial information, which is independent from government information. The judiciary's current system, called JudgeNet, is now outdated and fails routinely. An interim solution is in place to keep it running until an upgrade can be implemented. This budget assigns a one-time transfer of \$150,000 in capital for that project to be done.

The budget transfers \$150,000 in capital funds, which were previously assigned for a new adult and youth corrections management information system. However, this project is underway in partnership with Health and Social Services, with considerable work planned for the 2018-19 fiscal period. Corrections is accountable for carrying out the orders of the court with respect to safe housing, supervision, rehabilitation and reintegration of adult and youth offenders, and an integrated facility and case management system will enhance the department's ability to do this effectively and efficiently.

In closing, Mr. Chair, I would like to thank all of those who worked so hard to ensure that the justice system is administered for the benefit of Yukoners, and to the Department of Justice staff for their valuable work.

Mr. Speaker, this concludes my Budget Address for the House today, and I look forward to answering questions from the Opposition.

Mr. Cathers: I would like to thank the officials for coming here this afternoon as well as for their briefing this morning on the budget.

I don't really have a lot of questions, because the briefing was quite informative, but I would like to take this opportunity to point out that, just as we're seeing again with this year's budget, the removal of information from the budget by this Liberal government has left the opposition forced to wait for briefings with departmental officials and having to ask them questions in detail before we have information that used to be evident the day the budget was tabled.

Likewise with this supplementary estimate, there's not a lot of detailed information in the budget book itself, but I do appreciate the information provided by officials this morning about the changes within the 2017-18 fiscal year. I would just ask for information on the capital side — a little more information about the changes under building maintenance renovations and space. There was a reference in the information we were provided to a transfer from Management Services capital building renovations for certain projects, including, it appeared, a transfer to the Department of Tourism and Culture. I would just appreciate an explanation of that.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The title of that line item, Building Maintenance Renovations and Space, includes a one-time transfer of \$156,000 to the Department of Highways and Public Works from the Management Services capital building maintenance and renovations budget toward the Department of Tourism and Culture's tenant improvement project that is managed by HPW.

The \$156,000 came from three Justice projects that are all managed by HPW, so funds that weren't required in a particular area were moved for that purpose.

The three projects they came from in Justice include the atrium skylight and tile replacement project. This project was tendered and all bids came in significantly higher than the projected budget for that particular item, so the project was cancelled and will be revisited using an application to the energy incentive program for that to go forward. There was some funding left there.

The other project that this money partly came from in Justice was the domestic waterline design project. This project is at the assessment stage and did not require all the dollars that were assigned to it for the assessment. Lastly, the fire alarm deficiencies project — this project is at the design stage and did not require all the dollars that were assigned to it to complete the design.

Mr. Cathers: As I indicated, we received a very informative briefing this morning from officials and we appreciate the list of answers they provided to a number of

detailed questions I asked at that time, as well as the information they provided in response to questions by the Third Party. I have no further questions at this point on the supplementary budget.

Ms. Hanson: I also join in welcoming the officials here this afternoon and for their briefing this morning.

Unlike my colleague in the Official Opposition, I probably do have a couple of questions because perhaps I didn't — there are a couple of areas where, in retrospect, I should have asked a few more clarifying questions.

I just want to repeat confirmation for the minister's benefit and for the other two ministers who are still in the House that we asked on a regular basis now for all departments to provide organization charts, so that when we're looking at a budget — in this case, the mains are seeking approval of nearly \$79 million for the Department of Justice this year. It's really hard to get your head around what \$45 million of community justice and public safety — how that is being delivered to Yukoners. Since we're slowly transitioning toward strategic plans and performance plans for departments that are publicly available, at least an organization chart is a starting point to begin to see how government structures itself to deliver on some of these key areas.

So I appreciate the confirmation from this department that they will be — and I appreciate the fact that other departments have already provided those to us. We thought at one point because there was a run on them that there had been sort of a secret among deputies that, "That is what they're going to ask for, so come prepared." I guess they must have skipped Justice, but we'll look forward to getting it. I appreciate the positive response this morning.

I just wanted to come back — there was a fair bit of discussion about the ability of the department to — in terms of lapsed funds as the basis to provide funding to the Kwanlin Dün First Nation's security policing program. It's called "security", so it confused us all at the time. But we know how important this project has been to the community.

One of the officials who heard me ask questions with respect to other pilot project funding that governments have funded in the past — so I wanted to ask the minister and have on record a sense of what criteria the government has put in place to assess whether or not, after the three years of initial pilot funding, they will be able to determine whether there should be an ongoing program. What targets have been established? What expectations or outcomes are there for the funding provided for this program to assist governments in the future to assess if this is something that is a core program that we should continue funding, or if it didn't achieve what we thought it was going to do? So I'm looking for the kinds of outcomes. If there is written documentation on that, I would certainly appreciate having that tabled.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: In answer to the question from the Leader of the Third Party, there is an evaluation component that is built into the program. It is managed through the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, because they are keen, of course, to make sure that their evaluation, their criteria and the criteria

put in place by the agreement between them and the government is met.

I can confirm — I think that is what I should do — that this is a pilot project and that the funding is in place until March 31, 2019. They do provide regular reports on that criteria, which is set out in the agreement between the government and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and they do provide regular updates to the department about how that is happening.

I don't have a copy of that criteria, but I'm happy to speak to the member opposite offline and make sure that all her questions are answered, or some other method for doing that. A few pieces of information I do have are that, from August 1 to September 30, 2017, the community safety officers — remembering they only started in June — but from those dates of August 1 to September 30, the community safety officers have had contact with 494 citizens and had received, at that point, over 142 calls, so they are clearly keeping records of those statistics.

Of the 142 calls, 99 calls were serviced by the community safety officers — it's a significant number — 20 required RCMP assistance, eight required some assistance from bylaw in the city, and one required medical assistance. Seven of those cases were referred to SCAN and two required probation or parole assistance, and five required conservation assistance.

I know of one of those that involved a bear in the neighbourhood, so the neighbours were very pleased that the safety officers were nearby to help and the conservation folks were called after that.

Those are not the statistics necessarily being asked for in this question, but it is a good indicator of the kinds of statistics that are being taken for the purpose of later evaluation, and there is anecdotal information, as has been mentioned by my colleague, that the program is wildly successful and accepted — a very important component — by the citizens of Kwanlin Dün as an option for their safety and security.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that information. I think it begins to address the issue. The caution I'm trying to raise, as I said with the officials this morning, is that, over the course of many years, one has the opportunity to see where we see, either from a government itself or a government in partnership with another level of government which, as in this case, establishes programs and then, at the end of it, it's like there's either a minor crisis or anger because there's a decision made to not go on with ongoing programming.

I guess the question I'm trying to raise with the minister and the department is seeking some assurance that there are some outcomes that are being looked for here, so that at the end of three years, both Kwanlin Dün and the Government of Yukon can mutually agree that this has achieved those outcomes — those expectations that were set — and make a logical determination whether or not this is something that continues to be solely funded by the Yukon or jointly funded by Yukon, Kwanlin Dün and somebody else. Failing that, we have all too many experiences — federal funding that is put in place for a short period of time and the territorial government

assumes responsibility for it and the territorial government gets criticized for growing the public service because it just kept growing as opposed to assessing. I am trying to get to the core of how some of these things can be avoided. I am looking for that assurance.

I understand that this may not be available this afternoon, and if those kinds of criteria are available, that some documentation can be sent to our office. I would be quite satisfied with that.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I certainly share the concerns — if I can say that — or the ideas set forward by the Leader of the Third Party. Government is not very good at stopping doing anything, but we do have to have very good, quantifiable criteria upon which these kinds of programs are measured. The success of a program like this in partnership with a First Nation government here in the territory is critical. We know that other First Nations are looking to explore programs, not exactly like this one, but some version that suits their circumstances and their communities. I appreciate the comments that have been made because evidence upon which to base decisions is critical to our government and to our one-government approach, and I expect that with a program that has been this successful, we will need to evaluate it on paper and determine exactly where we go from here.

I appreciate those comments. I will look to see if there is something with respect to the criteria or the outline of the criteria that we can provide to my colleague's office.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate the minister's comments and look forward to receiving that documentation.

I just want to clarify my understanding so that when we speak to the indigenous courtworker program, as I understand it, and the minister can confirm or correct me, that for — here's a new deal — a one-time limited investment of \$300,000, of which the government will get back \$150,000, that by seizing that opportunity, the government now has the ability to ensure that they will have 50-percent recoverability on an ongoing basis for the total amount.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the indulgence, not only from you, but from my colleagues here, so we can get good information.

Indigenous courtworkers, known previously as the aboriginal courtworkers program — and this was my most recent question. It has been in as long as I can remember, and that is not back as far as it has been in place here in the territory, which I understand to be in the late 1970s. It was originally a program brought forward by the Council for Yukon Indians, at the time, and supported by various combinations of funding from the federal government and the Yukon territorial government since that time. I am happy to say that this is the history.

The current agreement is in place for the next five years — to answer the question — and, after that, there will be further negotiations. Based on the history of this program, I daresay this is not something the government will stop doing either. For the fiscal year 2017-18, the budget for the indigenous courtworkers program is \$674,000 and, as noted by the question, a one-time increase of \$300,000, with 50

percent recoverable from funding from Canada, is what we have here before us today.

An expansion of the federal funding for underserved and unserved communities became available if matched by funding from the provinces or territories — and that is what Yukon took advantage of in this case. The Yukon sought and received funding, as I said earlier, in 2017-18. That allowed service providers to fund the increase, and that took us from six to 11 indigenous courtworkers.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that response. Just as a point of clarification — neither of the opposition members asked a question this morning with respect to the one-time increase in 2017-18 in the deputy minister's office. I don't know why I didn't. With the minister's explanation clarifying that it was with respect to — so we saw at the implementation of Bill C-46 — I was triggered by the minister's comment that it was to do specifically with impaired driving aspects of the implementation of that bill.

I guess my question is really: Is this just focused on cannabis? Because the distracted-driving issue is one that is huge in this territory, as anybody knows who has walked or driven in the Yukon with respect to people texting with cellphones. Is there a product of that one-time increase that, by the end of March — if this was an augmentation for 2017-18 only — we're going to be seeing early in the new fiscal? What's the product for having this \$129,000?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This is an interesting question because it shows that even the best laid plans will not always come to fruition, and, in fact, with respect to this \$129,000 and given the timing of the announcement, this was funding that was to come from the federal government to the Yukon government for the purposes of dealing with the changes that are coming with respect to Bill C-46.

Just to remind all of us, C-45 of the federal government's legislation bills is with respect to cannabis and the legalization of cannabis, but C-46 deals with the changes to the *Criminal Code*, and in particular to impaired driving with respect to that issue. But because the announcement of the funding was late, Mr. Chair, Yukon will not receive the \$129,000 before the end of this fiscal year, so discussions have taken place between the territorial government and the federal government and, in fact, April 1, 2018 — going forward, the five years of funding for this will be intact for Yukon to benefit. It is \$525,000 annually for the next five years from the federal government for the implementation of these bills and the effect it will have here in the territory. In order to support the increase of what will be required for the specialized training and technical supports, Canada has pledged to provide a formula amount, and our amount will be \$525,000 provided to this territory for five years of funding to support training initiatives and to offset the cost of technical supports with respect to the enforcement.

That is impaired driving and the changes that are coming. I appreciate that reference was made by the member opposite to distracted driving, and that will not necessarily be part of what this program and this funding will cover, but that is a separate topic and I am pleased to speak about our plans for distracted driving at another time.

Ms. Hanson: Indeed we will. Thank you very much, I have no further questions.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice?

Seeing none, we will move to line-by-line debate.

Mr. Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried

Chair: Mr. Kent has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,126,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$156,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$970,000 agreed to Department of Justice agreed to

Chair: We will now proceed to Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*.

Yukon Development Corporation

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to invite two of our officials to the Assembly today. This is, I believe for both individuals, their first time. I would like my colleagues to welcome first Mr. Blaine Anderson, who is the CFO for the Yukon Development Corporation, as well as Mr. Geoff Woodhouse, our senior policy analyst. I would like to have my colleagues invite them into the Committee and make them welcome.

I would like to thank both individuals for coming in today and providing some support for me as we go through this.

Mr. Chair, I don't believe we're in for a long analysis today. We only have one item, so some opening remarks and then we can see if there are any questions. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the supplementary estimates for the Yukon

Development Corporation for the 2017-18 budget year. It's one item only, but it's the largest single item in the supplementary budget, at \$39.2 million — almost \$40 million.

The change in the budget has been driven by one initiative under the O&M category — the refinancing of the \$39.2-million — almost \$40-million — loan to YDC from the Government of Yukon. This is a one-time impact.

The first repayment for this loan will be made on March 31, 2018, and it will fall in the 2017-18 fiscal period. If we had not refinanced the loan, the entire amount would have been due by the end of March 2018. That is really important to understand as we go through our discussions today. If we had not done this, there would have been a loan for \$40 million due this month. The loan will now be fully repaid over a period of up to 40 years. It is 40 years because — the terms of the loan — we did not have the ability to repay those now, so in turn, the magnitude of it, of course — we are going to repay that with our cash flow over 40 years. This refinancing allows us to amortize the cost of the facilities over their operational life, and that gives us the time frame on how you amortize it. I am sure if there are deep questions from the opposition on this, the chief financial officer — an esteemed chartered accountant here in the Yukon — can speak to that. The Yukon government will recover \$7.1-million in principle and interest payments by the end of the 2021-22 fiscal year — within that structure.

Mr. Chair, let me explain why this refinancing is necessary. The previous Yukon government loaned the Yukon Development Corporation \$39.2 million — almost \$40 million — to help Yukon Energy Corporation finance construction projects, including the LNG facility that we have today. The original \$39.2-million construction loan between the corporations was restructured in 2015. At the request of the government, it was restructured.

Of course, in my role, when the government provides direction, whether it is through Management Board or others, and government changes, those documents are sealed. So who the \$40-million minister is — I am not sure, but there were two ministers who had that portfolio at the time, and they are elected officials here in the Yukon today. I don't know, but maybe one of those previous ministers at some point will provide us with some insight into where the direction for this amazing financial misstep came from.

As I stated, the government then provided the direction to YDC. YDC provided \$16.8-million construction financing and a capital contribution of \$22.4 million to the Yukon Energy Corporation. To quote the Member for Watson Lake today — we will try to follow the money here. So try to follow the money.

This decision to change a portion of the loan to a grant was never communicated to the public by the previous government — never. This would have meant that YDC owed \$39.2 million to the Yukon government, but would only be recovering \$16.7 million of that from the Yukon Energy Corporation and would have had to make up the difference.

How they would have done this is quite a mystery. Perhaps the member opposite or members can explain this at

some point, because, as I said, who was the \$40-million minister of the day?

The full lump sum repayment schedule for March 31 of this year would have been financial challenging for Yukon Development Corporation. It would have required borrowing from external sources, which would impact the Yukon government's debt cap. That was the only source. The money wasn't there — had to go external — debt cap would have gone from whatever we were — I think it was almost \$200 million when we got here. It would have been more.

It is also important to understand that the transaction on the books between the Yukon government and the Yukon Development Corporation — that loan that wouldn't have been able to have been paid back with the current cash flow — showed an asset on the books for the Yukon government, so actually, it showed that they had more money, but if you look at what was actually going on, there was no loan. What does that mean? I don't know. Some may say it would have been the fact that the government was in — I don't know — maybe a deficit for years more than what they said, but they didn't communicate this to the public. That is why this is such an important piece.

We have worked with the Department of Finance to refinance the terms of the loan to ensure that the entire amount, including interest and principal, is paid to the Yukon government. We are doing this for Yukoners. We are going to clean this up for Yukoners. By extending the amortization period over a reasonable time frame, aligned with the actual infrastructure, Yukon Development Corporation is able to use internal cash flow to repay the full amount of the loan without impacting the Yukon government's debt cap. I appreciate the work by the officials on this, and I appreciate the work by the Yukon Development Corporation board and president. I am sure that these were challenging undertakings to get to this spot, for those individuals after being appointed to do good work for Yukoners, and a solid individual in a leadership role was appointed as well, taking this on — but having to undertake this.

I have to say that I have never seen a transaction like this on the government books. Asset-backed paper — that is one thing — from years gone by — is something that multiple governments did. Not identifying O&M when you build capital — that happens. Borrowing \$40 million and not having the money to pay it on a loan structure is a different story, and I have to say, Mr. Chair, that every time I sit in this Assembly since we started and we are scolded on financial stewardship, this is the one thing that has been on my mind since the day I started. In the responsibility for the Yukon Development Corporation — this was day-one briefing. You have a \$40-million loan — the government borrowed it. We don't have money to pay it unless you go to the debt cap. So you can imagine what it is like to sit in here day after day and be told that the financial stewards of the Yukon are sitting across from me — when I have never seen this.

At this point, I am sure there should be some good questions. I also hope that when we get to the end of the supplementary budget, we have full support from the

opposition in passing our supplementary budget, taking into consideration the hard work of the officials and the board to, let's just say, get the train back on the tracks at Yukon Development Corporation instead of running the boat into an iceberg, which is what was happening previously.

So I will open it up to questions from the opposition, and I would love to speak to this topic today. The officials, I'm sure, will help me get through this topic.

Mr. Istchenko: I do want to thank the officials for coming in here today. I don't have many questions; I actually just have one. I am just wondering how much Kwanlin Dün First Nation has received off of their revenue from the variable rate off the LNG plant over the past year.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will answer the question concerning the payment schedule for Kwanlin Dün First Nation during the mains, because that is part of our discussion during the mains, but today we have one thing on the supplementary budget, and that is \$39 million — \$40 million. That is what we have today. That is the topic of conversation. Anything that anybody wants to ask me on this topic, I will answer, and when we open up the mains and we go through the complete Yukon Development Corporation budget, I will speak to that as well.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the member opposite for his question. I have no further questions.

Ms. White: I have a lot of questions, and part of the reason I have questions is that I can go back to my 2013 budgets and I can't find when the money was transferred. I can go into 2012, I can go into 2014, and I can't find the line item where the money was transferred.

Mr. Chair, the reason why this is upsetting for me is that, for five years, the team I worked with worked really hard at paying attention to what was going on. The critic of the YDC and the YEC was on top of it at all times, so when knowledge of this \$39.2-million transaction became more visible — and I asked about it in the fall, and there was some maneuvering and I understand now why that question couldn't be answered. I have a concern, which is that I can't find the money in previous years. I can't find it in the budgets, and asking this minister where that money was is not fair, because it wasn't his money and it wasn't his government who did it. But I do have questions because it is a substantial amount of money, and I echo the minister's frustration and I feel for the officials who are here for the first time because I spoke to board representatives before and they were the ones who dodged the question a little bit, and it makes more sense now.

Mr. Chair, the thing that really needs to be — I can't say it more times than not. I can't find \$39.2 million that was transferred for YDC in budgets for 2012, 2013 or 2014. There is no mention of it in 2015 or 2016. One would think that part of our role here is the transparency of being able to follow that allocation, so I echo the frustrations and would just like to put in the pitch for anyone who may be reading this far away from now in future years: I don't think the criticism that the minister was making was directed at the NDP. We did not move the money. We have questions about money, but we've

had questions about money for years, so this isn't any different.

It's a shocking thing that we're here, but this is an important part, because it's important that this is aired out right now. I can say with great confidence that I was not involved in that, and that rests pretty easy with me. My question, to start off with, is: What was the final and completed cost of the LNG facility next to Yukon Energy Corporation?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, part of the mystery — we believe, from the numbers we have and in the work we're doing right now with Yukon Energy Corporation, that we're in that range, but we're also trying to decipher, within that \$39-million range — what I will commit to getting, as we walk through this, is to decipher costs of a substation that were also part of that cost, which we're trying to break out. Actually, part of what we're doing, just to give some comfort — and absolutely, I wasn't referring to the NDP in any way.

What we're trying to do is — we're in the midst of having a board-to-board meeting with Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation in the next 45 days. It's just being pulled together. Part of what we're undertaking — and the Department of Finance for the Yukon government will be there. What we're undertaking is just having a discussion about a financial sort of analysis work. For some, they might have seen that — I think it was out on the tender management system — but it's really an analysis of what has transpired and where costs have gone. It's really just us trying to support the work of Yukon Energy Corporation, but also to come to some understanding on actual costs.

Once again, I apologize to the member opposite, but I will do my best to get an exact cost. I'll pull out any of the financing payments, but the actual capital expenditures for you concerning this — I'll endeavour to do that in the next week when we come back and provide that to you.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. One of the reasons why now this question is so important is that it was a moving number previously, and now understanding that things happened that I can't trace in our budgets and I can't find in documentation and I'm learning about, now I would really like to know what that final number was, only — not only; what am I saying?

There are so many reasons to want to know what that final number is, including what the promise was by government and what the promise was by the Yukon Energy Corporation at the time for what that cost was. This is a serious thing, so I look forward to having further conversations with the minister — not necessarily in the House, but even outside. I look forward to the government releasing that information when it's finally understood, because the citizens of the Yukon were told one thing, and it sounds like it may be different. I feel like everyone deserves to have that honest answer.

With that, Mr. Chair, I thank the minister and I thank his officials. I really do love Yukon Energy Corporation and I look forward to, one time, being able to have a conversation about future projects and aspirations of what the corporation

can do. It won't always be doom and gloom from my side. So I thank you for being here for your first time. I am sorry it is under these circumstances, and I thank the minister for the opportunity.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation? Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line starting at page 12-3 of the estimates booklet.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We will go through it one more time, I think, just to ensure this one.

Certainly, for the supplementary budget, O&M, vote 22-1 — for the record and for —

Ms. White: Mr. Chair, to follow procedure, I will ask the question: What is the \$39.2 million for?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I thank the member opposite for the constant work that the member opposite does for the people of the Yukon and the riding she represents. I think that is an important reason why once again we are going to touch on this.

The \$39.2 — the almost \$40 million — that is here is the repayment. It is the repayment of a loan that was structured within an absolutely unrealistic and unattainable period of time. It is a debt instrument that, over the next weeks and months, we should hopefully be able to find out more about it and why it was structured. I think Yukoners want to know about something along those lines. They want to know what this is. They want to know the same way that — we have an opportunity here every day to answer questions and to ensure that we stand behind it.

I think there is still an opportunity — or part of my responsibility in this role to identify the fact as well that we need to find out how this happened, really, respecting, of course, that the direction has been put aside and archived from the government. I think that being good representatives of the Yukon we will find that out.

Once again, the \$39.2 million was driven by one initiative under the O&M category. It's the refinancing of the loan to YDC from the Government of Yukon. The original \$39.2 million construction loan between the corporations was restructured in 2015 at the request of the previous government. YDC provided \$16.8 million in construction financing and a capital contribution of \$22.4 million to the Yukon Energy Corporation. This decision to change a portion of the loan to a grant was never communicated to the public by the previous government. Of course, this would have meant that YDC owed \$39.2 million to the Yukon government, but would only be recovering \$16.7 million of that from YEC and would have had to make up the difference.

So the full lump sum repayment was scheduled for March 31, which is coming up, but would have been financially challenging for the Yukon Development Corporation, so it would have required borrowing from an external source, which would have impacted the Yukon government's debt cap.

With that being said, in closing, I will commit to the member opposite that I will bring to the House the final costs for the LNG infrastructure. I will work with our CFO to obtain

that and, at that point, we can table it so we can fulfill the questions you have requested today.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$39,200,000 agreed to
On Capital Expenditures
Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to
Total Expenditures of \$39,200,000 agreed to
Yukon Development Corporation agreed to

Chair: That concludes consideration of Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation — thank you to the officials for appearing here this afternoon.

We will now proceed to Vote 1, Yukon Legislative Assembly. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote 1, Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Is there any general debate?

Yukon Legislative Assembly

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Members' Services Board is responsible for the budgets of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. It is therefore appropriate that the Chair of the Members' Services Board should provide information to the House on these appropriations.

The 2017-18 supplementary estimates for Vote 1, Yukon Legislative Assembly, show an increase of \$18,000 in capital expenditures. This increase is due to additional funding required to upgrade and complete the installation of new pac poles and new cabling in the opposition caucuses. Perhaps more money is required in the next budget. That is my report with respect to the capital appropriations for the *Third Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, Vote 1.

Chair: Is there any general debate?

Ms. Hanson: I am intrigued because I wasn't at the Members' Services Board meeting, so could the chair of the Members' Services Board clarify that the supplementary budget that is requested here today — you mentioned pac poles. The opposition offices were also provided with boxes that supposedly allow opposition members to be able to use cellphones, which are not possible to use in the opposition offices, and they don't function yet.

I am just wondering if those are also part of this \$18,000, and do we ever do any quality check to see if things we paid for work?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will return to the Leader of the Third Party with the information that you have requested in that question. I do not know about the timing of the work that was performed. On quality control — I will also get back to

the officials with respect to that and we will respond in due course to your inquiry.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the member for that response. I understand the officials have attempted to work on it. I was just hoping that the Chair would perhaps undertake some sort of personal investigation on this just because he is interested in the well-being of the members of the opposition.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, I will report back to the Leader of the Third Party.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 1, Yukon Legislative Assembly, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 1, Yukon Legislative Assembly, cleared or carried

Chair: Mr. Cathers has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 1, Yukon Legislative Assembly, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to
On Capital Expenditures
Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$18,000 agreed to
Total Expenditures in the amount of \$18,000 agreed to
Yukon Legislative Assembly agreed to

Chair: We will now continue with clause-by-clause debate on Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Schedule A

Schedule A agreed to

On Schedule B

Schedule B agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Silver that the Chair report Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Chair: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2017-18*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

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

Clerk: Third 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 third time and do pass.

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

Hon. Mr. Silver: Our government has made a deliberate effort to establish a budget process that is more credible and transparent. In support of this transparency, I would like to take an opportunity to speak to some of the points that were raised by members opposite during the general debate.

Mr. Speaker, this government has heard loud and clear from the opposition members that they were concerned about \$30 million in lapsed capital funds in the 2017-18 budget. This government is taking steps to ensure that the government's capital plans are more realistic and achievable. The work that we are doing in this area will ensure that these lapses continue to decrease each year with better forecasting and better planning.

While I will speak to this in greater detail when we debate the mains for this year, I would like to express that this government has taken steps to continue to reduce capital lapses.

Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes that things can always change and that some lapsing is unavoidable, but with better planning we can continue to reduce that amount. I would also like to express that this was perhaps one of the

smallest lapses in recent memory. I do like to thank the members opposite for their concerns in this area.

This government has also heard concerns about the budget highlights once again this year. While it would be more appropriate to discuss this concern when we get to the mains, I will speak to it because the highlights are made up of the part of the main estimates for the 2017-18 budget.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the members opposite are not fond of the infographics that we developed in recent years, but the reality is that these make the budget more digestible for Yukoners who are reading it. To develop a budget that is so mired in technical information that it is not understandable would be doing a disservice to the general public. This government committed to openness and transparency. By making the budget more user-friendly, even if only by a small amount each year, we are delivering on that commitment, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that a number of more specific concerns were addressed by my ministers, my colleagues here, during the departmental debate, so in order for time to get to the mains, I won't dwell on that.

I also took note of several times that were more closely related to the mains and encourage the members to share their concerns during that debate.

In closing, the annual surplus of \$6.5 million was projected in the main estimates. The surplus forecasted in the supplementary estimates is \$6.3 million. These supplementary estimates do not differ greatly from the main estimates. Our government is looking forward to working with all members and Yukoners to continue developing budgets that provide certainty and stability, which will contribute to more efficient government.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the members for their contributions and their debate on this bill. I now wish to close debate on this bill and move that it does now pass in third reading, subsequent to any other comments from members.

Mr. Cathers: Speaking to this as Official Opposition Finance critic, I do just have to note that the explanation the Premier just gave for the Liberal government's choice to remove information from the budget documents and be less transparent — the Premier's claim that this is about making it more digestible to Yukoners and claiming that, previously, Yukoners looking at the budget highlights were "mired in technical information" is quite rich, Mr. Speaker. Yukoners are not as dumb as the Premier seems to think they are. They like details —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I have heard some ridiculous conversations before, but this is just absolutely personally insulting. The member is imputing false motives and also, the dialogue here has come to an all-time low with that statement. I would ask him to retract those comments.

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

Mr. Cathers: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's just a dispute between members. I was expressing my view of the language used by the Premier, which I felt had minimized the intelligence of Yukon citizens.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The words chosen by the Member for Lake Laberge are not particularly helpful to advance the debate in the House, but on balance, it's a dispute between members, and if the Member for Lake Laberge chooses those words to describe the electorate, in some respects, I think that's his call.

Member for Lake Laberge.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My point is not every Yukoner is going to pore through the budget — that is the reality. Some rely on the media or other sources for a summary of what's in the budget, but there are actually a great many Yukoners who are interested in either the fulsome details of the budget or the details related to specific areas that are of interest to them. The Liberal government has, since taking office, made the budget highlights. They have reduced them from 11 pages in the previous year — typically around 11 or a dozen pages on an annual basis — where it used to list, specifically by department, the major projects and activities anticipated in the upcoming fiscal year. They have reduced that, dumbed it down to four pages that are very heavy with infographics.

It is not only us, but also members of the media and members of the Third Party who have noted that with some of the items referenced in the budget highlights, it's hard to tell what they actually mean. They are high level enough in some cases — and Mr. Speaker I will give a couple of examples of it here. It doesn't really give people the information they used to get in the budget that they want to see in the budget. This includes the current budget highlights — under the infographic Improving our Transportation Infrastructure, it says \$22.7 million in roadwork.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge — we are closing debate on the supplementary for 2017-18. In my view, you are going to have ample opportunity to debate the mains and to express your concerns about how the current budget has been set out and the information provided for the Yukon electorate. I would ask you, for the purposes of closing this debate, to generally confine your comments to the bill that is before the House right now.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will, of course, respect that ruling and simply note that, although I was referring to the next budget we will be debating, in the current 2017-18 fiscal year, the budget documents released a similar level of information. It is very high level and it is very opaque for Yukoners who are looking for a detailed list of things such

as road projects. They are simply not included in the budget highlights as they used to be.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to be very critical of the government as long as they continue down this path of making budgets more opaque and less understandable for Yukoners, because again, I do have to reiterate the fact — and I heard it loud and clear from constituents last night at my public meeting — that people who either want to understand the entire budget, or are looking for specific projects or spending under specific departments, want to be able to pick up a copy of the budget highlights at a government office either in Whitehorse or in rural Yukon. They want to be able to go online and look at them and be able to easily see what the major new activities being commenced by government are in the upcoming fiscal year.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I understood your ruling a couple of minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, to be that the debate should continue with respect to the supplementary budget. I have, since that ruling, not heard any comments on the supplementary budget. I think that the member opposite could please be directed to confine his comments not to challenging your rulings, but to actually doing what you said he should do.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I can comment on this. It's fine; thank you.

What I heard the member say at least initially after my ruling was that his view was that the — in his words, infographics and the presentation of the previous budget was similar to the current budget. But then I don't disagree with the Government House Leader that the Member for Lake Laberge began to stray back into the current year's budget.

If the member could please close debate on the supplementary budget and confine his comments to the supplementary budget.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will, of course, respect your ruling, but again, I would say, in *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*, the current document, the current budget book being debated this afternoon, does not provide much in the way of information about the changes within the fiscal year either.

This is a government that has been long on rhetoric but has, in fact, reduced the amount of information that is available to the public in its budget documents and dismissed the concerns that we're bringing forward not only from us, but on behalf of Yukoners, as being somehow ridiculous.

I'm not going to spend too much more time making that point. The government doesn't seem to be disposed to listen to that point and has chosen the path of less transparency, but I will just point out that, among the concerns that my colleagues and I have had about the government's spending choices over the fiscal year that we are just wrapping up, is the government

being very slow to act on the needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation to address bed pressure at Whitehorse General Hospital, being very slow to act on the needs of the RCMP, which I first raised with the government 10 months ago, but the government was quick to act in areas such as, after taking office, spending \$105,000 on personal electronic devices for Cabinet ministers and staff and \$40,000 on office renovations. They have been able to find \$120,000 to literally spray water into the air, hoping for ice at Dawson.

We have seen other cases of spending being out of touch with the priorities of Yukoners, such as overspending on the Financial Advisory Panel, which cost \$58,000 more than budgeted —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Hon. Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I'm gobsmacked here. I believe we are talking about the second supplementary. I cannot wait to talk about the things the member opposite wants to talk about today — I cannot wait. But please, if the member opposite could respect the rulings and leave his comments to the supplementary budget that would be great.

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

Mr. Cathers: I'm speaking to spending that occurred in a current fiscal year. Based on past practices and rulings in the House, when discussing the expenditures of a fiscal year and a budget bill related to a fiscal year, it has been deemed perfectly in order to refer to spending that occurred within that same fiscal year.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: It's going to be difficult for the Chair to know — you'll really be getting back and forth, as far as — because you'll get close to the end of a fiscal year, and I don't have all the budget documents before me. But all I'm asking the Member for Lake Laberge to do is to confine yourself to the subject matter, to the best of your ability, of this motion.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and of course I will continue to do so, but it is part of our job in this budget bill and in other budget bills to point to spending by government that we do not believe reflects the priorities of Yukon citizens. When we believe that government has been more interested in spending on personal items, while we're hearing concerns from Yukoners who are seeing their priorities go unfunded, it is our job to raise those concerns.

With that, I will wrap up my comments, but I will note that this supplementary budget does contain a \$2.9-million increase in social assistance costs.

The Premier committed during debate that he would provide more information about that as I requested. I hope that the Premier will keep that commitment, because I would note that again I am concerned — and I think it is my job to be concerned — about a 50-percent increase in social assistance cases in a fiscal year, and understanding why social assistance

costs rose \$2 million in the Whitehorse area and \$900,000 in rural Yukon at a time when there is supposedly low unemployment and people are doing well.

I would, in fact, pose one question as well for information that I would appreciate receiving in addition to the information I asked for when we last debated this on March 6. I have heard concerns raised by constituents at my public meeting last night about the potential for fraudulent claims under social assistance, and one gentleman in attendance spoke to a case where someone had fraudulently attempted to claim that he was their landlord.

So I would again note that I am referring to one specific claim made by a constituent of mine, but I would ask the government to also look into and provide information on what steps are taken to ensure that while government is providing social assistance to people who do need it, they are taking steps to prevent the possibility of fraudulent claims under social assistance.

Again, Mr. Chair, in wrapping up my comments, we have seen in this budget — the supplementary estimates revisions that see the government only in a healthy financial situation with a year-end surplus due to their failure to spend \$30 million in capital projects that they said they would spend, and committed that they would do better than the previous government, as well as their failure to act on other areas, including their much-touted announcement of 11 mental health workers being hired. At almost the end of the fiscal year, they have failed to deliver most of those mental health workers.

As my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, noted yesterday, this is causing concerns in rural Yukon as well as within the Whitehorse area.

We have heard very clearly through the numerous points of order that the Premier and the Government House Leader don't always like the questions that we ask, they don't always like the legitimate criticisms that we have into those actions, but I would point out to the government that as much as they may want to censor and shut down those concerns, questions and criticisms —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I object to the word "censor" as imputing false motives to either the Premier or myself in relation to the context used by the member opposite. At no time, whatsoever, has there been any attempt to censor anything and do anything but answer the questions that should be coming from that side about the issues that are of concern to all Yukoners.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I would ask the Member for Lake Laberge to be careful of that choice of words. I agree with the Government House Leader.

Mr. Cathers: Again, I would just note that one thing that the Liberal government is discovering as previous governments have is you don't always enjoy when you are criticized for your action, but it is an important part of our job to do that when that criticism is warranted.

If a member of the government attempts to intervene when a member of the opposition is raising those points, I would suggest that it is getting very close to impeding freedom of speech in the Legislative Assembly.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think I have outlined a number of our concerns related to government. I would point out, though, that in a year, by the government's own admission and their own numbers, they have added to the size of government by some 240 new, full-time-equivalent positions, virtually none of them related to continuing care. The government does have some explaining to do to Yukoners about why they promised one thing and said one thing in the election and, in fact, after the election, despite criticizing previous governments for growing government too much when the Leader of the Liberal Party, the Premier, was in opposition, he has gone beyond that in hiring positions while claiming that he is trying to restrain the growth of government. Those positions are not related to projects such as the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, as the Premier often likes to claim.

With that, Mr. Speaker — and the fact that the government is again planning on growing government this fiscal year — we do note that we have seen a dramatic change of tune from the election, when the government ran on a platform of “Be Heard”, and now their growing list of failed consultations, or failure to consult, and, in terms of restraining government spending, they said one thing to get elected and we hear a different story now.

Ms. Hanson: I had not intended to speak to the supplementary estimates. I had thought that we had had a rather thorough debate and discussion of the matters contained in the supplementary estimates. I do think, though, that, for the record, there is only one outstanding matter, and it was dealt with at some length this afternoon, and that is the very important issue of this \$39 million. There is more information that is required there.

Based on the conversations and some of the assertions made by the previous speaker, it seems to me that he used certain loose language there, but I am not using it loosely when I say that it strikes me that this is requiring some sort of forensic review. We are talking about a serious misleading of the Yukon public and this Legislative Assembly — not once, but over the course of many years. I don't know what the next steps on that will be, but we certainly look forward to the information that the minister indicated he would be providing — at least, to the Third Party, since we have been asking those questions. It is strange that the Official Opposition is not asking them, but we are, and we will continue to ask them because it is important, and it means that it was clear at that time that a number of opportunities for more effective use of

those resources to achieve our renewable energy future were foregone.

I will leave it at that, but we do retain that one outstanding concern with respect to what is contained in the supplementary estimates.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'll just try to make three small points. The first one is with respect to social assistance cases. In conversation with the Minister of Health and Social Services yesterday, we were reviewing the changes in the number of cases over the past several years. What we noted is that they have been rising consistently over the past six years. I think there is something to look at there and I think it's important, and I look forward to hearing that conversation in this Legislature.

With respect to the number of full-time employees who were hired last year, when I look back at the 200 new employees who were added, over 130 of them came in the Department of Education, and well over half of those were hired when we arrived. I note that, as we have said previously in this Legislature, this is a situation we found ourselves in. I think it is important, and I appreciate the Premier talking about managing the growth of government. I think that's very important.

With respect to the path of transparency and helping Yukoners to easily see major new initiatives, I'll refer us first to page 4 of the bill where it notes that there is a lapse of \$29.7 million in capital spending. I agree that this is something that we should work to try to reduce. I thank the members opposite for their comments on that. I note that it is smaller than it has been in past years, but to the comment that this is how we somehow managed to reduce the deficit, or get close to balancing the budget, I will point out, on page 3, a transparent and easy-to-see major initiative, which is \$39.2 million under the Yukon Development Corporation, which heavily outweighs that. That cost, which comes on our books, more than outweighs the savings that came with lapsed capital funding.

I think that is a serious concern of all Yukoners.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard on third reading of this bill?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate some of the comments from the members opposite. I will respond to some of the claims, statements and rhetoric from the Member for Lake Laberge. I'm going to start with the dialogue about fraudulent social assistance claims. If the member opposite is making an accusation, I suggest he make it outside of the safety and boundaries of the Legislative Assembly. That's an important piece. This is serious. If there are some fraudulent claims and we just hear it on the cusp on a supplementary estimate, as opposed to bringing it to the attention of the ministers responsible, I question how the member opposite is treading.

I will expect, maybe directly after the Legislative Assembly — I will make myself available, because these are

serious claims that the member opposite is making and taking the liberties in the Legislative Assembly to do so.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: The member is using insulting language pursuant to Standing Order 19(i) and is certainly misrepresenting what I said. I asked the minister to look into an issue based on a concern from a constituent. The Premier is certainly misrepresenting what I said and I would ask you to have him retract that and apologize for it.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I am merely saying that if this is a serious concern to the member opposite, I suggest he talks to me about this outside the Legislative Assembly.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I will review the Blues, but in my view, it's open to an opposition member to ask about the expenditure of government resources, which I suppose could include concerns raised by a constituent about fraudulent claims being made in any program. It's not — anyway, that's my gut reaction to this matter. I will review Hansard. I will speak to the Clerk prior to Monday, but it does appear to be in my view an MLA bringing a constituent concern to the attention of the government. I will get back to the House on it.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, what I will ask then, if the member opposite is alleging that a crime has been committed, that is what I am getting at. That is what I'm getting at — if the member opposite is alleging that a crime has been committed, please report this to the authorities or me and I will do so.

Mr. Speaker, I will come back to a couple of different things here from statement from the member opposite from the Yukon Party. It's interesting to hear that the member opposite believes that we're dismissing the concerns of Yukoners as we sit here and debate the supplementary budget, when the majority of this budget is a \$39.2-million issue and we heard nothing from the Official Opposition — not a word — on the largest part of the supplementary budget. I am beside myself.

It's fine — they get to decide what they are going to focus on in the supplementary budget, but to say that we're dismissing the concerns of Yukoners, and yet we are not hearing anything from the members opposite who were ministers when this loan was turned into a grant and again, with the financial implications of that expiring and then having to be put on to the debt cap — I would say that would be the majority of the conversation for a political party who is interested in the fiscal future of the Yukon — yet the members opposite are silent on that major piece of the supplementary budget and they choose to use their time, instead, to talk about infographics.

It just doesn't bode well for the Yukon Party, especially when we are talking about the recession that happened in

previous years and we hear from the members opposite — no, it was an economic downturn. I would put the definition of recession and the definitions that we're getting from the Yukon Party — I mean you could ask any economist in the world whether or not we were in a recession or an economic downturn. Again, this is the narrative that we're hearing from the Yukon Party when it comes to our finances on this side of the House where we are, in our opinion, giving more information in the budget, including the economic forecast, and we're glad to continue on that track.

Again, we are disappointed that the Yukon Party does not want to talk about the \$40-million minister, whoever that was, from the Yukon Party when they made this huge financial decision — not a comment, not a peep from the Yukon Party.

With that being said, I want to thank the NDP for their comments, and I look forward to hearing the vote on the supplementary budget.

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.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

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

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

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 204 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 204 has passed this House.

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

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

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to the budget for the first time here at second reading, I would like to again thank my constituents in Lake Laberge for their continued support and the opportunity to serve them and to work with them as MLA for Lake Laberge.

I would again note that, in this budget — although, of course, we have been and will be critical of areas of the budget that we believe are warranting criticism — we do also appreciate some of the work that has been done — good projects that are carried forward with and investments such as the increased investment in the RCMP that we had been calling for, for quite some time. As well, there are the investments that are contained in it for continuing care, including the Whistle Bend facility, and in funding to reopen and staff the Thomson Centre. I would appreciate from the Premier, when he rises, some more detailed information from what we were provided by officials at the briefing. I would like to thank officials for the informative briefing on the mains as well as thank each of the departments that have briefed us so far on their individual budgets for the information that they have provided to us. We do appreciate the hard work that they do in preparing for the budget, including questions that they anticipate may come from members of the opposition, and I appreciate the information that they provided to us.

I would note that, according to the information provided to us at the budget lock-up briefing, overall there is an increase of 242 FTEs — or full-time equivalents, as they are commonly known — marking an increase of \$28.5 million in the personnel allotment from government. That grows it from — and again, according to the information that we received from the Department of Finance — \$516.5 million in the personnel allotment in 2017-18 to \$545.1 million in 2018-19. I would note that out of those FTEs, based on the information we were provided, we understand that 186 of them are due to funding for continuing care, but I would appreciate a breakdown on the amount of those who are allocated respectively to Whistle Bend, Thomson Centre and home care since we were only provided with one overall number and not clarity on how many of that total of 186 is due to each of those two facilities and to home care.

In speaking to this budget, we do have to make the point that the projected annual deficit of \$4.5 million in this fiscal year is of concern to us. We do not support the government going into deficit this fiscal year. We have also identified the fact that the government's decision to get into the retail and distribution of cannabis is an expensive choice. As I have stated previously in this Assembly, our position — the Official Opposition — is that we do recognize that the issue of the legalization of cannabis is one that people have strong feelings about.

We respect the views of those who are in support, and those who disagree with it, but ultimately, since the federal government has made it quite clear that they are proceeding with legalization, it is our view that the job of the Government of Yukon is to prepare to responsibly manage it, including to

responsibly regulate it and take enforcement action related to it.

Again in that area, the allocation of \$3 million under the Yukon Liquor Corporation to set up the cannabis distributor corporation fund is a choice that we believe is entirely necessary. There are private sector interests here in the territory, small businesses that are interested in getting into the retail of cannabis once it is legal to do so, and in fact have asked us to press the government for a timeline for when they will be able to apply for a licence under the new structure.

There are also others that are interested in getting into growing cannabis under what, of course, would be a federal licence to do so. We believe that government does not need to grow the size of the government by getting into retail and distribution. We believe the government would be better off to not spend that \$3 million that is allocated.

It is also concerning to us that, based on the information we have received, it refers to that \$3 million as start-up money, so it does sound like the costs of that might grow within the fiscal year.

When government enters into new enterprises of this type, there's a risk of unanticipated costs. I think it's fair to say that, if government gets into the retail and distribution of cannabis, it's more likely that the costs of doing that will be underestimated than that they'll be overestimated in the \$3 million number used here.

Again, the capital costs of getting into the distribution and retail of cannabis, the staffing costs and the fact that once government enters retail — it's going to be very difficult to exit it without laying off employees, and thus it is unlikely to happen. We believe this is an entirely unnecessary expenditure of government funds in this area and that government would be better, instead, to minimize the cost to taxpayers by focusing on regulating, inspecting, enforcing and education related to cannabis, as well as prosecution of offences under the law that occur.

We hope the government will listen to those concerns and reconsider its current plans noted today on a related matter, the tabling of Bill No. 15, the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*. I note there is a substantial amount of that which does deal with the proposed set-up of a distribution corporation. We simply believe that is an unnecessary expenditure of taxpayers' money.

When it comes to the retail, distribution and warehousing of cannabis, we believe the risks of that and the cost of that should be borne by the private sector instead of Yukon taxpayers.

Just to summarize my point, Mr. Speaker — if government were to listen to that request we have made, and which they have also heard from Yukoners who operate small businesses, they could take that projected annual deficit down from the number of \$4.5 million to \$1.5 million. In considering that the government's total estimates are \$1.472 billion, 0.1 percent of that overall budget being \$1.5 million, this is something that government could find within other areas and return the budget to the black, instead of going further into the red.

Mr. Speaker, I would also note in some of the other areas we have seen additional costs related to the start-up of cannabis. Most of those areas, we do understand, some of the costs related to preparation for it are necessary, but we have to highlight the area where we believe unnecessary expenditures are planned.

I want to move on to other areas. I would just note that, at this point, we still don't have a detailed look at what the lists are of highway projects. I have constituents asking; I know a number of my colleagues do. They're wondering whether the priorities they brought forward to us and we have brought forward to government are proceeding. Those include — my constituents were asking for information at my meeting last night, and previously. They have asked for information on where government is proceeding and what the timelines are for government proceeding with changes to the intersection of the Mayo Road and the Alaska Highway.

The plan itself is one I have generally heard good feedback from constituents about, and I would actually also have to thank staff of Highways and Public Works, because the request for a longer turning lane and for adding a slip lane is a request I have made in the past, and I am pleased to see that the plans, as presented to YESAB, at least, suggest that government is proceeding down the path that I asked for and that constituents have asked for, but additional information on whether that project is proceeding this year, and if so, to what extent, would be appreciated.

My constituents are also asking about what steps, if any, will be taken to add a walkway on to the Takhini River bridge on the Mayo Road for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and others. I would note that some planning work had been done to that end, but people are waiting for answers and they would like to know whether government is moving forward with their priorities.

Other issues brought forward by my constituents in that related area include — under the government's general reference of the budget highlights being somewhat opaque — referencing \$22.7 million in roadwork noted in the budget highlights. People are asking what is contained under that. Does that include work to improve Takhini River Road, for example, which is one that I have heard from constituents down there who would like to see investments in that road to improve the overall service of the road, which has problems? Because of the type of material it was built from, it frequently develops washboard and, in times of heavy rain, can develop some rather large potholes rather quickly.

Constituents of mine have also asked about investments in upgrading Burma Road to improve the surface there, and Vista Road as well. I know that other of my colleagues have similar lists of rural road projects that they have heard about from constituents, and people would like those answers, whether through the rural road upgrade program or other government funds, whether government is moving forward on those priorities that they brought forward.

Another issue that I have asked about, and my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, has also asked about, is the request from people who use the Alaska Highway as it

goes through Porter Creek in the area in front of Porter Creek Super A for a turning lane at that location. That is something that has been evaluated in the past and considered in the past, and it is a priority that I hear, and that I know the Member for Porter Creek North hears as well from constituents who would like to see that type of improvement for road safety.

I would be remiss at this point if I did not again take this opportunity to bring forward concerns that I hear from constituents regularly, and at almost every public meeting, about the current line pattern in Hidden Valley at the Couch Road intersections. I know that the decision was made based on the recommendation of a consultant, but to paraphrase what I heard from constituents last night, people there were telling me that they are concerned that the consultant doesn't actually live there and doesn't drive the roads and doesn't experience them in the same way that they do. The topic of other past mistakes — no doubt made with good intention — by consultants or engineers include the time when, as members will recall, at the intersection of Fourth Avenue and Second Avenue, there were, for a short period of time, two left-turning lanes from the road coming off Two-Mile Hill and there was actually an increase in accidents there.

Fortunately, there have not been accidents entering Hidden Valley, but a number of my constituents have had close calls, and when I asked people for feedback, I can tell the Premier and the minister that we heard loud and clearly, especially for people living in Hidden Valley, that they feel that the change has made it less safe, and that going back to the pattern it was at until summer 2016 would improve road safety there.

So those are a few of the things we are waiting to hear from government. We have also heard in the area that we see an allocation in the budget for roughly \$2.2 million for an RCMP detachment, but we have not heard clarity from government on when they will be moving forward with the replacement of the RCMP detachment in Faro. We had the sense from the information provided that it seems like everything is on hold at this point in time. So that is a project that is important to the community of Faro; it is important to the RCMP and it is important as well for Yukon contractors.

I think I made the point earlier, so I'm not going to spend a lot of time belabouring the point, but I do have to again mention to the Premier and others that the choice they've made in terms of budget presentation under the highlights is giving contractors and others less information about projects for the current fiscal year, and that is why they are hearing us complain about that as well.

We're looking forward to hearing more information from government, such as whether government is proceeding with projects like restudying the option of connecting to the BC electrical grid. The last consultant report that was done was not only thorough and did a thorough assessment of actual costs of transmission line projects here in the Yukon and Outside, but determined that, even over a 40-year lifespan, the project was so far from being economical that the gap was in excess of a billion dollars and there was just no sense to that. We're hoping the government is not planning on studying that

again. That's another piece of information we don't actually see in the budget here.

I do have to also note that I welcome the recommendations from the Financial Advisory Panel where they recommended twice in their report that government — and I quote — and for Hansard's reference, this is from page 15 of the report: "Improve comprehensiveness and transparency of territorial budgeting to include fully consolidated books and projections."

To that end, we do see that the budget doesn't reflect the change in format that they recommended. I would also note that, as the Financial Advisory Panel noted, the picture of government finances looks different when viewed on a consolidated basis versus non-consolidated.

I will again quote from the Financial Advisory Panel on page 38 of their report, where they note — and I quote: "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."

Continuing on — I go on to quote: "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."

So again, I would note if the government had followed the recommendation that was made twice by the Financial Advisory Panel, it would show a more transparent and clearer picture of the government's finances, but unfortunately for them, it would not align as well with their narrative on this.

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, just to confirm, the member will have approximately 20 minutes going forward — thank you.

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

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 206 accordingly adjourned.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.