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HANSARD

Thursday, April 12, 2018 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2018 Spring Sitting

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

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

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Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 12, 2018 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

TRIBUTES

In recognition of 50th anniversary of the Rotary Music Festival

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 50th anniversary of the Rotary Music Festival. During this annual event, musicians and dancers showcase their talents. They receive feedback from expert adjudicators to help them improve and perfect their craft.

It all began in 1969, with around 60 participants taking part in the first festival, which was still a significant amount in 1969. Now, more than 1,400 participants take part each year from across the Yukon Territory. The festival features musicians who play instruments of all shapes and sizes, as well as many vocalists singing in different types of styles and ensembles.

In 2015, the Rotary Music Festival expanded to add dance categories. This part of the program features classical, contemporary stage- and street-dancing styles, such as ballet, jazz, tap, musical theatre, hip hop and breakdancing.

The festival also gives young composers, songwriters and choreographers the opportunity to showcase their own creations and get constructive feedback.

This year, the festival runs from April 11 to April 21. At this very moment, musicians and dancers on multiple stages are being adjudicated by recognized experts from across the country. These adjudications are the culmination of months and months of hard work. After perfecting their technique, students perform for expert adjudicators who provide critical feedback, personalized coaching, encouragement and inspiration. For many participants, this opportunity sparks a love of performance that will last their whole lives.

Generations of past performers will return to the Rotary stage this week for the highly anticipated alumni concert. This illustrates the event's long history and community impact. Next weekend this festival features the festival full of talent, including two final concerts with award presentations.

The Rotary Music Festival has been a mainstay of the performing arts community here in the Yukon for half a century. This is thanks to the sponsors and the volunteers who contribute donations, time and expertise year after year. We want to thank the people who encourage performers to develop their abilities, who shape this festival experience and who help to foster creativity in the Yukon. Hats off to the

teachers, families and friends who are soothing performers' nerves and supporting them on stage and off. This community effort makes the Rotary Music Festival such a rich and successful event year after year and decade after decade.

Music and dance enrich our lives. They connect us with our traditions, with places and events, and they connect us to each other. It's no surprise that the Rotary Music Festival has become an annual tradition that we look forward to every spring. Congratulations on 50 years of hard work and dedication, and thank you for enriching Yukon's performing arts community every step of the way. Here's to the next 50 years.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition and the Third Party to pay tribute to the Rotary music and dance festival. This annual event has hit an amazing milestone — 50 years — and 50 years of anything is always something to celebrate. Students of music and dance have the opportunity to perform on stage for community members and family. The festival began yesterday with performances running through to April 21.

This Saturday, April 14, at the Yukon Arts Centre, there will be an alumni concert as a special salute to the anniversary and 10 previous winners will be performing and some returned just for this event. What an amazing presentation this will be. There will be: MeiJane Quong, piano, 1976; Regina McAllen — at that time known as Gina Parker — piano — she won in 1980 and 1985, as well as flute in 1986; Connie Penner, née Klassen, piano, 1981; Mandy McDevitt Bopp, senior piano duet, 1997; Stephanie Campbell, voice, 1999; Jillian Durham, née Ewert, piano, 2002; Bryn Knight, violin, 2004; Nadia Petriw, violin, 2005 and 2012, as well as piano in 2011; Kieran Poile, violin, 2008 and 2009; and Calvin Laveck, voice, 2009 and 2010.

Throughout the event, independent expert adjudicators provide encouragement, advice and support for students as they give their very best.

For serious students, it will allow them to grow and advance within their chosen discipline. I glanced at the 39 pages of regulations and syllabus, and it is not for the faint of heart. The festival is doing it, and it is doing it right — well done.

More than a thousand participants of all ages will hit the stage in a large variety of disciplines, including piano, woodwind, strings, voice, guitar, percussion and band. Performances will be given by many of these.

I remember spending many early mornings and evenings taking my son, who played trumpet, to band practice and attending the music festival. It was exciting and a great opportunity for all who were involved.

I encourage community members to take part in the 50th Rotary music and dance festival and support our up-and-coming Yukon artists in their musical journey. Good luck to all participants, and a huge shout-out to the Rotary Club of Whitehorse for the unending good work that they do for our

community, and especially for the Rotary music and dance festival. Here is to 50 more great years.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon Playwrights Conference

Hon. Ms. Dendys: It is my pleasure today to rise on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to the Yukon Playwrights Conference. Yukon is home to an incredible community of established and upcoming playwrights. Through their use of language and imagery, they bring stories to life. They weave intricate tales of our history, our land and our people.

As viewers, we are transported on journeys that explore humanity with all of its triumphs and its flaws. Their work helps us to better understand the world around us. This Saturday, playwrights will gather for the Yukon Playwrights Conference. This one-day conference is hosted by the Playwrights Guild of Canada in partnership with Gwaandak Theatre. The day will begin with the power of the playwright panel discussion.

Panelists Leonard Linklater, Kevin Loring and Donna-Michelle St. Bernard will discuss the power that a playwright has to transform the world through theatre creation.

After the panel, participants will move into a marketing workshop. From Page to Stage will feature: local playwright, Brian Fidler; Gwaandak Theatre's artistic director, Patti Flather; and Nakai Theatre's artistic director, Jacob Zimmer. They will share their perspectives on promoting plays and creating professional relationships in theatre. The Playwrights Guild of Canada will then facilitate a workshop where participants will collaborate and design a visual marketing plan for current and upcoming projects.

After the workshop, the conference will open to the public for the Spring Thaw Play Readings. The Spring Thaw Play Readings will feature local and guest playwrights reading and sharing their work with the Yukon community. The event is open to the public and takes place from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Old Fire Hall.

Hosted by Roy Ness, the event will feature playwrights Renelta Arluk, Wren Brian, Kevin Loring, Donna-Michelle St. Bernard and Doug Rutherford. Organizers simply ask that you pay what you can at the door. I would encourage all Yukoners to take advantage of this incredible opportunity to enjoy an amazing evening with our playwrights.

I would like to thank the Playwrights Guild of Canada and the Gwaandak Theatre for supporting local playwrights through this exciting conference and, of course, the Spring Thaw Play Readings.

A lot of work goes into a full-day event like this. Thank you to everyone who has been involved in making this Saturday a success. To all of the guest artists, thank you for sharing your talent with us. It is so appreciated. Best wishes for a wonderful event.

I know that both Leonard and Patti would have been here today from Gwaandak Theatre. They have contributed a tremendous amount to our artistic community. They are dealing with a deep, personal loss with the passing of

Leonard's brother, Joe Linklater. Our thoughts and prayers go out to them today, to their family, their community. The MLA from Old Crow and I, along with many Yukon leaders, will join them tomorrow in Old Crow for the celebration of life.

We have a number of playwrights here today, and I will introduce them formally in a few moments.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is my pleasure to introduce some special guests here today who are associated with the Rotary Music Festival. I ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming Bonnie Venton Ross, who is the chair of the Rotary Music Festival. With her is Henry Klassen, co-founder of the Rotary Music Festival — he may not know it, but he was my husband's former band teacher — and Rod Hill, who is a member of the Rotary Club and a long-time chair of the Rotary Music Festival. Thank you for being here and for all that you do.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Dendys: With us today we have Jenna Winter, general manager of Gwaandak Theatre, Renelta Arluk, Mary Sloan, Aaron Wells, Wren Brian and Kevin Kennedy, Yukon representative for the Playwrights Guild of Canada.

Applause

Ms. White: I ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming two very special people, because it is not a chance that you get very often, to thank your teachers publicly from the floor.

Mr. Klassen taught me my love of music. The very first thing he did in grade 7 band — he made us lie on the floor and listen to Pachelbel's *Canon*. To this day, I actually don't ever hear lyrics; I only hear the music behind it. I have you to thank for the fact that I can never remember the words to songs, but I can always sing along to the melody.

Then, Mary Sloan — so when we talk about playwrights, she has nurtured dozens of classes through the MAD program, and it was with her that my class, when I was in grade 11, wrote, I think, the second play ever for the MAD program. It was the *Epic of Troy: Love, Lust and a Wooden Horse*.

Between these two teachers — and it is important to know that they are teachers, because they take that love that they have of the arts and then they share that. Then, when we get to see you, decades later, you know that you made an impact, not just on me — there are lots of us.

Thank you so much for what you did in education. Thank you so much for what you continue to do in the arts. There are just not enough words to thank you. Thank you so much for being here.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have today for tabling a legislative return in response to questions that arose during budget debate on Community Services.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a legislative return responding to questions from the members opposite during the Public Service Commission budget discussion.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Whistle-blower protection

Mr. Hassard: Last week, the Premier and the Minister of Highways stood in this House multiple times to tell us how brave they think these government whistle-blowers are. Sorry, Mr. Speaker — I will start over on that one.

On March 29, the Minister of Highways and Public Works told this House — and I quote: “If you’re a public servant and you have seen something that you believe is wrong — some sort of problem — please bring it to our attention.” He then went on to say — and I quote: “As to the member opposite’s question: of course, there will be no reprisals.”

It’s all well and good for the minister to say these things, but this morning, we found out that the minister’s words are empty. The CBC reported that a senior manager within Health and Social Services was fired after they raised concerns about the way the government-run group homes are being managed.

Will the minister end this government’s witch hunt against whistle-blowers?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like to remind the members opposite that it would be inappropriate for me to discuss an HR matter on the floor of this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Hassard: Last week, the Premier and the Minister of Highways and Public Works stood in this House multiple times to tell us how brave they think these government whistle-blowers are. They told us that no one will be punished coming forward. As I mentioned earlier, the CBC reported this morning that a government employee raised concerns about issues within the government-run group homes and was then fired.

Let me read an excerpt from the story detailing a concern that this employee brought forward — I quote: “He also recounted the case of another female youth who was under a ‘continuing care order’ under the Child and Family Services Act — meaning the child has been legally declared a ward of the state.”

Again I quote: “... he was told there were no group home beds available for the youth, contradicting what other staff told him.”

“After the girl disclosed in a meeting that she had been ‘unsafe’...” — we wonder: Does the minister believe this employee should have been let go for bringing forward these concerns?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This is a really difficult issue. There are no two ways about it.

I respect the media and its role in society, and I know intimately the role that the media plays in this society and in this community. I also have respect and confidence in the HR professionals in the Government of Yukon. I am committed to changing the legacy of fear in this civil service. Make no mistake about that.

I have expressed this to the House. I have expressed this to the media. I have expressed this to the Yukon Employees’ Union. For years, the government has had a *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* and it has not been actively promoted. That is patently clear and we have seen that recently. I have no idea why, after unanimous passage in this House, that piece of legislation was allowed to languish, but it has.

I want to say that this is changing. I want to encourage employees who have concerns to come forward. I will reiterate: When you come forward with legitimate concerns to this government, there will be no recriminations, and I stand by that on the floor of the House.

Mr. Hassard: It’s interesting that the minister talks about how he respects the media because, in this morning’s story, it was reported that the government refused to comment. I’m curious, Mr. Speaker — will the minister stop muzzling public servants on this important issue?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I do not accept the premise of the question. I am not in favour of — I have not and will not muzzle civil servants. I actually want to build a legacy of trust in the civil service.

The separation of the political arm of government and the civil service is exceptionally important. A government interferes in the hiring processes within the civil service at its peril. We on this side of the House collectively recognize that. We respect the process. I have confidence in our HR professionals, and I want to assure our employees that, if they have legitimate and substantive concerns that they have seen within their daily lives, doing the job of public servants, please bring them forward to your supervisor, to the deputy minister or to the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner — bring those concerns forward and tell them you’re doing so, and there will be no recriminations.

Question re: Children in care

Ms. McLeod: We know the Minister of Health and Social Services became aware of serious specific allegations of abuse within government-run group homes over two months ago. We also know that she did not take any action until she found out that the media was going to run a story on

the issue. Today, we find out that other serious allegations were brought forward last December.

Can the minister tell us what specific actions were taken to address the allegations that were brought up in December to ensure children in group homes are safe? What specific actions were taken to address the allegations she sat on for six weeks?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can assure the member opposite that we do not sit on information; what we do is react. We react when a concern and complaint comes to our attention, and that means we take action. We take immediate action; we do the assessments; we do the review. Always our utmost priority is to ensure that our children are safe, and we want to ensure that all our children are given the top priority they deserve and they need in Yukon.

We have worked really hard. This is not a new issue. It didn't stem back to December; it didn't stem back six weeks ago; it's long been systemic in our systems. We have had children in our care for many years and we know that we have an obligation and we aim to address that. We are taking the necessary approaches to do just that.

Ms. McLeod: The minister has been incapable or unwilling to provide straight answers on this file. One day, she tells us an internal review was completed to address the serious allegations she learned of in February, and, the next day, she tells us there's no internal review. The Premier seems to think these are pretty clear answers, but the only thing that's really clear is that the minister either doesn't have a handle on this file or she is hoping people will stop asking questions.

Can the minister tell us, with respect to the new allegations we learned about this morning from the CBC, what follow-up was done to look into those allegations and what changes were made in how group homes are managed?

Hon. Ms. Frost: An interesting line of questioning. They keep asking the same questions and I give them the answers. They don't like the answers so they ask the same questions over and over again.

The fact of the matter is that it is inappropriate for us to address staff relations issues in this House. It is important to note that we are taking the necessary actions by case management.

Speaking of facts that have come into consideration with respect to reviews and operating under what was formerly known as the residential support unit, now the transition support unit, a *Child and Family Services Act* review is being conducted. We have the Child and Youth Advocate office involved and we have our departments involved in addressing some of the concerns.

We know historically there were many, many audits and reports and Auditor General recommendations to implement progressive changes so we can start addressing indigenous children in care — 70 percent of the children in care are indigenous. In rural Yukon, we have made some significant changes. We have reduced that down significantly and we are now implementing policies to keep our children in their homes and in their communities where they belong by

providing essential services and supports to the families in the communities.

Ms. McLeod: One of the allegations that came out this morning was that a young woman who was a ward of the state was denied a bed in a group home even though beds were available and, as a result, she was then forced to go to a home where she was abused. What is the minister doing about this specific allegation?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am not going to speak about specific allegations or specific situations that are brought up in this Legislature. I would be happy to provide a little more clarity, but I am not going to reveal publicly what the department is doing with respect to the children because our job is to protect the integrity of the children.

What I don't want to do is I don't want us to re-traumatize the children we have in care. We have to provide safe opportunities for them to express their grievances and their concerns, and we are doing that with our partners. That is through the Child and Youth Advocate office.

We know that the review that was conducted in 2014 provided recommendations to the members opposite to make systemic changes in the group homes. Those are things that we are assessing and reviewing so that we can start putting some policy changes in effect so that we are not addressing challenges going forward; that we provide the children who we have in our care with a healthy and safe environment where they are loved, welcomed and embraced, so that they can grow to be successful contributors to our society — much like we are doing in the transition units in Porter Creek. That is the opportunity that we have — to embrace our young adults.

Question re: Whistle-blower protection

Ms. White: This morning, CBC reported that a manager at Family and Children's Services who raised serious concerns about the services provided to youth in care was fired. It should be noted that the employee in question was not one of the many whistle-blowers that spoke to the media over the last few weeks. Instead, this employee brought up his concerns to the assistant deputy minister and to their supervisor — just like the minister has repeatedly told public servants to do.

Mr. Speaker, why would any public servant follow the minister's advice after seeing what has happened to this one employee?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Trust is a very tenuous thing. We are dedicated and committed to building trust within the civil service. This is not something that just blew up; this is something that goes back decades and I will repeat my earlier remarks: I respect the media and its role in society, but I also respect and have every confidence in the HR professionals in this government.

They do not act impetuously; they do so methodically and well. I am committed to changing the legacy of fear in this government. I have expressed this to this House, I have spoken to the members opposite about this, I have expressed this to the media and I have also spoken to the Yukon

Employees' Union on this matter. I encourage employees who have serious concerns to come forward to their supervisor, to their deputy, to the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Commissioner and make those claims — please bring those concerns forward.

We will investigate from that with the source data. That source data is essential for us to do our jobs and to actually root out the problems we see in the civil service.

Ms. White: Despite the minister's answer, the courageous whistle-blowers who have come forward over the last month are noticing that this employee was fired mere months after raising concerns through the proper channels that he has noted. This does not look good on the government, but what looks equally bad on the government is the content of the e-mail that was sent to the ADM. It speaks of a youth who is under a continuing care order. This means that the youth is legally a ward of the state. This youth was denied a bed in a group home until they said they were unsafe in their current housing situation, at which point, a bed became magically available.

If, in our own words, all of our children are given top priority, can the minister explain how any youth who is under a continuing care order can be refused a bed in a group home when this youth is the legal responsibility of the government?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to a case management file or an individual file that comes to our attention, obviously the intent is to ensure that we provide safety for the child. That's our utmost priority. If there were issues in the workplace, issues in the group home, issues with the staff — whatever evolves — our objective is to get to the bottom of that and make the changes that are required from this point on.

I have assured the public, the employees and the children that we will not be performing in that manner. Our objective is really to ensure that we are compassionate, that we act as parents as we are legally obligated to do, and to ensuring that we provide all the children with a safe environment. We are not going to put things aside and not address things. That's not my goal at all. That's not my objective and I don't believe that is the objective of the staff.

If there are issues that come out then we will certainly address them, but with respect to direct HR matters, I will not address that in this Legislative Assembly. That would be totally inappropriate and the Public Service Commission — if there are issues of that nature — deals with it, as do the human resource professionals.

Ms. White: I'm pretty sure turning a youth away isn't an HR issue. When we talk about "loved, welcomed and embraced", how are youth supposed to feel knowing that their peers have been turned away?

What this e-mail also highlights is that the government was aware of serious issues in youth group homes well before the initial testimony of the youth in care who brought up his concerns. The e-mail from the manager who was fired was dated December 22, 2017. It talks about youth being deemed too high risk for the government to take on as a liability. What is this government's job if not to care for high-risk youth in its care? Has the minister seen the December 22 e-mail detailing

the mistreatment of youth in the care of this government and has she done anything whatsoever to ensure that kids who seek the care of this government are not turned away?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I can say is that I have received multiple e-mails, as did some of the other ministers and the members opposite. The e-mails that we receive are anonymous in nature. If there is substantial information in there that we are obligated to follow up on or follow through on, we will do just that and that's exactly what we've done.

Now, what the Public Service Commissioner has indicated is that we are going to go ahead and support the staff who come forward and allow an opportunity to address the concerns.

I would refer us back to the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board report that was done in 2013, which highlighted some of the systemic issues in the workplace and the recommendations that came out of that.

What we're doing is going back in time. We're looking at what we have done to secure and ensure that policies and procedures that are there that need amendment or that need improvement — and that's what we're going to do. We're going to ensure, by the same token, that the children who require supports and services are supported.

I would like to also note that we are working with our communities so we don't bring the children into our care, that we keep them in the communities. If children come forward and want to raise their concerns, that would be our priority — to give them the space. The Child and Youth Advocate office is doing just that; it's allowing them to express their grievances and concerns so we can make the improvements we need to.

Question re: Teacher staffing

Ms. White: There are currently 251 Yukon teachers on call, better known as substitute teachers. These professionals are the last in Canada to have no representation through a union or, in this case, the Yukon Teachers' Association, and they're trying to change that but, in the *Education Labour Relations Act*, it clearly states that the act does not include a person employed on a relief, casual or substitute basis, and this certainly leaves this group of pretty important employees at a real disadvantage.

The protections and rights that are afforded to other employees working alongside substitute teachers are denied to them. Mr. Speaker, does this government intend to amend the *Education Labour Relations Act* to recognize the rights of these important education professionals?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't think it will surprise anyone that substitute personnel are a very important part of the public school system here in the territory. We have a large roster of individuals who perform that duty on a regular basis. Substitutes are employed as needed to fill in when staff are absent from work, either for a short period of time — a day due to illness, perhaps — or a longer period of time due to covering for someone who is away longer.

It can be challenging to find substitute teachers in all communities here in the territory. They are a critical part of

our education system and one we support. As the member opposite notes, the *Education Labour Relations Act* has some terms in it, at the moment, that are restrictive and we are working with the YTA — the Yukon Teachers' Association — going forward to discuss what and how substitute teachers — or on-call teachers, as some people call them — can be better supported through the process.

Ms. White: I guess the question remains: Does the government believe that these substitute teachers are important enough to have similar rights as their peers? Yukon is the last jurisdiction in Canada that does not allow relief, casual or substitute teacher membership in an organization such as the Yukon Teachers' Association. Regardless of whether or not this union drive is successful, the fact that the law doesn't allow representation is fundamentally unfair.

Other Government of Yukon employees, including auxiliary-on-call or term employees, receive the services, protections and rights through the Yukon Employees' Union. It would seem to me that these educators have been unfairly barred from participating or joining a bargaining unit to protect their own rights.

When will the minister amend the act to stop banning teachers on call the right to be represented by a union?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I certainly am happy to take the opportunity to reiterate how important substitute teachers are, not only for our classrooms, but for our students and for the smooth running of a school in any event, but because substitute teachers often bring a new perspective and give the opportunity for students to experience different kinds of teaching.

I should also note that the Yukon is one of the only jurisdictions where non-trained teachers are able to be substitute teachers in our schools. That has been something appropriate in the circumstances so that classrooms can have a teacher present. There are certainly opportunities for teachers who are certified to be substitute teachers, but, of course, there are a number of individuals in that 331 noted by the member opposite in her initial question who are not certified teachers. That is an opportunity as well that is available here in the Yukon, but not available in most jurisdictions.

Ms. White: We all agree that substitute teachers are important, but some of us think they should be allowed to join a bargaining unit to protect their rights. It is no wonder that these individuals are looking for change. A local on-call teacher spent time looking across Canada at the work conditions and pay of substitute teachers. Besides finding that Yukon is the only jurisdiction with no protection and has an exclusion clause in the act barring them from joining a union, it turns out that Yukon substitute teachers are also some of the lowest paid and they have no benefits.

When a substitute teacher shows up, they are not just there to babysit a class. They are expected to teach, to participate in school activities, to provide schoolyard supervision — just to name a few of their responsibilities. They are expected to perform the same as any other teacher in the school.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister review the wages paid to teachers on call to bring them in line with other provinces and territories?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't actually accept all of the preamble to this question, but it is important to respond with respect to the question on the basis of substitute teachers being available in our schools, being of the highest quality in order to support our students and having the opportunity that will allow them to help our students in our classes.

With respect to the issues that have been brought up by the individuals, they are certainly something that we are discussing with the Yukon Teachers' Association. They are important factors, not just because they have now been brought to our attention — they are certainly on our list of discussion items with the Yukon Teachers' Association. It has been a long-standing request of the Yukon Teachers' Association for on-call teachers to be included. It is certainly something that must be addressed.

I take issue with the idea that they would be paid, for instance, here, the same as in other places in Canada because of course, as we know, we need to make sure that their pay is commensurate with their duties here in the territory, which may mean, frankly, an increase; but it's not something we can commit to here. It's a conversation we have to have with the Yukon Teachers' Association, with the substitute teachers and with all of our educators.

Question re: Affordable housing

Ms. Van Bibber: The Minister of Housing has told us that, as part of the agreement she signed with Canada, Yukon has developed targets for increasing the territory's social housing stock. We have asked her for two days to tell us what this target is and for two days she has not told us.

Will the minister now tell us what Yukon's target is?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors and the president, working with all of Yukon municipalities, Yukon First Nations and our partners, have gone ahead and designed a five-year strategy — a new long-term strategic strategy. That strategy — along with the housing action plan, the homelessness and poverty reduction strategy — is our target. Those are our targets — that is what we want to do. We want to put some breadth around that; we want to implement and we are going to do that with our partners.

Right now, for me to get up and say that we are going to put units in specific areas that are not needed at this time — maybe we have some priority pressures in other areas. What we do know is that communities that are coming forward expressing significant concerns about affordable housing and social housing are the communities of Dawson City, Mayo and Watson Lake. Those are the communities that we are working on.

We have worked really hard over the course of the last year and a half with the Ross River Dena Council to address their concerns and what we do know is that we are not able to deliver supports to the First Nation communities that occupy settlement land. They are not able to access funding and so we

are seeing significant pressures there. That is our objective; it is to try to work with the communities that really need the support and we will do that in due time —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Van Bibber: The minister was very clear: She said Yukon had a target — I don't know if that was 75 percent, 90 percent or 110 percent — for increasing the territory's social housing stock. Does she know what Yukon's target is, yes or no?

Hon. Ms. Frost: At this point in time, I would have to say that we are working with our partners and I am not going to give a yes-or-no answer because that will be determined by Yukoners. They are focusing on what their needs are. We will align with the resources. We are entering into our negotiations with the federal government on a bilateral basis and the funding that they have rolled out — the billions of dollars. Our objective is to get access to that so that we can start cost-matching, we can start working with our partners and our communities and we can start addressing the significant pressures.

What I can say is that we have allocated \$40 million in this budget. We have resources in Yukon Housing Corporation's budget that we have gone through and I would be happy to give more details on it, which is to work with our communities to give more details and more breadth around addressing the core needs of the communities. We are getting all kinds of pressures, but we can only address the communities right now that are coming forward with expressed needs and priority needs. It is difficult for us to give a specific number.

What we have been doing successfully is we are working with the community of Dawson City and we are working with Watson Lake to try to address the social pressures there — the social and affordable housing pressures.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has elapsed.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Before proceeding to Orders of the Day, as I have heard from MLAs over the last 83 days — for the benefit of Hansard and for those listening at home, I just want to thank all MLAs for supporting each other and supporting the community of Humboldt, Saskatchewan, the Humboldt Broncos, the Province of Saskatchewan and the greater Canadian hockey community — and Canada in general.

Today, all MLAs are wearing colourful and diverse hockey jerseys from both professional teams and local Whitehorse teams — and other jerseys. I thank all MLAs for coming together and providing that support. The House provided a tribute to the Humboldt Broncos and the community of Humboldt on Monday. I will be conveying our best wishes on behalf of the House to the community of Humboldt shortly.

As I said, I certainly appreciate all MLAs coming together in a communal, non-partisan basis at this time of, I'm sure, incredible anguish and hurt which is occurring right now. The healing process is just starting for the families and

extended families of the 16 persons who have perished and for the other players and support personnel who have also suffered significant injuries.

Once again, thanks so much to all MLAs at this time. Once again, we send our support, condolences and love to the community of Humboldt.

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 17, entitled *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 17, entitled *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I would like to welcome to the House today our officials: Valerie Royle, deputy minister responsible for the Women's Directorate; Bhreagh Dabbs, our legislative drafter for this bill; and Taryn Turner from the Women's Directorate. They have all worked very hard on this bill, and I'm happy to have them here to assist us today.

I am pleased to speak to Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 17, entitled *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*. As I mentioned during second reading, the bill before us is really part of a broader conversation about the sort of community we want to be living in. Our government has a vision of healthy, vibrant communities where Yukoners feel safe, included and able to live their best lives. Supporting greater inclusion and equality of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners in our community is an important step toward realizing this vision.

One of the strongest tools we have for supporting such change is legislation. As my colleague, the Minister of Justice, said so eloquently the last time this bill was brought forward in this House, changing the law promotes acceptance. By changing our laws to speak more inclusively of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners and to be more inclusive in their application, we are shifting not only our government practices but also the broader culture of the Yukon.

The *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* is a bill that will enable the diversity of our community to be better reflected within our laws and that takes important steps to remove language viewed as discriminatory to some LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. As it has been a few weeks since the last discussion on this bill, I will provide a brief overview before inviting questions from the members opposite.

The first key theme of this bill is removing potentially discriminatory binary sex and gender language from nomination and membership requirements of four Yukon boards and committees, the *Care Consent Act*, the *Child Care Act*, the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act* and the *Social Assistance Act*, and replacing it with language that enables and encourages cultural, regional and gender diversity in board and committee membership.

The purpose of these amendments is to remove binary sex and gender language that could potentially create barriers for trans, two-spirit and non-binary Yukoners to apply and serve on the board according to their gender expression or identity. By removing this binary language and replacing it with gender diversity, it is now clear that board and committee applicants of all genders can and should be considered when appointment decisions are being made.

We know that greater diversity on boards and committees is associated with improved decision-making effectiveness and outcomes. It also supports decisions that are more reflective of the diverse needs and experiences of the public. That is why we have taken this opportunity to also introduce language supporting the consideration of cultural and regional diversity when making appointments to these boards and committees when and where such language was not already present.

Another key amendment was made to the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act* to clarify that a purpose for which money in the trust may be used is the promotion and provision of services intended to prevent gender-based violence. The amendments also ensure that organizations concerned with gender-equality issues can nominate persons to be appointed to the board of trustees. Finally, the bill will also amend the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* to add gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation to an existing clause setting out the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination.

With these additions, we are ensuring that no employee organization that discriminates against LGBTQ2S+ employees can be certified as a bargaining agent for a bargaining unit.

In summary, the *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* includes amendments to increase the

representation of diverse voices on decision-making bodies that influence key areas, such as childcare, social assistance, violence prevention and provision of care, and will also affirm the importance of equality and inclusion of LGBTQ2S+ employees within our public service.

As we have mentioned before, we know that inclusion and equality for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners requires more than the bill before us. Other legislative amendments are needed, some of which have been identified through an internal legislative review. This has been highlighted by members opposite as well.

I want to take a moment to provide a bit more detail about this legislative review. Last year, our government undertook a high-level review of all of our legislation in order to help identify the scope of the work ahead of us, in terms of making our laws more inclusive of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. As you know, our legislation has historically been written as if there were only two sexes, two genders and one sexual orientation. As you can imagine, amending these provisions to be more inclusive of all genders and sexual orientations can have a potential impact on other legislation, policies, programs and services.

Our legislative review provided us with a bird's-eye view of changes needed to make our laws speak more inclusively, as well as the policy and legislative resources required to make these various changes. The review also enabled us to identify opportunities to take a more consistent approach when resolving similar issues across different enactments, as demonstrated by this bill which removes discriminatory language and promotes greater gender diversity across a number of boards and committees.

Our decision to bring these particular issues forward this session was informed by several considerations, including our legislative timeline, available policy, legal resources and expected impact. The legislative timeline for future amendments will be informed by ongoing community input, our internal legislative review, relevant developments in federal, provincial, territorial matters and internal policy work.

We also recognize that some LGBTQ2S+ priorities extend beyond legislation and include policies, programs and services. To help guide this multi-faceted work in the coming months and years, we will be asking Yukoners to help identify their needs and priorities through a public engagement on LGBTQ2S+ inclusion.

Earlier this week, we issued an invitational tender for preliminary work with LGBTQ2S+ stakeholder organizations on the design of a public engagement process that will be inclusive, accessible, meaningful and ensure LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners feel safe to tell us what issues and priorities are most important to them.

We are also exploring options to enable individuals to have their say on the design of the public engagement process and I invite people to visit our <https://engageyukon.ca> website for current and future updates.

Finally, we are creating a new internal framework for improving our coordination and collaboration on LGBTQ2S+ inclusion.

I will conclude my opening comments there, in the interest of allowing the members opposite sufficient time for questions. I look forward to discussing the *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* with them in greater detail.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for the comments that sounded fairly similar to the second reading, so I appreciate that she has brought us back. In that case, I am also going to take us back to the concerns that I highlighted. Although I appreciate that the minister has said that changing up the representation on boards is a top priority for government, again, I will highlight that there is other legislation that I feel is far more discriminatory at this point. I do appreciate that there was a press release put out on March 27 that said that further investigation is going to be happening toward discrimination issues.

But at this point in time, the minister again has stated that this was of critical importance to get these changed now. We are talking about the *Care Consent Act*, the *Child Care Act*, the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act*, the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* and the *Social Assistance Act*. I will highlight again that I think that if we are going to talk about gendered language and we are going to talk about legislation that is out of date — what is the norm these days — the *Family Property and Support Act*, where we have the language of husband of wife, and the *Marriage Act*, where we have the language of husband and wife. What about the *Married Women's Property Act*? It is all in the title — that one, Mr. Chair. The one that I found particularly alarming when I was looking at legislation was the *Spousal Compensation Act*, where it highlighted that you would have to live with a member of the opposite sex.

Although I appreciate that there are going to be these changes to the makeup of boards and committees, again, I will highlight my concern. I know that within the community, when letters were sent out to groups, concerns were highlighted — that if you weren't an organization that specialized in legislation, you would not even know where to start. To ask them what legislation affects them is a pretty broad statement. At this point in time, I am not even confident that the six that I have mentioned are all that would need to be changed. I know that one group in particular, after being contacted about this legislation change, has cut ties with government. That is my first question. I want to know what the Yukon government is going to be doing to repair the relationship with All Genders Yukon.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I think I will start with the last comment that was made by the member opposite, and thank you for the question. Inclusion of all voices is incredibly important to us. I expressed it in my opening comments and spoke about this in second reading in terms of our approach to broader engagement and having — we have just put out the expression of interest for individuals to work with us on the ongoing engagement on this work over the next couple of years.

We are absolutely committed to working with all of our stakeholders. I respect the fact that the member opposite has raised a specific organization. We appreciate that. This

document and issue has been shared with members opposite and with media. However, until we hear directly from the group with different instructions, we will continue to respect the wishes for confidentiality. I would be happy to have further discussion with the member opposite — not on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, but more privately.

In terms of the issues that the member has brought forward, all of them are definitely a priority that we want to look at. We felt that these amendments were amendments that needed to be done immediately. We certainly did not want to wait until we could do everything at once. We wanted to take an approach where we are taking action in every single Sitting to introduce new legislation or amend legislation to ensure that we are working toward ensuring that we have the language within our laws. Again, it is one of the most important and clear indications that we can make as a government — by changing our laws to include non-discrimination and ensure that our boards and committees that are making decisions on behalf of Yukoners are equal and that we have the right voices at those tables to make good decisions on behalf of Yukoners.

In terms of gender inclusion, our legislative review sought to identify potential discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. While the amendments that we are bringing forward this spring focus largely on gender inclusion, this does not mean that we are less committed to addressing discrimination facing lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer Yukoners, or that we view this issue as less important. While not in this bill, our government updated its registration of marriage form in June 2017 to be inclusive of same-sex spouses.

We work in a reality of sometimes limited legal resources and can only work on so much at a time. We remain committed to our overall legislative goal of LGBTQ2S+ non-discrimination and we will bring forward clear legislative changes in the coming sessions, as I have already stated. As the Minister of Justice had mentioned during her second reading speech, we know that amending additional pieces of legislation will be important. We are absolutely keen to make practical changes that will affect the lives of Yukoners and do this in a very positive way.

Thank you very much for the question, and I look forward to more.

Ms. White: When I look at, for example, the changes to the *Child Care Act*, the existing language says: "In appointing members of the Board, the Commissioner in Executive Council shall consider the racial, regional and gender balance of the Yukon." We are taking out "gender balance" and taking "gender diversity". I wonder why that is more important than the language in the *Spousal Compensation Act* that says: "... compensation as a consequence of his or her commencing to cohabit with a person of the opposite sex..." is considered to be more important?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: It's not that it's more important than other changes. It's just that these are the changes that we can bring forward now. These are key boards and committees that make decisions on behalf of Yukoners. As I have stated, we

will be bringing forward legislation into the future. We have committed to that. The Minister of Justice, my colleagues throughout our Cabinet and I have committed to ensuring that the right changes are made into the future and we will be bringing forward other legislative changes.

We're really going to be relying on the public engagement and are willing to shift our legislative agenda if Yukoners are telling us something different from what we think and have right now on the agenda. If Yukoners identify other legislative changes — and we take note of the list that you have given to us. We will certainly frame our questions to the public to take into light the comments that the member opposite made during our debate on the Women's Directorate in Committee of the Whole, where you don't know what you don't know. We absolutely take that to heart. We agree with the member opposite that it is, in fact, true. We know that not all Yukoners are fully aware of all the legislative pieces and how they impact them, and we'll certainly be taking that into consideration as we go into future engagement with Yukoners.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

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

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Clause 5

Clause 5 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 17, entitled *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee that the Chair report Bill No. 17, entitled *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 206, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 206, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Environment

Hon. Ms. Frost: Before I begin, I would like to welcome the Deputy Minister of Environment, Joe MacGillivray, and Bonnie Love, Finance director. Before getting into my speech and presentation, I want to just take this moment for us to acknowledge Bonnie's 32 years of service with Government of Yukon. She retires in June, so I just want us to acknowledge her here before we begin, because she has a diverse background with lots of experience and has loaned amazing support to me over the course of the last 18 months. I'm sure the Member for Kluane can also attest to her support and knowledge. She is here today to provide support on the budget, given her breadth of experience. She is retiring in June and we wish her well on her next journey. Hopefully, it's an exciting one, as it was for the last five years in Environment.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Frost: As Yukoners, we get to call this amazing landscape home. With this privilege comes our responsibility to stewardship of it. As the Department of Environment, we work together with First Nations, the Inuvialuit and a number of other partners as stewards. We work to maintain the health, sustainability and prosperity of this environment.

This collaborative work helps ensure this place is shared with our children, grandchildren and many more generations to come, and that's defined by our respective agreements we have with the First Nations.

In the department, we have a number of priorities and there are many aspects of this work. For example, we spend approximately \$2 million each year to maintain and upgrade inventories of Yukon air, water, fish and wildlife. These inventories help us gauge when and how to focus our efforts.

Along with our biologists and wildlife managers, the territory's chief veterinary officer works with the Department of Environment. The Animal Health Unit leads our response to disease risk and domestic animal care in Yukon communities.

Each year, about \$95,000 supports this work with Yukon communities to find unique and appropriate solutions to the issue we have encountered most recently around rural dog care; for example, since its launch in 2006, about 170 dogs have been spayed through our rural dog spay program.

We also deliver programs and services that give Yukoners and visitors safe and memorable interaction with the Yukon environment around them. This could be through camping, enjoying nature, hunting, fishing and more wildlife viewing. We know that the number of people camping, hunting and fishing continues to rise each year. In 2017,

approximately 5,600 hunting licences were issued and 19,000 angling licences were purchased. Nearly 82,000 people camped in Yukon's campgrounds and that really is an indication of the pressures that we're seeing within our environment and in our campgrounds — likewise we need to be responsive to that.

When the health of this shared environment is at risk, department staff respond. For example, environmental compliance and inspection officers act fast when there is a threat to the environment from litter or spills and our conservation officers are on the scene when conflict arises with wildlife.

We also support a growing economy by helping guide sustainable development. We do this by providing data for project assessments and we also issue and regulate permits. We spend an average of about \$1.4 million to educate, monitor and enforce the laws that protect human health, our environment and water each year.

We also lead the assessment, monitoring and cleanup of the government's environmental liabilities. Because of the risk to do this, the environment liabilities and remediation program makes up our single biggest budget item each year.

Last but not least, we know the impacts of climate change, the effects it is having on our communities, our culture and our way of life. Yukon's average temperature has increased by two degrees in the past 50 years and our winter temperatures have increased by four degrees. This is two times the rate of southern Canada. Environment's Climate Change Secretariat works to coordinate the territory's adaptation, mitigation, preparation and innovation for resilient Yukon communities.

The work Environment does is connected to every one of the Government of Yukon's priorities and is integral to all aspects of Yukon lives. We know that we need to consider, as we look at science and science assessments, that we also need to consider local traditional knowledge that is derived from our relationship with the various boards and committees in Yukon.

People cannot thrive and live healthy lives if the environment they live in is not healthy and thriving. Our communities and economy will not be sustainable if the ecosystems they depend on are not. It is through our shared stewardship of this land that our reconciliation with First Nations is brought to life.

With this in mind, I rise today to lay out some of the work of the department in planning the 2018-19 fiscal year. Most notably, we are seeking just over a total of \$47 million for the year ahead. This is an increase of \$4,694,000 from last year, which is largely for the remediation work planned for the Marwell tar pit project. This is a project we share with Canada. Remediation of the Marwell site, located in Whitehorse, began with assessment work in 2010-11.

The entire remediation project has three phases. It is anticipated that it will take more than a decade to complete, with monitoring being carried out for many years beyond. This year, we are scheduled to complete seasonally dependent work, including site preparation and excavation of the

contaminated soil, segregation of impacted soil on the site and treatment of the contaminated soil. On-site treatment of the soil will be through a process called "enhanced thermal conduction", which is when the soil is heated, causing the contamination to become vapours. These vapours are captured and burned off to air-quality standards before being released. The Marwell project is one that highlights our work together with our federal and First Nation partners. Together, we are working to heal the scars left on our land from a time when we knew much less about contamination and hazardous substances. While technology and industry standards are improving, the costs of dealing with these liabilities are not going down. It is only by working together that we can make sure that we leave this land in better condition than we found it.

Under the operation and maintenance budget, Environment includes \$45.919 million for O&M. This includes \$10.1 million for projects under the environmental liabilities and remediation program. More than half of this — or \$5.365 million — is recoverable.

I just discussed the \$4.6 million for the Marwell project, for which Canada has contributed 70 percent of the funding over the life of the agreement. The remaining \$5.5 million will go to other site assessments and remediation work for government-owned contaminated sites across the territory. These include the nursing station in Old Crow, a number of solid-waste facilities and highway maintenance facilities across the territory, the visitor information centre and Old Territorial Administration Building in Dawson City, and a number of sites in Whitehorse, including the F.H. Collins Secondary School and the property at Fifth Avenue and Rogers Street. Ongoing monitoring will continue on the new Salvation Army Centre of Hope and the former Motorways site where the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre is now located.

When deciding what work needs to get done to assess the remediation and environmental liabilities, we use a risk-based approach that looks at risks to people and to the environment. Our knowledge of how to safely store hazardous materials was not as good as it is now. Standards for construction and handling of chemicals have improved. We know more about contaminants now than we did years ago, but cleaning up past actions is always more costly and challenging than taking proactive steps to protect our shared environment for the future. Being proactive is almost always more fiscally and environmentally responsible. This is why we are working together with the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada on projects under the climate change preparedness in the north program. This four-year agreement will provide a total of \$1.7 million of recoverable funding. We are now in the second year of this program with \$450,000 allocated in 2018-19.

In the north, we know climate change is not a theory. It is the cracks in our highways and the shifts in the foundations of our buildings. It has real impact in the communities we call home. As my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, reminds us, we have three communities that are most directly impacted by the permafrost melting at such a speed that we

are having issues with our building infrastructure. Those are things that we take into consideration in Environment when we look at impacts on our communities.

To address this, Yukoners are also changing. We are modifying the way we build, finding new ways to travel and exploring more sustainable sources of energy. Department of Environment is committed to develop a new strategy for climate change, energy and green economy together with other government departments and a number of First Nations and municipal partners. We understand the importance of basing our decisions on evidence, ensuring the input of Yukoners and working together with our management partners to chart our path forward together. This is why we work with First Nations, Inuvialuit renewable resource councils, the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and other local partners to bring many important aspects of the final agreements to life. By this, I mean that our collaborative work on special management areas like parks and habitat protection areas as well as fish and wildlife management forms an integral part of the work we do.

Each year, approximately \$500,000 supports the work to develop management plans, like those being developed right now for the Tagish habitat protection area, the Herschel Island park and the grizzly bears, just to name a few.

Another collaborative project is the development of a territory-wide wetlands policy. Together with First Nation communities and a number of stakeholders — including industry — we are developing a guide for management of these critical natural phenomena. Wetlands are not only habitats for biodiversity space for recreation and cultural activities; they are integral to our survival. They improve water quality, help manage natural risks like flooding, and they are key components to addressing impacts like climate change.

Helping Yukoners understand and appreciate the environment around them is a feature of the work that the department does. This is supported by the efforts and investments in making services easier and more accessible online. This year we continue to offer fishing licences and annual camping permits online. As well, hunters will once again be able to apply for a permit hunt and submit their harvest reports from the comforts of their own homes.

In this budget, we have committed about \$200,000 to work toward a new e-service project. During the 2018-19 year, we are working on bringing resident hunting licence renewal and non-resident hunting licence purchases online. We are also working on making the special guide licensing lottery applications process electronic and bringing some of our vendors into e-licensing from their storefronts.

We know that Yukoners and visitors to the territory embrace the opportunity to enjoy this beautiful landscape. No other numbers are better proof of that than the continuously increasing numbers of Yukoners and visitors spending time in our parks and campgrounds. The number of campers in Yukon has steadily increased, and the 2017 year was another record year for us, particularly in the Tombstone Park area. We saw 23,000 people, which is more than we have ever seen. This

was an increase of nearly 46 percent from the 2016 season. This is why we are investing nearly \$1 million in Yukon's campgrounds for 2018-19.

More than \$250,000 of this amount will be in operation and maintenance monies to ensure that the park officers and interpreters program continues to provide opportunities for Yukoners and visitors to connect to these amazing wild spaces that we are obligated to manage.

Now, on to the capital budget — our total capital request is \$1.15 million. This includes \$720,000 for campground infrastructure. This money will support our continued work to create more campsites, replace outhouses and playgrounds, improve docks, trails and boat launches, roads, interpretive and informal signage and accessibility to those with mobility challenges throughout our world-class system of 42 campgrounds.

Our 2018-19 capital budget also includes \$95,000 for replacement and upgrades to another important system across the territory — our hydrometric and hydrology monitoring stations. Understanding the territory's water systems — whether on the surface like lakes, rain and snow, or underground — is like placing a stethoscope on the overall health of our environment. Ensuring our water systems are healthy and sustainable ensures our people and communities are healthy and sustainable as well.

This year's capital budget also reflects \$300,000 in operational equipment. These funds are dedicated to replacing our fleet of equipment, which we haven't replaced in quite some time. Without this equipment, we would not be able to monitor any of the lands we are responsible to protect. There is no place in the territory where this is more true than in the northern parts of our territory and some very remote places we are required to manage.

We work together with the Inuvialuit to implement the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. This includes management of Herschel Island, Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park and the North Slope. In this year's budget, we dedicated \$35,000 of capital money to support that work.

With regard to transfer payments, our shared responsibilities for implementing the Inuvialuit agreement also represents one of our many relationships to foster a partnership and accomplish our work. We have in our budget a total of \$3 million of government transfers and this includes support for our joint work with First Nation renewable resources councils and the Wildlife Management Board.

We support local humane societies and veterinarians who help administer programs with other health animal units, and we support research. There are many things that are done in the department in collaboration with our partners, like Yukon College. We have \$30,000 identified for the environmental awareness fund.

It is very important to note that we have scientists, biologists, planners and officers within the department and we look at a number of issues every day with respect to data analysis, data assessment and data compilation to look at better management so that we can give a full story. Part of it is that, together, we need to ensure that we work with our First

Nation partners to get the on-the-ground story, the traditional knowledge and the on-the-ground experience. What is observed historically is really essential and we need to tie that into our management structures, which is very important to us. We have to look at our landscape; our economy will continue to grow, diversify and prosper if we consider all of the environmental impacts and observations around adaptation measures and climate change that our First Nation partners see.

That's really relevant and essential when we work with the renewable resources councils in our communities — we work with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the trappers, the hunters and the outfitters. Those are people who have a wealth of information and we want to ensure that we take those things into consideration as we look at various changes within the department on adaptation and climate change measures.

Our communities will thrive if the environment and ecosystems coexist and are healthy for years to come. We look forward to discussing the 2018-19 main estimates for the Department of Environment, as well as the positive projects, and we look forward to the discussion today.

Mr. Istchenko: First of all, I do want to welcome the staff here today and obviously concur with the minister. Thank you for many years of service to the Department of Environment.

As a critic for Environment, I appreciate what this beautiful Yukon has to offer, especially my homeland of Kluane. So the questions that I will have here today come from my experiences growing up in the Yukon and in the north and listening to our governments, our First Nation governments, our municipalities and our local advisory councils, as well as our boards, councils, hunters, trappers, fishermen, and our local associations and foundations, and just those who enjoy the outdoors. I have many conversations on a daily basis with people about the Yukon and their outdoor experiences. That's where my questions will come from today, as well as from listening to those who get a hold of our office through my fellow colleagues, the MLAs, and ask us about their concerns and issues. I'll be bringing those forward today too.

My first question today — and I have asked this question of the minister before: Can the minister confirm the status of the Kusawa park management plan and whether she has any indication of when it will be signed by the respective parties?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. As noted, the Kusawa park management plan has taken quite a long time to get to — and I'm pleased to say that the plan, which has taken many years to design and draft with input from the communities of the Kwanlin Dün, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and Carcross/Tagish First Nation, has been completed. The First Nations — our partners — are now working to conclude that plan.

The work has been done; it's just now a decision with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kwanlin Dün and Carcross/Tagish First Nation. They need to come to consensus

on implementing or accepting the plan as drafted that has been completed.

Mr. Istchenko: Just one more follow-up: Is there a timeline for signing, or some sort of an event?

Hon. Ms. Frost: As with all plans, we really want to conclude that plan because it is a requirement that derives from the self-government agreement and we want to ensure that we get it done as quickly as possible. We can only move as fast as our partners and we want to ensure that we work with our partners to get the plan concluded. As to when we can sign off and celebrate — that will happen when we have the parties agreeing to that. I don't know when that is, but my anticipation is that we are working really hard with our partners to resolve this and to get the plan signed off, given that a lot of the work has already been concluded.

Mr. Istchenko: Can the minister confirm when the new campground regulations will come into effect and whether they will align with the results of the survey done last year? Can the minister also comment or talk a little bit about the status of the site reservations — the changes there and how that is working?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With regard to the changes to the campground regulations, I know it's a bit of a challenging subject with Yukoners. We know that we were seeing campgrounds and campsites being — really the increase — I think I said that we had 56,000 visitors. We have seen some intense pressures on some of the campsites and campgrounds near Whitehorse — Pine Lake being a really popular site and of course Kusawa being another popular area.

We heard clearly from campers, through a survey, the concern that was brought to our attention about people holding campsites when they were not using them. We also heard that they wanted a better and fairer process, so that families who show up to camp have access to the campgrounds. We know it's challenging when we have a lawn chair in the middle of a campground with a gate across the access, so we're hoping that we can address these concerns through the campground regulation changes and address that.

With regard to the changes to improve fair access and increase campground availability, I am just going to ask for a quick moment to confer with my DM just to find out where we are with that.

I gave a bit of a background on how this came to be with regard to unoccupied campgrounds — we have gone through the consultative process and 1,300 people responded through the survey. We had more responses online as well and the decision to move ahead with the regulations has gone through our regulatory process. When the campgrounds open this spring, they will come into effect.

Mr. Istchenko: Is the minister confident that, when they come into effect, they will align with the results from the survey that was done?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We received quite strong support from the surveys, and that's our vision and our objective. We're hoping that, once rules are noted and correspondence has gone out, the public will become aware and hopefully abide by the process. We really want to see more families get out and have

easier access to the campgrounds that are within the proximity of the city.

Mr. Istchenko: With the changes, when they come into effect, what sort of education or advertising campaign have you done for Yukoners to let them know there are changes to alleviate people thinking it's still the old way and that the way has changed?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Obviously this is a new venture, a new initiative, modernizing the rules that we have in place around campgrounds. The result of the survey indicates that Yukoners are in support of this change. I do want to say that our objective is to use this opportunity to use outreach methods to educate our users and try to educate as much as we can this first year by using various methods — social media and using the newspapers, as well — with our partners. In instances where we have campgrounds that we jointly manage with First Nations, like the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, we will work with them. We will notify the communities as well. I think it's really important that we get the message out to the communities that are in the vicinity of these campgrounds.

We will do that and focus the first year on education and less on enforcement, but try to educate Yukoners that these new rules will apply. If we see consistency in individuals, we will give warnings and go ahead and use a soft approach to launch, and then start looking further at implementing the regulations as the season evolves.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the member for that. I sure hope the campaign works.

I just want to read from an e-mail from someone who was concerned about the upcoming camping season. This person says that they played by the rules — no reserving sites, et cetera — and although, last year, it was reported by the media that government will strictly enforce the campsite rules, nothing seems to have changed. People are still reserving sites, some also put up a little tent in the middle of the week, drive back home in their little car and return Friday to the campsite, remove the tent and park a camper — some of the issues that we have heard before.

One of the things that he brought up in here was, as a matter of fact, during the summer of 2016, he had booked off for a week planning to take his grandson camping at Fox Lake. He waited until Sunday evening before heading out so he would have a site to camp at. To his surprise, two motorhomes with Yukon licence plates arrived just before him at about 6:00 p.m. They had waited until the preferred sites were empty and proceeded to park both motorhomes in these sites. The drivers of the motorhomes then got in a small car that had followed them to the campsite and headed back to their town.

Can the minister elaborate a little bit more on how the enforcement people are actually going to alleviate some of these issues? If she says it is going to be more of an education thing, are you just going to stop and say, "Hey, you can't do that next year; we're going to give you a hard time" — how is that going to work? There were a lot of people who put time and effort into the survey and I think it's important that if

we're going to change things, we educate them and then they have to follow the rules.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I do have to say that I have learned a lot about the process in the last year and I have learned a lot from the Director of Yukon Parks, Dan Paleczny, who is now retired, around the strategies. I'm sure the member opposite would be familiar with that, in that the emphasis around promotion of campsites and camp use was to try to encourage Yukoners to use campsites that are further away from Whitehorse and build them up in such a way that campgrounds like the Engineer Creek campground, for example, or other campsites in Yukon that generally don't see all the pressures are being — that Yukoners and others are encouraged to use those campsites and to go further out. So as long as we can put the support into building those sites up so that they are welcoming and they have the upgraded facilities, we will see less pressures, we're hoping, on the Whitehorse vicinity or closer to the city campsites. We really wanted to take that approach and use an educational approach and an outreach component to our strategy.

We're looking for voluntary compliance in the first year. If we continuously see repeat offenders, obviously we would want to ensure that we implement the enforcement rules because we want to clearly send a strong message to Yukoners that we have — it's difficult for families to get out in some situations and we want to ensure that it is accessible and that we don't have motorhomes and others who take the space three days in advance or set a tent up there and move along. I have had that same experience last summer in Pine Lake campground where we went to spend the weekend paddling and camping in the campsite and there is a tent but there is no one there. We trained there for two days and no one showed up at the campsite. I absolutely understand when you show up with a bunch of kids in tow to use the facilities that are there to be enjoyed by all Yukoners. That obviously irritated me and irritated the children who I had with me because the site was close to the lake.

We want to really work on trying to educate, look for voluntary compliance and — as we would under any new process — issue the warnings that are necessary to educate the campers that this is not a practice we want to support at all. The fine is significant — more significant than we have seen historically. It is now \$200. We will ensure that non-compliance will result in that fine. I think the emphasis and the pressure you will see more around the city and less on the external parts or rural parts where there are more camping spaces that are less occupied — try to encourage more Yukoners and more visitors to use those sites.

Mr. Istchenko: The minister has also made it clear that government intends to go through each of Yukon's campgrounds to modernize and improve them. She just spoke about trying to get people to use the further away campgrounds and that is great. I agree that each campground should be maintained to the highest standard for Yukoners and visitors, and I appreciate the campaign that the government created to urge campers to go further out of town to explore new areas; however, it isn't always feasible for families —

and we see this — who have just two days to get out of town and go back, and this is where this reservation of campsites has started. As we know, campgrounds closer to the city are often at capacity — or in my community of Pine Lake — even long before the weekend begins.

I am going to ask the minister: Can you confirm if the government has looked at creating new campgrounds or expanding the existing campgrounds, or making the sites bigger so maybe two or three can be at one site with one firepit — is there any option to look at that to alleviate some of these issues?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to thank the member opposite for the question because it is really a great question. With regard to accessibility and ensuring that we get Yukoners out to enjoy the wild spaces and occupy the campgrounds — it is difficult when we don't have that within the proximity of the city or within the municipalities. We do have resources in the budget to upgrade this year. I know that the first campground in some 30 years was built a few years ago; I thank the member opposite for that. That was to open up the Conrad Campground.

Our vision is to look at further campgrounds in the future so that we can provide more campsites. It is really imperative for us to look at the sites we currently occupy — as was indicated — and if the sites are not maximized, then clearly we should be able to make those minor amendments to allow more spaces to be made available within the sites we have. We are working with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation on the sites near Tagish, so that might be one opportunity as well.

We are looking at improvements and putting the resources there and always looking to work with the communities to expand campsites and campgrounds to allow more spaces to be available.

I really like the idea of taking the existing stock we have currently, looking to seek improvements, and perhaps add more spaces into the existing campground sites.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. We spoke last year — sticking with campgrounds here — about the large amount of deadwood and brush in the areas around a number of campgrounds in the Yukon. It is not only a fire hazard; it is actually a safety hazard with people going out there — dead trees leaning and things like that. Much of it could be used for firewood as well. Has the minister looked into the possibility of firesmaring around the campgrounds and using the wood for firewood? I know that previously when I was the minister, I had worked with my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources or Community Services — I am not sure which one — and the Wildland Fire crews who work in the off-season this time of the year and in the fall. They would go in and do some of that work. It kept their training up and stuff like that. I am just not sure. Can the minister comment on that?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The recommendation is a really great recommendation. I think that we want to ensure that the campgrounds are not hazardous. The recommendation around perhaps firesmaring is a really good option. I would be happy to follow up on that recommendation with my colleagues to

see whether that is an option or not for the future. What we don't want to see is campers cutting trees within the campgrounds because that would just destroy the landscape. But if there are hazards with falling trees and such, then we want to ensure that our parks team is aware and that they take the necessary measures to clear the area so that it doesn't become a hazard.

Thank you for the great recommendations. It is surely something that we will consider and take under advisement and have an internal discussion on.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. There have been trees falling on campers when the wind picks up. If we have no fire-burn — and not everybody listens to no fire-burning — and we create a forest fire — in a lot of these campgrounds, especially the busy local ones that are close to municipalities or to the City of Whitehorse, I think it is imperative.

Just a last question that I have on campgrounds, before I change gears a little bit, is kind of an ongoing thing when it comes to the maintenance and the grading of the roads. First thing in the spring, the roads are rough, and I am pretty sure every MLA has been hollered at on more than one occasion. I understand that the Department of Environment isn't a big owner of many graders, but I know the Department of Highways and Public Works is. I have heard the Premier say "one-government approach", so I will use this one on him. Is there a standard — is there a bit of an unwritten rule between the local highway departments on how often they do the maintenance on those roads? Is it only when requested? Who requests the maintenance on that road? I think the minister will probably understand what I am getting at.

Hon. Ms. Frost: To the point around accessibility, I want to highlight that part of the survey addressed some of the concerns that were brought to our attention around accessibility, or mobility access, to some of the campgrounds. Part of the upgrades is to allow those who have mobility issues easy access in and out of the campgrounds. That's really important. Generally, these folks who have mobility issues don't have easy access — let alone getting out to camp. We want to provide that opportunity. We are addressing that in some of the campgrounds closer to the city.

With regard to the maintenance of roads and access, my understanding is that is done in collaboration with Highways and Public Works, and that is done in early spring, prior to the campgrounds opening up, recognizing that it's also the busiest time of the year for Highways and Public Works.

I will take under advisement the suggestion that we need to work together to better align our cooperation to ensure that the campgrounds are graded and, in all parts of the year, are accessible when the campgrounds are open.

In this year's budget, we have allocated \$30,000 for road maintenance and upgrades. That is over and above what Highways and Public Works does with their spring support. That's separate to this. We want to ensure that, if we do get feedback from some of the campgrounds where there are concerns, we bring that to the attention of Highways and

Public Works and make sure we get them in there to fix the road so it is accessible and barrier free.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. I don't expect it on the floor of the House today, but could I get a breakdown of — maybe in a legislative return — which campgrounds are getting what money being spent in campgrounds — she mentioned earlier, I think, \$200,000 on campground upgrades — and also where she is spending the road maintenance money, above and beyond, with Highways and Public Works? I don't expect it today.

I'm going to move on to another question: How many boat launches is the Department of Environment responsible for in campgrounds and on lakes around the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can respond to the first question and hopefully give a bit of information. I'll respond to the boat launch question following that.

In 2018, the Parks branch prepared a five-year capital plan around the maintenance and replacement projects in Yukon campgrounds. That was essential, because we have aging sites.

We have aging infrastructure in those facilities as well and we want to ensure that we are responding in a timely fashion, so that trees don't fall on vehicles. If we have outhouses that need replacing, we will replace them or if we have picnic tables that need replacing — all of that. The projects that we plan to systemically address within four levels of need are: public and workplace health and safety, such as repairing and upgrading vehicle and pedestrian bridges, boat launches and campgrounds; as well as work related to bear-proofing; and environmental standards, such as replacing dry outhouses with pump-out tanks.

I went to the Yukon Parks office last year and I saw the creative and innovative approaches that they were taking to building outhouses for Herschel Island, for example, choppers that in because that is really essential in terms of how they deal with waste in that park.

Of course, mobility and universal access are really important, so constructing wheelchair-accessible campgrounds, trails and facilities is another really important priority. We're also looking at maintaining the quality of services that we currently have around the shelters and the picnic tables, as an example.

Specifically, the work plan to be carried out this year in Yukon campgrounds is identified in the 2018-19 budget. We have \$300,000 to revitalize infrastructure at a number of the campgrounds and \$300,000 to replace campground playground equipment. In fact, we have campgrounds with playground equipment that don't meet current safety standards. Those will have to be replaced and upgraded.

We also plan on developing infill sites in campgrounds and backcountry sites like Tombstone, so there is \$105,000 assigned to that. The retrofit to the Wolf Creek Campground — there is \$15,000 in the budget — so \$300,000 for campground infrastructure in total, really looking at the upgrades, as indicated.

We have a number of accessibility issues and concerns with some of the campgrounds. We want to really make sure

that we address that in kiosks and signage and, as noted earlier, making sure that we put the notices and the outreach out there about the rules around reserving campsites.

Those are some of the things that we are doing.

As well, the point noted was that we have hazardous issues and concerns in the campgrounds like trees that are about to topple over and such. As well, we want to make sure that we bear-proof everything and we have bear-proof garbage containers and lockers across the campgrounds.

Those are some of the priorities that we are focused on this year. Currently, in Yukon campgrounds — the question that was asked around boat launches within campgrounds was: How many do we have? My understanding, based on the Yukon government's campground and recreation sites, is we have 10 boat launches in campgrounds and recreational sites across the Yukon.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. Does the minister believe that they are maintained to a safe standard for those who utilize those lakes?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can say that the department does its best and puts its best effort around ensuring that those boat launches are safe, given spring runoff and spring thaw. Those are clearly some of the areas that the department looks at to ensure they are accessible. Are they safe? I can't say for certain, but that is assessed every spring.

Mr. Istchenko: Are the locations of the boat launches for when the weather is bad? When we build campgrounds, do we look at those locations to make sure they're in the right spot for bad weather and windy conditions?

Hon. Ms. Frost: For reference, on the website under the Government of Yukon campgrounds and recreation sites, it highlights the boat launches and where they are located. There's a specific line there. I'm just going to stop for a second and ask for some clarification.

The note with the map highlights the various boat launches throughout the 10 Yukon campgrounds and recreation sites. The point that was noted is: Are they appropriately situated, given that they are more or less historic sites — or historic units or facilities and infrastructure that have been there for more than 30 years? The most recent campsite that was built near Carcross would have taken that into consideration. As we upgrade and advance the current sites, we want to ensure that, as we look at new locations, we take those things under advisement and into consideration.

I'm certain that the member opposite, with respect to the question, would have taken that into consideration when the Conrad site was built, and we want to do that in the future as well.

Mr. Istchenko: So those boat launches are on the Environment website. On the Environment website, are there any other lake boat launches, or just the ones that the Department of Environment is responsible for? Does the Department of Tourism and Culture, on their website, also — because the Department of Tourism and Culture advertises: come to the Yukon, we have lots of great places to go. Is that stuff on their website also?

Hon. Ms. Frost: That's a really great question. What we have on our website are the campgrounds and the sites. I will ensure that, as we go ahead to work with our partners and colleagues around the design of the website, the upgrade and modernization, we keep the message clear around accessibility on all Yukon spaces and public places. Accessibility is really important, but we also need to collaborate and get that message out.

Thank you for that. I will follow up and make sure that it is the case.

Mr. Istchenko: What I'm getting at is that the government advertises: Come to the Yukon. The Department of Tourism and Culture advertises: Come to the Yukon, there are great places to go. They advertise the Yukon's largest lake, which has two boat launches — not Teslin, but Kluane Lake. It has two boat launches, and one boat launch is at the south end, which is available when the lake is open, but quite often it is not that safe because you are at the south end of the lake, and when the wind blows, it's not very safe. There are a lot of users who go to Destruction Bay and would like to use the marina.

Now, I have asked the question in the House in Question Period. I would just like the minister to comment — does she believe that the Yukon government should be advertising, "Come to the Yukon; it's a great place to go", and advertising that we have a huge, large lake and all this to offer, and the great partnerships and the co-governance and a one-government approach through the different departments — but the lake's not accessible. I'm just wondering if maybe the minister is discussing with her colleagues — maybe the Tourism minister — to have maybe a bulletin put out that some of this information is wrong and maybe the websites need to be upgraded to: "Don't come to the Yukon to certain areas because there is no accessibility for you"? Can the minister comment on that?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I certainly agree that we want to promote — come to our Yukon, or come to my Yukon. We want to promote access, and we want to promote to the rest of Canada and the rest of the world the accessibility to all of our spaces. What we do control through the Department of Environment and Parks are the campgrounds that we're responsible for.

The point around the boat launches in Kluane Lake falls under the other departments. I would be really happy to have that conversation with the departments, and I understand that Minister of Community Services has been to Kluane himself and he has also, through the Infrastructure Development branch, gone out to review the current situation and is happy to look at improvements, but that will take some time.

We're hearing the same things that the member opposite is hearing — that the community needs and wants to have access. It's important for the community. I recognize and appreciate that and I absolutely agree that we need to work to resolve that issue in the future. We will work to reflect that and take that under advisement and work together to try to solve that. I just wanted to say thank you for that.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for the answer. I find it ironic that, when I ask the question, the Minister of Highways and Public Works got up and answered the question, and, today, the Minister of Community Services went down and provided some information. Anyway, I will leave that one alone.

As you know, the Department of Environment works with other departments when it comes to, for example, wildlife viewing. They work with the Department of Tourism and Culture. I'm just wondering, with the Department of Environment — and I had caught a news article with — I'm not sure exactly what the title is from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

We have a huge tourism opportunity — but also it has to do with ice melting. We have the ice caves in Haines Junction. I believe that every weekend, there is a lot of activity. There is no pullout there. There is actually a huge safety issue with the people parking along the highway. I am just going to ask the minister if this is something that the department — because they do have Parks campgrounds — is looking at doing something to alleviate the safety issue along the north Alaska Highway north of Haines Junction.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to respond by saying that we do take a whole-of-government approach when we address all of these issues with respect to climate change adaptation measures. With regard to boat launches and such, it is really essential that we take that into consideration, because we have expertise within the various departments and it is important and relevant that we share that knowledge so that we can address, in a holistic, collaborative way, the good work that is being done within the various departments.

I do know that the Minister of Highways and Public Works has also consulted with the communities — as I have as well. The adaptation around climate change and measures that are necessary and essential in these specific areas need to be considered and assessed long term so that we can better align for services and supports, which is really important.

We talked about that in my earlier statements — around the need to make changes. We have some key areas in the Yukon around climate change and permafrost melting. One of those key, specific areas is in the Vuntut Gwitchin traditional area in Old Crow; another is in Ross River, and the third one is in Kluane country. These are areas that we really need to start working on and pay more attention to so that we can better align services to ensure that, in the long term, we provide for and address some of the safety issues.

Most recently, EMR geologists went and conducted an assessment on the ice caves and made a public statement that they are really a short-term attraction and, given the short-term attraction and the concern about the potential for it to collapse — and to address some challenges with folks going inside the cave during the spring melting. So although it is a public attraction, when we are in this current critical time and with temperatures warming, then, obviously, that would become more of a concern.

We also want to state that accessibility and putting in more sites around that area — that is something that we could

certainly consider and take under advisement in the future. Highways and Public Works really has done some great work in looking at trying to provide access in some of these areas that have shown most recently some attractions in Yukon.

We want to ensure that as we go ahead, as we get feedback, and as we are seeing key, high-pressure areas in Yukon where there are new attractants — new sites — we want to make sure that it is accessible, but first and foremost, it has to be safe. I also want to note that it is important, as noted earlier by the member opposite, that the comment about coming to my Yukon — all of the departments — including the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon — through the strategy are looking at measures to ensure that these concerns and interests that are brought forward are considered in the strategy. It really is Yukoners who are speaking, letting us know and making us aware of their key priorities — much like we did through the campgrounds — and demonstrating that they wanted to see some significant improvements. We have really geared up to provide that support and I welcome the recommendations that the Member for Kluane is bringing forward. Certainly, with the experience of having been the Minister of Environment, historically, I am sure that there is a lot of good information that we can have a conversation about that we may not be able to address today. I look forward to that.

Mr. Istchenko: I do agree with the minister when she speaks about adapting to climate change. We also have to adapt to some of the safety issues on our highways. I know that Highways and Public Works has done a good job. They pushed the snowbanks over on to the shoulder of the road, which had caused traffic to start parking like they were on Main Street, and then they went further on the road. I remember coming back from a Rangers exercise up north with a bunch of vehicles behind me. There were dogs and traffic all over the road, and I didn't know if I was going to get whoa-ed up in time. Everything went fine, and there were three more vehicles behind me — we all commented on that. There is a pullout just on top of the hill there that they could be using.

I am going to switch gears again here and talk about elk agriculture. This will be good for the deputy minister. He will appreciate this one. The problem with the conflict between elk and agriculture, of course, is ongoing. It has been raised with the government in the past, back when I was the minister.

The most recent management and harvest plan has not really fixed the problem. Farmers are again experiencing a high number of elk. This government has committed to the agricultural sector in our territory that something must be done, and there must be some serious changes with the management plan, including increasing the hunting permits. This year, next year and the year after, there is going to be that conflict. I don't believe many tags got cancelled because I don't believe it was that the elk were actually in as many of the agricultural properties. But there must be some changes to the plan, which is going to be the ability to increase hunting permits to reduce the size of the elk herd from its current level — the level that it was committed to stay at. Can the minister also commit to supporting Yukon agriculture and increasing

the number of hunting permits to a level that would bring the herd size down to a manageable number? I am just asking this because I know that the hunters — the outdoorsmen who like to hunt and the reason that the elk came here was for hunting opportunities — and the farmers just want to see a resolution. I know they want to work together on it. I am just wondering if the minister can comment on that.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The question with respect to the elk and agriculture conflict — the member, as former minister, is very familiar with the challenges and the first phase of the implementation of addressing that. The consultative measures have taken place to engage with the agricultural industry and the folks in that vicinity of Takhini and Lake Laberge area. The concerns were brought to the attention of the department around the elk occupying spaces they shouldn't be occupying, and that would be going on to the farmlands and destroying their crops.

The first phase of the agricultural/elk conflict would have resulted in some direct face-to-face meetings and engagement sessions. Out of those came some recommendations. That followed up through the working group workshop on March 26 and 27. That would be the phase 2 approach of that initiative, which is to look at proposed changes going forward.

During all of this process, the departments of Energy, Mines and Resources and Environment worked very closely to ensure that we addressed the conflicts that are there. We also closely monitored the elk and looked at gathering the data and information from the agricultural landowners about past conflicts with elk on their properties, and then looked at bringing those issues and concerns via the working group, which has representation from that sector.

As a note, the count on the Takhini Valley elk was conducted in early March. There were 188 elk sighted, which is down from 229 from the year previous. Currently, the majority of the elk are not in the area. My understanding is there are no recent complaints received about the elk in the Takhini Valley, but we want to continue to work on implementing the measures that were put there before — fencing, preventive measures and looking at reducing the conflicts.

Perhaps that might come forward with recommendations around increasing some of the hunting pressure in the area. That might very well be one of the proposed recommendations that come from the working group. If those are the recommendations, we would certainly look at all the options that are brought to our attention.

We are also going back, I think, a little bit — the Member for Kluane would know that the 2016 elk management plan was really to support sustainable harvest opportunities for elk because he would have been directly involved in that as a minister. It is prudent of us to consider, as we move forward, the agricultural industry, because we have to balance both. It has to make sense. Although the elk were imported for hunting opportunities, the agricultural industry has been long-standing in the area — probably a lot longer than elk have been in the area — so we have to try to balance both so that

we don't end up in that conflict between the landowners and, of course, the hunters.

We have learned a lot about the initial program in the phase 1 approach and what we learned at the meeting in March really just highlights some of the areas of concern that have been brought to our attention.

Going back to the 2016 management plan and then looking at the phase 1 consultative engagement process, the face-to-face meetings, and looking at some of the recommendations as noted — perhaps more proactive hunting in the area to address the herd when they are in that area so that we can eliminate them — not eliminate; I should not use that word. It is so that we can deter them from occupying the agricultural lands.

With the recommendation around issuing of permits and perhaps expanded hunting opportunities, perhaps that might be one of the recommendations that might come out. The hunting extension — the time limits are short. Not many permits are issued, so perhaps that might be one of the other recommendations and those are some of the thoughts that are coming forward for deliberation and consideration around timelines, around access, and around ensuring that we perhaps increase hunting opportunities as well.

It is really important to always note that we have hunting restrictions around a one-kilometre corridor and elk are within that corridor and next to homesteads. We want to ensure that whatever we do has to be very controlled and that safety is a top priority. It is important that we continue to collaborate and work together and I'm sure there are lots of experiences and stories to be told and lots of input around the drafting and design of what we see as a current challenge before us. Collectively we will work to try to find the solutions together.

Mr. Istchenko: With respect to the permit hunt authorization — the PHA process — I had asked the minister in November to commit to having a third party conduct an external audit of the process. The minister responded in February by stating that they envision a more comprehensive review of the PHA process in the coming year and a broader working group will be established at that time.

Will the minister update or commit — maybe this has been done — to ensure that this working group is created, independent from the Department of Environment and as a third party external group with no interest in the PHA system, and a bit of a timeline please?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to thank the member for the question. The permit hunt process — when I spoke about the comprehensive review and the assessments, really I think that the member would appreciate that, for years and years and years, everything was written down and permits were issued by paper. On my visit to Environment, there was someone sitting in an office with many, many boxes around her, and she was doing all of the data entry to try to modernize and update the electronic system.

It is really essential that we start tracking the data and assessing the data around comprehensive management and best practices and business practices. It's difficult to do that when we don't appropriately track what we do with our

management measures around hunting and permitting — as well as how many elk were harvested or how many moose were harvested in a specific area, other than going out and doing an aerial count. We're really trying to work hard on reviewing the operational practices around permit hunt authorization and the process to transition to a fully electronic system.

In November, the department met with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the Yukon Fish and Game Association to obtain feedback on those practices. We are reaching out to look at improvements and creating opportunities and the space in which we can have those deliberations — envision a more comprehensive review of the permit hunt authorization process in the coming year, and that will obviously involve a broader engagement process. We will continue to transition to this electronic system. As we ramp up, we will start looking at quality of data and reducing errors and trying to facilitate future audits. Right now, it's going back through paper files and paper documentation. We will work with our partners to review the permit hunt authorization process and make the best informed decisions based on what we are hearing.

The previous audit of the permit hunt authorization process was conducted in 2002, and all recommendations from that 2002 report were implemented. It is now time for us to do that again. We really look forward to the engagement and the advisement. I am sure we will get a lot of great feedback from the partners that we are obligated to work with. As we do this, we want to also work with the Bureau of Statistics so that we can start doing the analytics that are needed and start drafting appropriately the management plans for effective management.

Chair: Would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 206, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

Mr. Istchenko: Welcome back to the staff who are here supporting the minister.

The Alsek moose recovery program was a three-year agreement that was set to end in March 2018. The minister has stated that the department was looking at the possibility of a two-year extension of this agreement.

I have a couple of questions. Can the minister confirm whether this agreement was, in fact, extended? We know that the program was very successful. I heard from a couple of constituents that they were out, or someone was out, assessing the program, so could she speak a little bit to that and who they talked to?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you for your patience. I was just trying to verify if it went out into the Dän Keyi traditional area or Kluane First Nation's area. That was what I was trying to clarify. The elk and moose survey recovery program — the question around whether the agreement was extended or not, given that the Department of Environment worked and collaborated with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations on this moose recovery program in the Alsek area. With that in mind, through the management agreement, it is necessary that we work with the Alsek Renewable Resources Council and Parks Canada as key partners in this process.

The Alsek Renewable Resources Council increased their wolf-trapping efforts in the region. Of course, Parks Canada, through their efforts, are monitoring the moose population — a collaborative approach to management. The program evaluator was hired to look at — obviously, we attempted to ensure through a competitive process that we hired this evaluator to look at evaluating the Alsek moose management program.

The independent evaluation will be based on local input and will rely on the experience and knowledge of local trappers and others in the area and, of course, through the RRC. That is an essential piece. In collaboration and deliberation, it is really imperative on us that, before extending the program, we have to do the analysis from all of the parties and look at tying that together on the moose recovery actions, which will be undertaken by the department in trying to keep with the management guidelines as defined, as well as looking at the Yukon wolf management conservation process. The third year of the program — as correctly noted by the member opposite — was completed on March 31, 2018. The Yukon government contributed \$174,000 to that. Parks Canada participated, as well as the Alsek Renewable Resources Council and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

The evaluators already started the work with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Alsek Renewable Resources Council to develop a comprehensive and collaborative work plan. The evaluation is expected to be completed by the end of May. The question around whether this program is going to be extended or not will be determined by the parties once they have completed their evaluation at the end of May this year.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. The majority of animal species management in the territory is actually done by hunters. Can the minister confirm whether she has been in discussions with the department about the importance of animal population management and, again, the necessity of programs like the one we have just discussed?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The evaluation with regard to the animal population management — I think it is really essential that we consider the need to work with the local RRC and the local hunters around the local traditional knowledge and practices as we implement and assess, from a scientific perspective, and look at the changing climates and the environment. It is really important that we work with our First Nation partners and modify the changes as required.

Yesterday, I met with the chairs of the RRCs from across the Yukon to talk about customary and contemporary practices and the emergence of those two models as we look at effective management measures. The knowledge that comes from the hunters and trappers is an essential piece of what we do in the Department of Environment. I really want to commend them for their really great work and their participation in this effort because, without the evaluation process and without the participation of the parties, we would not be where we are today.

The evaluation was done through interviews with trappers, face-to-face meetings and drafting the evaluation reports. We went ahead and looked in detail at the agreement and the objective of the management plan, wanting to ensure that we are going to proceed. We want to do what we can to get First Nations involved and get the heritage departments involved as well, because they have integral knowledge on historical practices of their respective areas. In this case, it would be the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

As noted, we have done that historically and worked with Champagne and Aishihik — with responsible management on it. We want to continue to support the First Nations with their subsistence harvest rights and practices. The main objective of our self-government agreements is to ensure that we protect the way of life of the people. That is something that we continue to work toward — continued collaboration.

I want to assure the member opposite that we will continue to do that because it is better for all of us if we start getting First Nation harvest data as well, and we do that with our partners through the RRCs and the Alsek Renewable Resources Council. If we don't get that information, it is very difficult for us to manage appropriately, and that is why we are working so hard to bring the partners to the table and continue to work.

We are seeing this elsewhere in Yukon — where we are seeing hunting pressures and we are really trying to get our First Nation partners to give us their data so we can help them as well in some pressure areas. This is really a goal for the Alsek management area as well.

Mr. Istchenko: I would hope that the document, when it is finished, is public.

I would like to — just for the record today — ask the minister if that would be public and also if the five-year campground capital plan could be made public.

On to the next question — we see that the price for moose and caribou tags has increased from \$5 to \$10. Can the minister tell this House: Will the increase in revenue go toward conservation as suggested by the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, or will it go into general revenue?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The first part of the question was around whether the documents would be made public. The five-year capital plan is an internal process, so that won't be made public.

With regard to the moose and caribou seal fee increase, the question is: Where would that go? That would go into general revenues of the government, recognizing that we are

following through on the recommendations from the Financial Advisory Panel. The key focus is really on supporting the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board to do their good work, and we are doing that. The fee increase is not going to enhance that, but the request has come forward and we have taken that under consideration, but we have also considered the recommendations from the Financial Advisory Panel. The fee increases will go back into general revenues.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. Can the minister confirm whether there has been discussion around a land lease for the Yukon Fish and Game Association?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We're in very early stages of our discussions with the Fish and Game Association around a land lease. I know that they put forward a proposal to occupy some land that they would like in order to continue to promote educational opportunities for Yukoners and to work with their young hunting and fishing people and young Yukoners. There is also a component of their program around — the women in wilderness program that a lot of us have participated in. Those are some of the things that they would like to consider stabilizing. The discussions are happening currently with Energy, Mines and Resources and with Environment.

I would be happy to continue that conversation, and hopefully we can find some resolution for them so that they can continue this really great work that they're doing right now for Yukoners. It's a huge opportunity and we certainly want to promote and emphasize that important project.

I know that a good friend and colleague, Clayton White, has pushed and promoted that historically through his work and I want to just ensure that we continue to do that and provide opportunities for our young people.

Mr. Istchenko: On March 15, I asked a question about bear hunting. At this point, I can verify that the minister had said she had verified that she had met with her renewable resources councils on numerous occasions throughout the Yukon. The minister went on to say: "I met with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board. I had extensive discussions around regulatory changes that align with the needs of Yukoners and also looking at hunting regulations. We have just gone through an extensive review of the *Wildlife Act*. I am happy to say that we have gone through a process of engagement with Yukoners and the regulatory bodies that are designated under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* to allow us this opportunity..."

Can the minister elaborate a little bit more on the extensive review of the *Wildlife Act*? Will the *Wildlife Act* changes be coming to the Legislature?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I can say is that the conversations that I have had with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the RRCs really were to look at our obligations to implement the *Umbrella Final Agreement* in the context of that and in alignment with current regulatory practices of the Government of Yukon.

Oftentimes, we are confronted with a situation where the regulations or acts are a bit antiquated and they don't align with current practices around implementation. I am going to

use an example: The *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan* was negotiated and ratified and now we need to put some implementation measures around that. It is the first of its kind, so we need to make some changes as we move. I would say that this consideration around regulatory changes through the Fish and Wildlife Management Board is really essential and we continue to do that. We look at the wildlife regulations to align with that support, but we also recognize that the *Wildlife Act* itself has not been amended. Is it in the queue for this year or next year? It is not in the queue, but it is on the radar and it has been brought to our attention by our partners and is something that we want to consider in the future as we modernize and update. Right now, we're dealing with some of the current and active files with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and with our First Nation partners. As well, we're contacting and supporting the RRCs.

Mr. Istchenko: Can the minister tell us which lakes she anticipates will be subject to fish population assessment surveys this year? Can she tell us whether any lakes will be added to the list of zero-retention areas this year? While she is up, could she also confirm what work is being done with the Department of Environment, First Nations and renewable resources councils to rehabilitate and manage fish stocks in some of these stressed lakes?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The question with the current fish and wildlife regulation changes — we, in collaboration with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, identified some key priorities. The process for regulation changes is to work through the Fish and Wildlife Management Board through the consultation measures and going out to engage with citizens of Yukon, recognizing the decision-making process. We want to abide by the final agreement implementation processes and that means working with various boards and councils, trust groups, with government and the general public at large.

The most recent round of proposed regulation changes was held throughout November and December of 2017. A broad engagement occurred, including public meetings in various communities, as well as online surveys. There were 18 proposed regulation changes considered, which are currently under review by the department.

At this point, I'll just make note of the proposals that were publicly consulted on. The proposals are to: change Fish Lake from general waters to special management; change Lake Laberge from general waters to conservation waters; change Little Salmon Lake from general waters to special management; change Nares Lake and Nares River from general waters to conservation waters; change Ladue Lake from general waters to special management waters; and change Mayo Lake from general waters to conservation waters. There are various proposed recommendations around those lakes. I would say that the recommendations for improvements came out of our consultative process with our communities and the partners we have.

We wanted to look at the process on changes and know that proposed changes can be found on the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board website. We are committed to making sure that Yukoners are aware of those changes and

want to ensure also that we in the Yukon have participated in the process. As the member opposite noted, Yukon seems to be a really high-interest area for fishing, hunting and trapping, but more importantly is fishing participation in all of the country. It's really clear that members of the Canadian population and the world enjoy coming to the Yukon to enjoy our wide open spaces and look at fishing and the pristine areas and waters that we have.

I wanted to just say that we are taking management measures that protect freshwater fish and, of course, the habitat, and that is done in collaboration with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board. Through that process, we do look at working with our partners.

Mr. Istchenko: So I'm curious to see — when it comes to the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, what precipitated the change? Who did the department meet with when it comes to Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm not going to say — with respect to the specific areas and Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, clearly we want to work with the First Nation of that community. We want to work with the RRC in that area but, by virtue of that, we have a regulation that affects all of Yukon. The consideration in that — we need to run it back up through the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and then back out to the public. We go through those processes, and the recommendations that come back would come back through that process.

Mr. Istchenko: So the department did meet with those people and have those discussions?

Hon. Ms. Frost: When we go through this process of regulatory changes in the Yukon, we want to clearly work through the regulatory processes and structures that are established for us. In this instance, it would have gone through that regulatory chain, and that would have been through the RRCs and, of course, through the Fish and Wildlife Management Board. The Fish and Wildlife Management Board has an obligation to go out and work with the communities. The recommendations that come back — our expectation is that the Fish and Wildlife Management Board would have gone through that exercise and that process, and we certainly want to ensure that we consult with all of the affected parties.

Mr. Istchenko: On to a new question here — Tuesday, March 20, 2018, in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* in Alaska, I was reading a report and it got sent to me by the Wild Sheep Foundation. It was online. I saw it on the Internet.

“Bacteria found in the wild Alaska sheep, goats for first time causes concern” — and the minister probably is a little bit privy to understand a little bit about what is called *M. ovi*. There is a long name for it — I am not going to say it in the House because I will probably say it wrong — but it was found in sheep killed last year by hunters. The bacteria was also found in wild goats in the Kenai Peninsula.

I know that this is a huge concern for the Wild Sheep Foundation and the Wild Sheep Foundation had sent a letter to the minister and in the letter — I will read a bit of it. It says, “I have reached out to both the Director of Wildlife and Deputy

Minister of Environment over concerns related to government's action, or rather inaction, on matters related to wild sheep management.”

It goes on to say, “As the minister responsible, I'm sure you are aware of the threats to Yukon's wild sheep and the need to actively address these potential threats with whatever resources are available.”

I know that the foundation was a little bit disappointed — they say in their letter further — and I quote: “Despite our failed attempts to engage with senior management, YWSF is not reliant upon the Department of Environment to take the lead in wild sheep conservation.” They have got a project committee that is active at working with their partners in neighbouring jurisdictions on this matter.

They think it is important in creating “... transparency, inclusivity and participation requires an honest effort by government ...” They put this in here and I believe them too. I know that the Department of Environment has some concerns. There are huge concerns from the renewable resources councils and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. The department has said that they have adopted the recommendations of the wild sheep working group, so I have some questions about this.

Have conditions been placed on agricultural land applications in wild sheep habitat? Have funds been provided to offset the costs of preventive measures to avoid contact with domestic sheep or goats? Has information been developed and shared in wild sheep habitat? So has it been shared with farmers, shared with hunters and shared with just the on-the-land enthusiasts?

The department encourages the reporting of close or potential contact between wild and domestic — have there been any reports? Does the department know how many domestic sheep we have in the Yukon?

To add to that, I will throw this in there because I have done a little bit of research. I had the opportunity in Montana to have a great discussion with their fish and wildlife people about them having to cull a complete mountain of sheep. There are a lot of programs out there in British Columbia — there are different tests, some draft regulations in places, some fencing, there are some huge experts, such as Dr. Thomas Besser from Washington State, I think population data and habitat conservation funds to work at this — so I am just wondering, with those questions, if there is a framework now? Are there going to be new regulations coming forward? Could the minister comment a little bit on that please?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The Yukon government has also received the letter and we have seen the social media posts and the news releases. We want to just assure the member opposite that we are doing the jurisdictional scan across the country to look at scientific assessments and notifications that have come out around reports, taking best practices forward in the mention of various assessments and tools that are there for us.

We are committed to putting the measures in place to ensure we protect our wild sheep population. That's really essential. With the Government of Yukon taking action to

keep domestic sheep separate from wild sheep, that's clearly our priority. We want to ensure that we continue to test as we move on, trying to put some management measures in place to protect our wild sheep population.

We are aware of the potential disease threat with domestic sheep or goats that come into contact with wild thimblehorn sheep populations, as explained with the situation in Alaska. To date, we are not aware of any pneumonia outbreaks in thimblehorn sheep in Yukon, and the science remains inconclusive about risks of disease transfer between domestic and wild sheep or goats. There is still education required and direct communication with farmers is essential and really important.

The first time this came to our attention, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources with the Department of Environment were working hard to ensure we still allow the farmers the right to keep their domestic sheep, but we also have a fundamental obligation to protect those species that have been here for a long time in the Yukon. There are pressures, and we want to detect where those pressures are, as we do have a relatively small population in Yukon.

With respect to specific numbers, I'm not sure I can answer that very detailed information. I'll have to go back and see if we can get that from the department, but we do know that we don't have a large population and we want to protect the populations that we do have. It's difficult to quantify, but we do know there's a risk. Due to the geographic separation of wild sheep in the Yukon, the first assessment is low risk because there's no domestic sheep in some of these wild places. We're trying to put emphasis on where the pressures are right now, and that's in some of the centres where there are domestic sheep kept in proximity to wild sheep.

We'll continue to talk to our Alaskan counterparts about their findings and monitor the situation. As I understand it, that is continuing to evolve as they do their scientific assessments — looking at the biology around that. Exploring options for policy and regulatory solutions to mitigate the risk on the population is really important and we will continue to do that. We are committed to doing that. It's really important for us to work with our partners in the agricultural industry and educate them as we find new information that becomes available, so that they are aware.

We had a facilitated workshop here in the city on February 24 to talk about the care and management of healthy sheep and goats. From my understanding, the workshop was very well-attended. We had folks here from the Wild Sheep Foundation and veterinarians from British Columbia and, of course, our own chief veterinarian officer. They noted that in March this year, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game issued that press release. We are clearly interested in what evolves there because that will set some precedents, as it is not something that is unique to this area or to their area. We are curious to know as we evolve — we want, through a jurisdictional scan and direct input on the assessments that are happening, to tie it into our management approaches.

Mr. Istchenko: I don't think I got an answer to a couple questions, so I will just ask them again. Have there

been conditions placed on agricultural land applications and wild sheep habitat? The other one was: Can the minister expand a little bit — she mentioned information or education — on what is being developed and shared, and who is it being shared with when it comes to wild sheep habitat and the issue that we are discussing?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With the limitations or restrictions around access and perhaps farming of domestic sheep, as the applications proceed, they would go through the YESAA process. We would then provide direct input on that. If we come into a situation where there is a direct threat, then clearly, that would be noted. I would like to emphasize how important it is that we continue to work with the Agriculture branch on potential risks as they evolve. This is kind of a new initiative, as I understand it. It is something that has come to our attention as of late, and we want to make sure that we track it very closely. I understand from my support staff that the four areas that we are most notably interested in are: British Columbia, Northwest Territories, our own area and Alaska. It is really about the north and the thimblehorn sheep in this area, and reaching out and making sure that we continue to do the work that we are required to do to protect our wild sheep, while still allowing domestic sheep — and for farmers to grow their crops and follow through on their commitments to their industry.

Mr. Istchenko: Can the minister comment on an issue that arose in the House earlier this week about the reappointment of a member to the Alsek Renewable Resources Council?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I wasn't here — I was on the road — but I understand that there was a petition to appoint a member to the Alsek Renewable Resources Council. The appointment had expired, so we would go through the proper channels in which to proceed with appointments. I would say that the process would be followed through as we have designed it — the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and through appointments to boards and committees — and we would run it through that process.

Mr. Istchenko: Can the minister please outline where the increase of over \$200,000 is being spent within the ADM's office in the Department of Environment?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm hoping that this is the right section to respond to the question. The increase of \$288,000, or three percent of the overall budget — I'm suspecting that this is what we're referring to — in the main estimates, is primarily due to a funding submission on the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, and it was a renewal on the financial transfer agreement between the federal government and Yukon government to implement and manage that agreement. We saw an increased submission there of an additional \$170,000 from Canada for *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* projects, and particularly the WMAC, or the Wildlife Management Advisory Council. That's the council that is responsible for the North Slope, and that's directly adjacent to the Ivvavik and Vuntut national parks. There is a moratorium on staking in that area. There is a moratorium for some 40 years through the WMAC arrangement and working through the

Government of Yukon, and, subsequently, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Really, I think the objective there is to provide the support to the Inuvialuit partners — so the remainder of the changes in salary and benefits for incumbents and a reduction of \$50,000 to the Climate Change Secretariat, which more or less aligns with the four-year agreement with Canada.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank you for the answer there. This year, \$8,000 is being allocated to the Wildlife Management Institute. Can the minister explain the Yukon's relationship with the institute?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The net increase for this area — we see, as noted, that \$8,000 was set aside for wildlife management to the Wildlife Management Institute, and that was directly associated with the new lynx study program.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that.

That finalizes my questions. I will leave the minister something to ponder shortly, but before I sit down and let the Member for Tahini-Kopper King ask some questions — Mr. Speaker, I fundamentally believe that our local knowledge, our traditional knowledge in the traditional territories — which is the whole Yukon Territory — and the local resources councils, Fish and Wildlife Management Board, our organizations like the Yukon Trappers Association, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, the Wild Sheep Foundation and all those local hunters and outdoor enthusiasts are fundamental in the management of our animal and fish species. I fundamentally agree that we need to start looking at managing our animal populations and start doing a better job of managing our animal populations. I will leave it at that.

I thank the staff for their time today.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I just want to thank the member opposite for their pitch around wildlife conservation and the efforts around wildlife conservation, conservation management and the fundamental principles around co-management, taking into consideration local traditional knowledge and practices and tying that into contemporary measures or scientific measures around co-management efforts. That is my belief as well, so thank you for that feedback.

Ms. White: I thank the Member for Kluane. Welcome to the officials and, of course, the minister. I think I should say that you're lucky today because I think my iPad from 2011 has just died. Instead of having all my departments online that I was ready to reference, I am electronics-free right now.

I am going to start with the paper that I have in front of me. There was a report released on September 18, 2017 from the Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner around an ATIPP request at the Department of Environment. The report is 104 pages long. There were a lot of fairly scathing recommendations in there. I want to know if the department has responded. Has there been a review of previous ATIPP requests? How will they deal with ATIPP requests in the future?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The environmental ATIPP request that the member opposite is speaking of — many pages — we did receive the report from the commissioner. All of the recommendations that were brought back were implemented in the department. I would anticipate that any of those recommendations that are brought back — we want to ensure we follow through on them in the future and, if there are further ATIPP requests, we would similarly follow through with that process.

Ms. White: Has there been an audit or review of the previous ATIPP requests as to whether or not they also met the recommendations of the Information and Privacy Commissioner?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The ATIPP request that was received was very specific to private information, so I would be hesitant to provide any of that information here, other than to say that, as the recommendations come forward to us to seek and make improvements, I want to assure the member opposite that those are things that we would certainly take under advisement to ensure we are making fundamental changes required in the department regarding ATIPP requests as they come in.

I would also just note that we have an obligation to accept all of the recommendations and make best efforts to implement them.

Ms. White: I think there was a misunderstanding with my question. It didn't actually pertain to the 104-page document or that ATIPP request. It was about previous ATIPP requests — as to whether or not the department has taken a look at the requests that they have received and as to whether or not they have been audited and reviewed to make sure they were meeting the recommendations of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Hon. Ms. Frost: My understanding is that the request was a fairly unique request and that the recommendations really wouldn't apply — that we are aware of — to any other ATIPP requests.

Ms. White: Excellent. I did mean to start off with a compliment, as it turns out, on my sticky note. I wanted to just acknowledge that the campground map has been updated to include wheelchair access. I really appreciate it. I look forward to the new website where, hopefully, we will be able to click on that map, it will expand, and you won't have to download a different version and it will be less complicated. It took me quite awhile to actually be able to read the writing.

It turns out that, as I get older, Mr. Chair, it is harder to read the fine print on the computer screen.

I did want to start off with that because it was an issue that we have discussed many times before — not necessarily with this minister, but with previous ministers. Congratulations — the campground map is very nice now. I appreciate that, when people are looking for accessibility, now it says which campgrounds wheelchairs will be able to get into — not just for parking, but for camping purposes, day-use areas, outhouses and all the rest of it. I appreciate that.

When we were debating the Chair's motion to support the *Final Recommended Peel Watershed Regional Land Use*

Plan, I brought up the action plan for the woodland caribou by the federal government with questions as to whether or not the Yukon government would be required to do any kind of actions as per the recommendations. Within the Peel area, the boreal woodland caribou are kind of in the upper right corner. I just wanted to know if we had any responsibility under this plan.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am always happy to talk about the Peel because it is something that is very dear to me. I spent many years on that, so I am really happy to talk about it.

Looking at the motion to support the *Final Recommended Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*, clearly we have a commitment, and we will ensure that we follow through on the commitment. We know that the boreal caribou are threatened, and it has come up in meetings between Minister McKenna and me. In February, Minister McLeod and I met with Minister McKenna to talk about our northern territories and the boreal caribou and species at risk. It is really important because, right now, we are seeing the Porcupine caribou herd growing and we are seeing other populations drastically declining. The concern, obviously, is around protecting the habitat and the jurisdiction. That means that we need to work in partnership around habitat protection with Canada, because, if the boreal caribou finds its way into the species at risk legislation, then we want to ensure that we follow through on that commitment.

On the weekend, we met with our partners on the Porcupine caribou, and the boreal caribou as part of the conversation. I think it was about two percent of the Peel — maybe I am wrong on that — but something like 15,000 square kilometres in one corner of the Peel is occupied by — and don't quote me on that. I will get you the exact numbers and the exact information.

It is actually not 15,000 — the population range lies in 8,982 square kilometres in Yukon near the Peel watershed. I would be happy to share the map with the member opposite. There are not a lot of boreal caribou, which makes it really important for us to put in place the protective measures. There are about 100 animals that venture into the Yukon, and we want to ensure that the first thing that we do before we start implementing the Peel plan is that we protect them, because we have an obligation to do that by way of the federal directives — and our partners.

We will work to ensure that we put in place the protective measures around that boreal caribou. It might mean some minor adjustments to the Peel plan, because when we say we're going to implement the Peel plan as recommended, we now know we need to make some minor adjustments to ensure that the boreal caribou are protected and their habitat is protected, which is this 8,983 kilometres in part of the Peel land use area.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. It's good to know, because when we were talking about it on a Wednesday, there wasn't an opportunity to actually know how it was going to be addressed or if it needed to be addressed.

I have asked in previous years about the *Inuvialuit Settlement Region Polar Bear Joint Management Plan 2017*.

My understanding is that the Yukon is included in that, so it's between Yukon and NWT. I know there were previously concerns that Yukon maybe wasn't quite as active a partner as we should have been, and I was just looking for an update.

Hon. Ms. Frost: It's an interesting subject in that, as we were having our deliberations around the international Porcupine caribou agreement last weekend with the partners — Canada, Northwest Territories, the WMAC under the Inuvialuit agreement, the GNWT and the Gwich'in Tribal Council — we spoke to our Canadian partners around a co-management measure and we talked about polar bears as part of that discussion, because they also occupy these critical spaces.

We had Canada there because they were actively involved on the international stage to discuss polar bear management and the habitat assessments that they did. They were using that as a basis for our conversation on the caribou management file, because they're looking at it as positive in the sense that they were able to make some progress with the United States government.

I don't have the specific details on that, other than being on the surface — informed based on my conversations with Basile van Havre. He's with CWS. I would be happy to provide more details to the member opposite, as I don't have that at my fingertips at the moment.

Ms. White: I have had to go to a smaller electronic device than before. In that *Inuvialuit Settlement Region Polar Bear Joint Management Plan 2017*, on page 7 in section 2.2.7, it talks about the Government of Yukon. It says, "... the Minister of Environment, is responsible for the conservation and management of Yukon's polar bears, in accordance with relevant legislation and agreements. Environment Yukon takes the lead role in ensuring management and protection of polar bears and their habitat, and coordinating harvest management within Yukon."

I just wanted to know if the minister could expand on what exactly Environment Yukon's role is and how we're doing that.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thanks for the really great question. We have an obligation under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, but under the self-government agreement of the Vuntut Gwitchin, we have an obligation for the North Slope, and we have not really historically done anything with that area. We know that we have pushed forward to implement some really special areas in North Yukon under the North Yukon process. We protected the Old Crow Flats, where we have polar bears. We protected the Vuntut National Park. As well, we worked with the Inuvialuit on the Ivvavik National Park.

I guess it would be northwest of the parks that we have in the Yukon, there is a really key habitat area for polar bears. It was my understanding, under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* — we worked with the WMAC and the conservation groups in the NWT. They take the lead role on that, because that's their key traditional use area.

The agreement allows for that transaction to happen. This very summer, we are going to meet with WMAC and we have committed to doing that, because it's essential that we put

some measures around co-managing that region and starting to have that very conversation around what we can do now.

It's not so much about the polar bears — it really, I think, branches off also to say that, as climate changes, we're seeing now that 26 percent of the time, the Porcupine caribou calving grounds are situated right in the heart of that area. So that was really an enlightening conversation for me to, I guess, get educated on — polar bears and how closely they are linked to a co-management measure with caribou. I didn't realize that. My whole career has focused on caribou management and I quickly realized that polar bears had to be really fundamental in that conversation.

I'm happy to say that the Department of Environment is assessing that specific area and we will continue to have that conversation with the Inuvialuit. In fact, we are proposing to meet with them in the summer — I think it's in June or July that they are having their next quarterly meeting. That will be a subject of discussion.

Thank you for the really great question.

Ms. White: Sometimes, the answer might just be to make sure that no one goes into the area. That is totally, perfectly acceptable as well.

The *Yukon Water Strategy and Action Plan* — to be perfectly honest — was a little contentious in here in previous years because a lot of the things, the priorities — it is almost more like they are statements — but sometimes I can't figure out how we would possibly measure them.

Anyway, so the *Yukon Water Strategy and Action Plan* — between 2014 and 2017 — \$3.35 million was put toward getting that going. My question is: Right now, how is implementation going? How do we measure whether or not it is working? Have there been any struggles to date and have there been any successes?

I don't need to know about the \$95,000; that was in the budget briefing. I do want to know more as to whether or not — not financially, so much — well, somewhat financially — but, mostly, I want to know if we are able to implement what that plan says.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I have to admit that I have not educated myself on the broad context of where that came from, but I will do that. I can say that we did proceed with the wetlands policy framework agreement — not framework agreement but a policy — and that was to provide Yukoners with an opportunity to look at a management measure around the wetlands. My understanding is that derived from or came straight out of the Yukon water strategy and the action plan and the implementation of that.

Since 2014, a large part of the Water Resources branch work has been dedicated to implementation of water for nature and water for people in the Yukon water strategy through that action plan.

I know that time is of the essence, so I am going to try to hit some of your points. If I don't get to it, I would be happy to provide you with that after session.

The strategy really lays out the values and principles. We know that there were six primary areas and 55 action items. Part of that is to ensure that, as we move forward, we

implement those action items — the 55 action items. I won't be able to go through those in specific details for you right now, but I would be happy to provide a summary.

I'll note that we are working on the Yukon wetlands policy. I think that's really exciting in that we're now working at trying to protect the special wetland areas that we have. I know we have done that very well in North Yukon, but there are some other areas — we did that in the Nisutlin wildlife sanctuary, but there are still some sensitive areas and habitat that we have yet to protect. I will be happy to provide that and so thank you for the questions.

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

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Frost that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 17, entitled *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 206, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2018-19*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

The following legislative returns were tabled April 12, 2018:

34-2-123

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to budget debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 206, *First Appropriation Act 2018-19* (Streicker)

34-2-124

Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 206, *First Appropriation Act 2018-19* (Mostyn)