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HANSARD

Thursday, April 27, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

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

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

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Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
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Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 27, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Day of Mourning

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite you to join me in an exercise. Honourable members, I would invite you as well. Visitors in the gallery, I hope you will also participate.

I would like you to turn and look at someone you know nearby. If you don't know anyone here today, think of a friend or a co-worker you have. Think of something unique you know about them. Maybe it's just their name; maybe it's their favourite hobby, the way they take their coffee, or the name of a beloved pet. Think of them in the community playing hockey, volunteering, at the market, biking, or driving to work.

Picture them in their workplace. It's where they spend a lot of time. Imagine them chatting with co-workers, consulting with their boss, enjoying a break, sharing jokes and stories. It is a community within a community for them. They feel valued and important there. Finally, turn your mind to them at home, where they are incredibly loved, irreplaceable — they are cherished. It is a safe place in the warm embrace of their friends and loved ones.

Now imagine them gone forever — stolen from their homes, ripped from their workplace — a community robbed of their contributions. This is what a death in a workplace looks like. It is not a statistic. It is not a number on a sign. It is a cold reality — a sharp shock that ripples across homes, workplaces and into the community at large.

Come tomorrow, there are many people for whom this exercise does not require any imagination. To them, it is all too real. They are the people who have lost someone to a workplace accident, and tomorrow is the National Day of Mourning.

A workplace borrows its people from a family — from a home. It is the responsibility of that workplace to return its people — its workers — to their families in good health and alive every day.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we know that it doesn't always work out that way. Some people never make it home from a workplace they enter. Others do make it home, but will have been contaminated by that workplace. Their suffering will be drawn out over many years and will end with their life cut too short. That's not okay and it cannot continue.

I think it's clear by now that I have risen to pay tribute to the Day of Mourning. I wish I didn't have to. I wish we didn't need a day of mourning, but the truth is that we do. We need it to remember and honour those who have passed too early because of their commitment to a workplace.

The Day of Mourning is about more than that though; it's about learning from the past losses, even as we work to prevent more. It's about the future and how we can shape it together. The spirits of those we've lost remind us to renew our commitment to health and safety in the workplace. That responsibility isn't some heavy burden that each of us carries on our shoulders in isolation though. It's a blanket draped across all of us. Together with our arms, our living breath, we carry the blanket and fight to keep everyone safe, healthy and alive within it. It's our shared responsibility to make sure that each of us — all of us — get home safe from work every day.

Please, I would ask you to turn to that person near to you again or recall the person you were thinking about earlier. They're still there. Let's agree to work together to keep it that way. Make this promise: You and I will keep each other safe. That is our pledge to one another. It's the pledge of the Day of Mourning.

The Day of Mourning ceremony will be held tomorrow at its new location near the workers memorial in Shipyards Park. It begins at 12:30 p.m. I would encourage everyone to attend. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to acknowledge the Yukon Federation of Labour President Justin Lemphers, Vice-President Lee Tanguay and Treasurer Sue Christianson. Thank you so much for coming here today.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to April 28, the Day of Mourning and to recognize and remember all those who went to work and did not make it home to their families or were severely injured on the job.

The effects of workplace injuries or fatalities are far-reaching. By coming together each year to honour the lives lost or changed by workplace injury, we not only pay tribute to those people but to their families and loved ones. At this time, we're able to come together to exemplify our commitment to the issues of health and safety in the workplace and beyond.

The Day of Mourning reminds us of just how important it is to enforce and to follow all health and safety regulations set out in the workplace. To be committed to safety not only ensures that you are working to protect, not only your own well-being, but the well-being of your co-workers, your friends, family and everyone around you.

April 28, as the National Day of Mourning, has roots that go back to 1914, when the first workers' compensation act was passed in Canada. The date was originally passed as a motion in 1984 at a Canadian Labour Congress convention and legislated in 1991 in Parliament as Bill C-223, the *Workers Mourning Day Act*. Since then, April 28 has been recognized by organizations around the world to remember

workers killed, injured, disabled or afflicted with illness due to workplace hazards.

According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, the most recent statistics show us that, in 2015, 852 workplace deaths were recorded in Canada. Over 232,000 claims were made and accepted for lost time due to injury or disease, and these are only the people whose injuries are reported and accepted.

I sincerely believe that if we continue to draw attention to workplace health and safety and the importance to adhering to safety regulations, and being aware on the job, these numbers can fall. The fact is that there are so many situations in which fatalities and injuries could have been avoided if safety regulations were followed and taken seriously.

I commend those who work safely and diligently to promote vigilance in the workplace and I encourage everyone to be aware of your surroundings, your actions and to mind the regulations that are in place to keep you and those around you safe.

One of the best ways to honour those who have been killed or injured in the workplace is to prevent another fatality or injury from happening. Be safe, and help to ensure you and your co-workers return safe to your families and loved ones each and every day and work together to protect one another from harm.

Ms. White: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to treat April 28 as the National Day of Mourning for workers injured or killed on the job. I hate these tributes. I hate that every year I stand up and I try to do it again, and I hate that I can't make it through. The words — they ring hollow. At this point in time, I feel like I say everything more than once. Having lost three people I cared deeply about to workplace accidents, I've claimed the Day of Mourning as my own. This isn't a day like any other that we mark in this House. We aren't celebrating. We aren't offering our congratulations. Today we remember. We mourn a loss — our collective losses.

April is the month of transition from winter to spring, from darkness to light, the migration of swans, the smells of spring and the first crocus — the month most often associated with renewals. For many, April is a joyful time. But April is a hard month for thousands of Canadians who live with the loss of a loved one taken long before their time in an instant that they couldn't even begin to imagine or understand, because it is in April that we remember the everyday people who headed to work and never returned home.

The fact that this gathering happens — even at all — fills me with rage. How is it that in this day and age — that in this time of technology and advancements in knowledge — good people still continue to lose their lives every year and, in Canada, almost every day at work? I'm frustrated that despite our best efforts, our continued pledges to do better, accidents still happen — worse yet, that many of them were preventable tragedies. The tragic truth is that every year I attend the ceremony, more and more people are attending. Now not only do I see the familiar faces of people who are mourning past

losses, but now I see the faces of people who are living through recent tragedies. I'm grateful that for the first time tomorrow, we won't be gathering in the lobby around a tired fountain, but we'll be gathering at the permanent memorial — a place that family and friends can visit at any time, a place for quiet reflection next to the river. It's a physical reminder for the community to nurture a culture of safety, a reminder to be responsible for one another. It's a symbol that shows how deeply we value safety and how much we miss those we lost.

But the Day of Mourning needs to be more than just a chance to gather to commemorate our losses and more than a day for sorrow because we need to do better. We need more than promises to keep each other safe. We owe it to each other, but we especially owe it to those who get left behind.

In recognition of National Volunteer Week

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

On behalf of the government, I want to recognize National Volunteer Week, which runs from April 23 to 29 this year. Across the country, 13.3 million Canadians contribute 2.1 billion hours, the equivalent of 1.1 billion full-time jobs. Last night, the City of Whitehorse held its 2016 Volunteer of the Year reception. The City of Whitehorse values the importance of volunteers and their contributions to our community. It celebrates and publicly acknowledges outstanding volunteers by providing an opportunity for citizens to recognize and appreciate volunteers who have made significant impacts to their organizations. The city annually invites organizations to nominate an individual as a candidate for this honour. The nominee should be someone who has made a significant contribution to the organization or to the community as a whole. The winner of the 2016 award is the president of the Porter Creek Community Association, Mr. Jeff Marynowski. Jeff is in the gallery today and I want to publicly congratulate him on receiving this award. I also want to personally thank him for all of the work he has done over the course of many years on behalf of the residents of Porter Creek.

Just before I finish, at the last AGM for the Porter Creek Community Association — and I might be off and I apologize to Jeff if I am — I think it has been almost a decade that he has been the president and on something like 10 subcommittees, whether it is working on crime prevention, trails, garden projects, recreation projects — the list goes on and on.

These are people who build community and certainly make our community a better place.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute and extend our sincere gratitude to Yukon's diverse and motivated community of volunteers across the territory. Through countless hours of volunteer service, they are able to positively affect the communities they live in and provide

services across the Yukon. This year, April 23 to 29 marks National Volunteer Week.

This week, we celebrate the local volunteers who donate their time, their minds, their muscle and their effort to enrich the lives of Yukon at a local level and to provide important services to Yukon communities. Without volunteers, Yukon communities would not be as safe, dynamic and culturally rich as they are today. Thank you to the many volunteers who spend hours helping vulnerable people navigate our communities to help ensure that children eat solid and wholesome meals at school, who help people learn new skills or talk to someone and simply be a kind ear at a time of need.

I would like to acknowledge the many NGOs and service organizations across the territory — the people who volunteer time to sit on boards and committees of the Yukon government to help inform and advise the course of the territory and the many parents who donate time on top of other commitments to ensure their children, teachers and schools have the support they need to carry out sporting events, fundraisers and everything else that requires helping hands at school.

We would like to as well thank everyone who dedicates companionship to seniors in Yukon communities and asks for nothing more in return than a smile and a story, and to the many community members who bring a wealth of skills and passion to annual events, festivals and celebrations and bring Yukon together throughout the year, without whose efforts these events would not be possible.

Volunteer work makes a difference in all of our lives, whether we realize it or not. Here in the Yukon, we rely on volunteer work in several areas. Volunteer emergency personnel provide hours on call and in training to keep Yukon communities safe. In fact, EMS services and fire departments would not be possible in most Yukon communities without the dedicated services of our fellow Yukoners who are volunteering their time.

These volunteers are also people who are usually busy with full-time jobs and other commitments, but they give their time to deliver vital services to their fellow citizens. They keep our communities safe by providing ambulance, fire, and search and rescue services across the Yukon. They contribute to the overall well-being and security of Yukoners. Firefighters keep our homes and communities safe, and EMS volunteers, along with paramedics and Yukon EMS, literally save lives and respond to other health emergencies, and they are there when we need them the most.

I would like to acknowledge that there are hundreds of people who volunteer for EMS and fire across the territory, including within Yukon communities and within the Whitehorse periphery, including my riding of Lake Laberge. These services, in fact, are there because of these volunteers.

I would like to especially mention the two fire departments in my riding — Hootalinqua and Ibex — which have already responded to two fires within the last week, including a large one last night that could have spread throughout the community, had the Hootalinqua Fire Department not responded as quickly as they did.

I would like to acknowledge as well Search and Rescue and note that many other areas that are not the critical emergency services but are also very important to the lives and well-being of our community include volunteers who contribute time and energy to sport and recreation — from coaching hockey to volunteering to ensuring major events such as softball and fastball tournaments can be held. Whether volunteers are helping to save lives, save homes or create sport and recreational opportunities, they demonstrate enthusiasm and an admirable willingness to help their fellow Yukoners.

Sport and recreation volunteers contribute to our health and our well-being as well as help seniors stay active and compete in major events like the Canada 55+ Games and, of course, provide recreational opportunities to everyone from seniors to young children. Volunteers support Team Yukon during events like the Arctic Winter Games, Canada Winter Games, and North American Indigenous Games. Without the dedicated support of these volunteers, Team Yukon would not be as successful as it has been and is today.

Volunteers also make it possible for the Yukon to host one-of-a-kind events like the Klondike Trail of '98 Road Relay, the Yukon River Trail Marathon and the Yukon Quest.

Volunteers in rural communities work tirelessly to provide recreational opportunities and help to build and foster healthy communities. There are so many aspects of volunteerism in our community; I've named but a few. Together it is all of these volunteers who are part of the fibre that weaves together the amazing fabric of the Yukon.

Again, personally and on behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Yukon volunteers who provide all of these benefits to their fellow Yukoners.

I would also like to note that, at the Commissioner's Levee this year, the Honourable Commissioner Doug Phillips handed out Governor General's Awards to a long list of volunteers from the Yukon as well as his own awards. While I want to congratulate all of those volunteers — I had the opportunity to attend the levee and congratulate many of them in person — I would also like to specifically acknowledge two constituents of mine who received Governor General's Awards. Mike Blumenschein received a volunteer award for his years of contribution to developing the Yukon agriculture sector, and Bob Atkinson, the fire chief of Ibex Valley, received an award for his decades of service as a volunteer firefighter. If I'm not mistaken, it has been 15 years as Ibex Valley fire chief and over 20 years of volunteering as a volunteer firefighter. Thank you again to all of our volunteers across the territory who help make Yukon the place it is today.

Ms. Hanson: I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party to pay tribute to volunteers throughout Yukon. Volunteers are indeed the lifeblood of our communities, and the impact to their time and work is felt by everyone. Volunteers build communities. They coach our kids, they protect our communities from fire and emergencies, they search for the lost, they entertain us, and they feed the hungry.

Government may offer up the framework of the territory but it's the thousands of volunteers who fill in the gaps. I'm pretty confident that every member here has volunteered at a community event within the last month. We listened yesterday as members spoke of the volunteers who brought us to this Legislature and thanked them. Quite frankly, we wouldn't be here without those volunteers.

For many years I have had a simple line drawing on the walls of my office sent to me by a friend who was volunteering with CUSO in Nigeria. That simple line drawing says: "What we can't do alone, we can do together." To me that captures the essence of why volunteers and volunteering is so important to all of our communities.

I just want to thank all of those people in Yukon, young and old, who volunteer a little or a lot. Thank you for making this a better place for all Yukon.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to introduce a couple of guests who are here today and encourage us to welcome them. First of all, Mr. Ben Asquith — he is the CEO of Da Daghay, the Ta'an Kwäch'an development corporation. Recently Ben helped to organize and put on wildfire training called "Beat the Heat". He and the other First Nations are doing great work there. We showed up on Friday and met some of the crews and it was terrific, and I would like to welcome him.

Also I would like to welcome Ms. Bev Buckway. She is of course the past Mayor of the City of Whitehorse and right now is the executive director for the Association of Yukon Communities. I am very pleased to get to work alongside her.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming Connor Whitehouse to the gallery, as well as Jonas Smith, the executive director of the Klondike Placer Miners' Association.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: I quite often drive home to Teslin at night, but on the nights that I do stay here in Whitehorse, I stay next door to a fellow who has joined us here today, Mr. Ranjit Sarin. Thank you for being here.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to welcome to the gallery someone I'm very proud to call my friend, Laura Cabott. It's fitting that she's here because she is a volunteer extraordinaire and has dedicated the majority of her career to giving voice to residential school survivors. Please welcome her.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I rise today to recognize a friend and former colleague,

Mr. Andrew Robulack. Among his many talents, he writes, he's a tech guru and he's also one of our dedicated civil servants. I would like to welcome him.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask everybody in the Legislative Assembly to help me in welcoming to the gallery the president of the Liberal Party, Mr. Devin Bailey, but also — and more importantly — two amazing Dawson constituents, Devin's mother, Diana Brooks, and her partner, Pat.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 200: *Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 200 agreed to

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 201 agreed to

Bill No. 3: *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2017* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 3, entitled *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2017*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 3, entitled *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2017*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 3 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the government to release the costs to date and projected completed costs for the demolition of the old F.H. Collins high school.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: North American Free Trade Agreement

Mr. Kent: Yesterday, Canadians heard that the Trump administration was considering pulling out of NAFTA. Later, we learned that there was talk after interventions by our Prime Minister and the Mexican President of quick action to renegotiate the agreement. We understand that earlier this week, the Prime Minister held a conference call with all premiers to outline Canada's proposed response on this as well as the softwood lumber dispute and to seek their input.

I have a question for the Premier as to what input he provided to the Prime Minister about this important issue and can he also explain to Yukoners what he sees as key issues for Yukon related to NAFTA and the potential US exit or renegotiation of that agreement, as this is Canada's most important trade agreement?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I did not attend that phone conversation. We were here in the Legislative Assembly. Our department is working on preparing for the COF agreements that we're going to be talking about in Washington coming up in June. We will prepare a briefing for the opposition on all topics related to NAFTA and other agreements that we are going to talk about with our counterparts on a federal basis.

Really important to Yukon, I will say specifically, are conversations about Shakwak funding — definitely something that we want to put a lot of emphasis on. We all know that there is only \$6 million left in that fund and depending upon the amount of paving that we do on that road, the costs can be up to \$15 million. So this is another further pressure on our budgetary considerations into the future and we want to make sure that's first and foremost on our minds when we meet with the federal counterparts in Washington in a few months.

Mr. Kent: I thank the Premier for that answer. I appreciate the response.

What we've also learned is that in response to what we're seeing as a growing trade war between Canada and the United States, the federal government has announced they are considering pursuing a new free trade agreement with China. This will build on the *Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement*, or FIPA, that Prime Minister Harper signed in 2014. Yukon has experienced considerable economic benefits from Chinese investment, yet some Yukoners have expressed concerns about the FIPA.

Can the Premier please explain to the House his government's position when it comes to the Canada-China FIPA?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I really do appreciate the question from the member opposite. China is having a bigger and bigger important role as far as the fiscal matters in Yukon. We all know there are contributions for the mining industry, whether with Selwyn Chihong or other previous mining initiatives. But we want to take a look, not only just in the mining industry, but we want to actually diversify the economy as well in connections with our country partnerships with China when it comes to tourism.

As the members opposite would know, 2018 is going to be, in China, the year of Canada-China tourism. This emerging market of about 250 million millennials from China is one of the most sought-after markets in the entire world. We have only scratched the surface when it comes to attracting the tourism potential from that market. Just yesterday, I sat down with Madam Liu, from the Consulate-General of China. We had a fantastic conversation about all things involving Canada-China relations and how we specifically in Yukon — we want to make it past the number seven mark. Currently we're seventh as far as destinations for Chinese individuals coming into Canada for tourism endeavours and we want to work in partnership with our counterparts in China to make sure that we get a few rungs up that ladder, especially when it comes to aurora borealis viewing in the Yukon to stimulate winter and cusp-season tourism initiatives.

Mr. Kent: Watching the happenings in Ottawa, I have been very encouraged that, when it comes to the trade file, there is bipartisan cooperation between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party and we extend the offer to the Premier any expertise or experience we have on this side of the House with respect to Yukon's role to assist, whether it's for the United States, China or other trade agreements.

My final supplementary is for the Minister of Economic Development, wondering if he has spoken with his federal counterpart to explain what Yukon's interests are with regard to a potential Canada-China free trade agreement and what role the Yukon will play as these negotiations begin.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I know this question was for the Minister of Economic Development, but I just want to thank the member opposite for his commitment to work with us. I know the Member for Kluane has extensive knowledge when it comes to the Shakwak file, as does the House Leader for the Official Opposition.

On that, we had some great conversations just yesterday with business interests from China. They want to take a look at our airports. They want to take a look at Whitehorse and they want to see it as a place to actually do more cargo transports from China into Canada. It turns out that our airport here is closer to some of the Chinese cities and also has better weather than Abbotsford or some areas down in BC.

Absolutely I really appreciate from the opposition their willingness to work with this government when it comes to international relations, and we will definitely take you up on your offer.

Question re: China-Yukon trade relations

Mr. Istchenko: As we know, it has been widely reported that exploratory free trade talks are underway this week as Canadians and Chinese officials visit one another's countries to discuss what a potential agreement might look like.

Mr. Speaker, when the Harper government negotiated the free trade agreement with Europe, they allowed and encouraged an unprecedented role for provinces and territories to have a seat at the table during those negotiations.

Has the Yukon government been formally offered a seat at the table for these free trade negotiations with China? If they haven't, has the Minister of Economic Development spoken to his federal counterpart to request a seat at the table to ensure that Yukon's interests are represented?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that probably the most successful meetings that we've had to date were during Yukon Days. That is when the Premier and I had an opportunity — we were invited to the embassy in Ottawa. The new ambassador was not in place, so it was the chargé d'affaires and so we met with him. We certainly had discussions at that point in time, just about the opportunities that are here in the Yukon.

As for the country-to-country negotiations, what I've had the opportunity to do is to keep in touch with the minister in charge of that. Certainly some topics I can share when we talk about softwood lumber. We're in a unique position here in the Yukon with an exemption, but certainly some of the other internal negotiations — it would be best to let these negotiations country-to-country lead before we have larger discussions here in the Legislature.

Mr. Istchenko: We know that these issues are evolving quickly, but there are serious implications for the Yukon relating to trade with China. Yukoners know that we're often an afterthought for the federal government, so we expect, of course, our territorial government to stand up for us and represent our interests — so that mining, tourism and the ICT sector are all significantly impacted by trade and investment agreements and will likely be the key aspects of this potential agreement with China.

When the federal minister calls the Minister of Economic Development back to ask what the Yukon's position is on these matters with respect to the trade deal with China, what will he tell him?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, we will tell him what we will tell every country. Yukon is open for business and we are looking forward to making sure that we increase the partnership on an international basis. Yesterday's conversation that we had with Madam Liu Fei was an eye-opener for me as far as all of the different initiatives that they want to push. We were embracing this new approach and we have made commitments every time — whether it is when the Minister of Economic Development or I, as Premier, or the Minister of Highways and Public Works heads down to Vancouver, we can visit with the office and talk more about some pretty exciting things going on right now. For example, there are some partnerships right now with China and

Air North. There are some exciting programs right now with getting some pilots trained up.

But there are some limitations right now that we need to discuss here in the Yukon. We are behind as far as the business nominee program. There are language requirements here that do not exist anywhere else in Canada. It is an antiquated approach and we need to change that. By changing the regulations and the rules that we currently have in place, we are going to make Yukon much more competitive right across Canada and also more competitive on the international stage.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the Premier for his answer. It is good to see the interest. The Yukon has had a mixed experience with foreign investment from Chinese state-owned enterprises. While foreign direct investment from SOEs offers a significant source of needed investment for our natural resources industry, investment also carries a risk. Will the Minister of Economic Development be advocating for the Yukon to be more open for investment from Chinese state-owned enterprises, or will he be advocating for less access to Chinese investment in our mining industry?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Kluane knows, absolutely it is a sensitive walk. We have had some scenarios before — part of my role as Minister of Economic Development is to take into consideration and defend the rights of Yukoners when it comes to these things. Certainly I don't want to see a scenario where there is an investment and then it leads to challenges for local corporations because of their relationships, lack of payment or things such as that.

I think there are some key areas that we can look at, and the risk portfolio associated with them is less. When I look at things such as tourism, as the Premier has talked to, I think it is a great place for us to start.

When it comes to resource development, we still live in a country where the market is in the private sector and there are going to be relationships that are built. Certainly, there is going to be foreign investment that comes in and there is a place for government and then there is a place where government has to stand back and let private business grow as it should. There are some interesting infrastructure projects that we will have discussions about in this Legislative Assembly and that will potentially have massive impact — good projects. Certainly the people who are coming to the table at the early stage are foreign investors. We are going to have to have those challenging discussions. I am looking forward to actually hearing some wisdom from across the floor — from their experience — to help me try to make those good decisions.

We are open to foreign investment, but we have to make sure that we respect the markets — the free markets — and that we make sure we don't inhibit the ability for this economy to grow, but certainly I don't want to see any Yukoners disrespected because of their business relationships.

Question re: Minimum wage

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, right now Yukon has the lowest minimum wage in the north at a whopping \$11.32 an hour. This is an easy question for the Premier. Does he believe someone earning \$11.32 an hour can survive in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'll talk first about the \$11.32 and maybe we'll tackle more of the member opposite's question in a moment. The Yukon has a program in place under minimum wage where we increase it each year by inflation. So this year we went from — I think it was — \$11.06 or \$11.07, and it has gone up as of April 1 to \$11.32. That keeps us in the fifth position across the country in the 13 jurisdictions. We also have a piece of policy where, if that ever drops down to the sixth position, we would then have a review here in the Legislature on minimum wage.

Currently that's not our intention. We are happy that the wage went up to \$11.32 this year. I will wait for the supplementaries to tackle the other parts of the member opposite's question.

Ms. White: In the last five years in Yukon, minimum wage has gone up by a dollar. The Nunavut minimum wage is at \$13 per hour; the Northwest Territories is at \$12.50. By next year Alberta, where they have substantially lower costs of living, it will be at \$15 an hour. It was not quite a year ago that the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition published a living wage report. A living wage is the amount someone working full-time needs to make to be just above the poverty line.

Through detailed research, the report showed that \$19.12 was a living wage for two parents, each working full-time, supporting two children in Whitehorse. This number is even higher in the communities. This leaves us with a gap of almost \$8 between the existing minimum wage and a living wage that removes someone just above the poverty line.

Does the minister responsible believe it is fair that people working full-time jobs in Yukon are living in poverty?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm not sure I'm going to be able to answer the question as it's posed by the member opposite directly. I don't wish for anyone to be living in poverty. I think that here, as members of this Legislature, we should work to assist all Yukoners to be able to have vibrant and sustainable lives. I don't know that I can give a direct answer the way the question is posed.

On the other hand, when I look cross-jurisdictionally to try to see where our minimum wage is against others, it is true that Nunavut has the highest minimum wage right now. Alberta, which is about to become the highest minimum wage, is currently in the third position across the country. On the other hand, we are in the top tier. We're just below Ontario. I don't know Ontario's rules but, by next year, I anticipate us moving ahead of Ontario.

So yes, there are costs to living here and we appreciate the concerns that are being raised. We're committed to a diverse growing economy that provides good jobs for Yukoners, and this government is committed to ensuring that there's a balanced approach for evaluating the minimum wage in the Yukon and that it takes into account the interest of both employers and their employees.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll make sure that I pass on those statistics for people in line at the Food Bank. People who work full-time jobs should not have to use the Food Bank to put food on their table but, with a minimum wage of \$11.32 an hour, many working Yukoners have no choice but to get assistance to meet their most basic needs.

This is hardly fair and I hope that the Premier and his ministers understand this.

There is good news, however, and that is they have the power to act. The minister doesn't like that people are living in poverty. He has the ability to change that. The minimum wage is more than a dollar higher in the other territories and comparing us to Nova Scotia doesn't make any sense. It will be \$15 an hour in Alberta no later than next year. It's time for action in Yukon.

Will this government follow the lead of the Alberta government and implement a \$15 an hour minimum wage?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: To answer the question directly, no, we are not intending to introduce a \$15 minimum wage and I'm trying to give a straight answer to a straight question.

To the earlier part of the question as to whether we care as ministers or individuals — absolutely, we care. I myself have volunteered on the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition for the past decade now — or maybe nine years, sorry — so I do care about this issue. I do think that we want to live in a society that provides for our citizens to have dignity and the ability to have a decent living. Although the members opposite feel that this number should be higher, it has just gone up and I would like to acknowledge that. I would like to acknowledge that it is not the lowest in the country and that we will continue to work on the issue for all of our citizens through many facets, not just through minimum wage.

Question re: Off-road vehicle use

Ms. White: The Premier will be familiar with this question because I've asked it every spring for the last four years.

In November 2013 the government passed amendments to the *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act* to allow the government to protect environmentally sensitive areas in shoulder seasons from ATV use. Citizens groups and government consultation have identified several endangered and sensitive areas, but so far no changes or protections have been implemented by government. With every passing year of inaction, we are allowing more damage to be done to Yukon's wilderness. This is not something we can repair overnight, if we can repair it at all.

Will the minister move immediately to protect identified sensitive areas during shoulder seasons from ATV use?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to thank the member opposite for her question. It's certainly not that easy to just put something in place and I will explain why.

First and foremost, this has been a hot topic. I know that for the previous minister, and certainly in this role that I'm in, it has always been a hot topic. It's a contentious topic, but the right things have to be done. First and foremost, we have had multiple meetings at the start of the mandate with the

concerned groups on this topic. They have done a tremendous amount of preparation and they have done good work on coming up with different strategies.

Part of our challenge is that we feel that we have to have a broader discussion to do this right. The reason we need to have a broader discussion is because there are different elements to this conversation — absolutely correct, there has been some enormous damage done. It continues to be done in the hinterland.

What we've done is that the Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources just last week met with the Council of Yukon First Nations land committee, because we feel that, if we're going to do this right, there has to be a broad approach.

We need to make sure that we're not usurping chapter 22 rights that are in place — First Nation rights — but at the same time, bringing everybody to the table to come up with a solution.

Ms. White: I can appreciate the minister is new to his job, but this issue is not new and it cannot continue to be put on the backburner. For the last four years, I have raised concerns about the increasing footprint of ATVs that permanently damage environmentally sensitive areas.

The fact is that the vast majority of ATV users are responsible and they care deeply about protecting our wilderness, but a few irresponsible users can cause lasting damages to our environment. The longer we wait — the longer we continue to wait, the worse the damage will be.

Mr. Speaker, will Yukoners have to wait for another spring to go by — another fall, another freeze-up — before protection is put in place for these environmentally sensitive areas that have already been identified?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Once again, we are taking a path where we have all the players at the table so that we can actually work through this to come up with an appropriate solution. You are correct. You are correct — it's a tough one. Nobody wants to come, hit the table, and dig, dig, dig into this, and certainly come up with a solution in the policy points.

There are a lot of things that are in place. Number one — there is no registration, first of all, so you're in a position where you would have certain sectors or areas that were closed off. Part of that would mean that you would want to impose some sort of restriction but yet you don't know who the people are who are driving through those areas are because they don't have even a plate on their vehicle.

Number two — if you sit down with a group that has probably worked the most on this, the first thing they're going to say is that if you have a particular area — not just a high-altitude area, but specific areas — we're then putting pressure on other specific areas.

I can tell you that if anybody's feet are to the fire, they are mine, because it just happens to be that every single person — except for one, I think, on the actual board that oversees this — is my constituent and has certainly talked to me over and over again about it.

On this topic, what we feel we want to do is get it right, and that is to work with the Council of Yukon First Nations

and their lands committee, we're going to work with EMR and we have to work with the outfitters — there are a series of groups — to come up with a solution.

Ms. White: I like that the minister has just opened the door to a conversation about the registration of ORVs because that is one I've also been having for the last number of years.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the department has laid the groundwork — and there is a pun intended there — to protect areas identified as being environmentally sensitive. They have worked really long and hard at this. They moved forward with the last five years of pressure from this side about protecting these areas. The department is aware and has studied the impacts of ATV use on these areas.

This government has also committed to developing a comprehensive ATV management plan for the whole territory, and in 2011 during the election campaign, they answered "yes" to TOYA's question about protection for sensitive areas in the Yukon and then again in 2016.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister take immediate action, because there can be interim protection — it doesn't have to be permanent — to protect environmentally sensitive areas this spring until the ATV management plan is in place for the entire Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, there is not a plan to make a rash decision and to put some pieces in place at this exact time. You need all the blocks in place to build the right program. First of all, we're in a situation where, once again, you and I have just discussed this.

We don't have a way to track the people who are actually going into these areas, so is there going to be a broader discussion about this in the Legislative Assembly? I'll leave that to the minister in charge, but certainly, if it does come forward, I'm sure we'll have a spirited conversation about it and maybe that's the right track to be talking about it. But, over and above that, let's get it right. This is about a conversation with a series of groups. We have not shied away from it. I've had discussions — the Minister of Environment sat with me on this. We've had great discussions with both groups, but it's a broader discussion. Do we take it seriously? Yes. Have I had the individuals who have championed this cause over and over again sit in my office and make a commitment to them that we're going to move on this? Absolutely. That's what we plan to do, but we're going to get it right and we're going to do it with all parties.

Question re: Canada Free Trade Agreement

Mr. Hassard: Earlier this year, provinces and territories agreed to a new free trade agreement, which would replace the former *Agreement on Internal Trade*. This new agreement differs in scope from the former AIT by adopting what is referred to as a "negative list". This approach requires the federal government and the provinces to lift all trade barriers across all sectors unless specifically identified as an exemption.

Mr. Speaker, this agreement will come into force in July of this year, so is the Yukon government taking any action or making changes in accordance with this new agreement?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, it would be inappropriate to start answering these questions without thanking the members opposite. I said it in the media when we had the opportunity to sign this agreement. There was a tremendous amount of work done by the previous government. Essentially the agreement was signed off — the draft, or in spirit — during COF last year by the previous Premier here but there are members who aren't in the House today — Minister of Economic Development — who I have thanked — and actually the interim leader who was in that role as well.

The Canadian free trade agreement — just to give an outline here — will benefit the economy by making it easier and more profitable for Yukon businesses to expand outside the territory. Through the agreement, Canadian governments will coordinate reducing red tape and opening new markets. Certainly, as we sign the agreement, we're taking a look at the exemptions that exist now and, yes, you're right that we have to apply this to how we look at tendering. Those are some of our challenges as we look at how we keep money in the Yukon appropriately and being respectful to the other jurisdictions in staying within the guidelines of the Canadian free trade agreement. Absolutely we're undertaking those analyses. This agreement guarantees Yukon businesses access to markets, investment opportunities and government tenders across Canada. I'm encouraged by that. I had a meeting the other day — I didn't know the extent of how much we're competing Outside, but certainly some of our construction companies are quite happy about this.

Mr. Hassard: I would like to thank the minister for that and, since he brought up procurement, I'll just keep going on that topic. As we know, the Canadian free trade agreement does relate to procurement. It provides better access to government procurement opportunities and reduces trade barriers so that companies can do business in other provinces and territories more easily.

Does this minister see opening up Yukon government procurement to greater competition from outside the territory as a positive development or a negative one?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Well certainly, Mr. Speaker, it's a sensitive subject. It's probably a sensitive conversation right now.

We have seen, over and over again, the largest contracts that this government has ever put out in history go to companies that are from outside the Yukon. We saw that with the rush planning on the Whistle Bend facility. The companies that came and talked to me in the private sector — and the word on the street as we watched what happened with Faro, a lot of — I know the Member for Lake Laberge talked yesterday about how procurement affects the feeding of families. I'll tell you, there are a lot of families who could have been fed over the last number of years with those contracts.

My focus is to make sure that as many Yukoners as possible are working — as many Yukon companies as possible are gaining opportunities within these exemptions, but appropriately. We're going to play by the rules. Partially, the other government created the framework for this. We had

the opportunity to come in near the end of it to look at a couple of different areas that needed some smoothing out, but this was a document — we talk about collaboration; this was certainly a forced relationship between both groups, you could say as well. I'm going to commend them for the work on it. Our focus is Yukon economy and Yukon companies.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One important trade issue that was not included in the CFTA was liquor. This means that breweries here in the territory, like Yukon Brewing, which sell their products in Alberta, for example, face unfair tax policies resulting from the Alberta NDP government's protectionism. Prior to October of 2015, breweries from outside of BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan were charged 20 cents per litre. Today they pay \$1.25.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, this makes it hard for a brewery from the Yukon to compete in Alberta. Has the minister called his counterpart in Alberta to raise this issue on behalf of Yukon's growing brewery industry? What action is he taking to resolve this issue?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you for that question. I think the previous government did some strong work on making sure that sector in the Yukon was supported. I know that was some of the work by the interim leader.

What has happened is that, during the discussions during the CFTA, it was an opportunity — I know you sat at that particular table. Within that caucus of economic development ministers from across the country, it was a focus. It's not just our jurisdiction that is not comfortable about this. It was highlighted nationally by media that this one particular area did not get solved.

I haven't called the minister from Alberta, but I have sat with him and chatted with him. The commitment that has been made is that we have a crossover now. The previous chair, Mr. Duguid from Ontario, has now stepped down. The new chair is Mr. Melanson. He's the Minister responsible for Trade Policy from New Brunswick. He is now calling the next meeting and it's the first topic there.

There are a lot of jurisdictions that are not happy, but I will reiterate — as I did when questioned about this by the media — that part of my work — and I have not done this, so I have to do it — is that we have a couple of different brewers and distillers here. Part of it is that I need to get some direction from them on how they want me to handle this question.

I know they have had challenges with these trade agreements previously, so I want to make sure that whatever I'm doing, I'm doing it with their direction, so I know how to best impact that part of the economy.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Prior to proceeding to Orders of the Day, the Chair will provide the House with a ruling on a point of order and a statement on a matter of procedure. Both the ruling and

the statement are in response to events that occurred yesterday during debate on Motion No. 6.

First to the point of order: During debate the Minister of Highways and Public Works proposed to "... fix the Leader of the Official Opposition's motion to more accurately reflect the new direction of the Yukon government from fast and loose to measured and considered."

The Official Opposition House Leader then rose on a point of order and said — and I quote: "I believe that he is using insulting language in a context likely to create disorder. I believe this type of language has been ruled out of order in the past and I would ask that you would rule on it now, or in future."

The Official Opposition House Leader is correct in that this phrase been ruled out of order in the past. For example, on March 13, 1996 a member used the expression — "... a government that plays fast and loose with laws". The following day, then-Speaker Devries identified that phrase as unparliamentary.

On November 8, 2010 one member accused another of — quote: "... playing very fast and loose with the facts and the financial position of the Yukon Territory." Speaker Staffen warned members against employing that kind of terminology.

In these cases, both Speaker Devries and Speaker Staffen determined that the phrase "fast and loose" was being used to suggest either that the government was violating the law or that an individual member may be deliberately misleading the House.

Having reviewed yesterday's Blues, the Chair concludes that the phrase was not used in that way yesterday. Consequently there is no point of order. However, the Chair would reiterate that context is key when it comes to unparliamentary language and the phrase "fast and loose" could be ruled out of order in the future.

The Chair thanks the Official Opposition House Leader for his point of order, which provided the Chair with the opportunity to bring this distinction to the attention of the House. The Chair would also like to thank the Government House Leader for her contribution on the point of order.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The Chair will also make a statement about relevance when debating an amendment. Yesterday, during debate on Motion No. 6, the Member for Watson Lake and the Member for Lake Laberge raised points of order regarding the relevance of remarks made by the Minister of Highways and Public Works on the minister's proposed amendment to the motion. The Deputy Speaker dealt with those matters, finding no point of order in either case.

There is no need at this time to revisit the Deputy Speaker's rulings; however, the Chair will, for the information of members, cite Standing Order 35, which says: "When taking part in a debate on an amendment to a motion: (a) the member moving an amendment has the right to speak both to the main question and the amendment in one speech; (b) a member, other than the mover, shall confine debate to the subject of the amendment."

Once an amendment is before the House, the focus of the debate should be on how the amendment does or does not improve the wording of the main motion. Focusing the debate in this way assists the House in making a decision on the merits of the amendment.

The Chair thanks the Member for Watson Lake and the Member for Lake Laberge for their submissions, and the Deputy Speaker for his rulings. The Chair would also like to thank all members for their attention at this time.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 201, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour today to rise and present our government's first budget. On behalf of my Cabinet colleagues and government members, we do so with great humility and gratitude. We do so with humility because we recognize that everything we achieve in government is enabled by the hard work and the resilience of Yukoners. It is an absolute privilege to serve them. Our government is grateful to voters for entrusting us with the profound responsibility of governing this wonderful territory and its diverse and vibrant communities.

We are determined to ensure strong, sound public finances for Yukoners. Sound finances cannot just look good on paper here in the Legislative Assembly. Sound finances enable progress out there in Yukoners' lives and in their communities. Coming into office, we understood that Yukon had a surplus budget, yet there was no surplus. There was in fact a deficit. In fact, this past fiscal year, our government needed to issue a special warrant for the last three months of that fiscal year. It provided additional budgetary authorization for up to \$29.4 million. This amount represented commitments by the last government not accounted for in the previous budget.

Mr. Speaker, today our government presents a 2017-18 budget that is clear and measured. We know that sound finances are not simply a government achievement to be trumpeted. They are a shared investment made possible by the contributions of Yukoners themselves.

Finance ministers often buy new shoes on budget day. In the spirit of government's commitment to authenticity and to hard work, I am here today in the Legislative Assembly in the type of shoes Yukoners wear every day — a pair that has been well-used. The shoes may be different, whether they are dress

shoes or work boots or even running shoes, but it is the act every day of lacing them up and getting out to work that provides the revenue to make public investments possible. Such hard work and commitment entitles Yukoners to budgets that are forthright and forthcoming.

Because we respect Yukoners, our budget is open and transparent. Because we need the ideas of Yukoners, our future budget process will include engagement. Because we believe in Yukoners, we will deliver a series of budgets that address their concerns and speak to their hopes for themselves and for the territory. Because government-to-government relationships with First Nations are Yukon's future, our budget will reflect the needs for collaboration with First Nation governments.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon faces several challenges that demand greater strategic thinking and financial accuracy in our budgeting. One challenge we are facing is that long-term revenue must align with long-term expenditures. In 2015-16, the fiscal plan was put at risk because the previous government based their plans on revenues that were too optimistic. Anticipated tax revenues had to be adjusted downward. In 2015-16, corporate tax revenues were lower than the previous government expected by \$19 million. Personal tax revenues were lower than the previous government expected by \$10 million.

On the expenditure side, as capital projects are greenlit, ongoing costs of operation and maintenance must be accounted for. As Yukon's public capital assets grow, operation and maintenance costs will increase. In the past, long-term plans have not fully accounted for this. This was the case with projects such as the Whistle Bend continuing care facility and the new French language high school.

Another challenge is infrastructure. There was a dual challenge here. Municipalities need new infrastructure because much of what they have is now aging. At the same time, they need to keep pace with the improvements in technology. They need infrastructure that is more efficient and environmentally friendly. We're not just replacing; we're modernizing.

Another challenge relates to demographics. Yukon will have more seniors in the future. In 2016, people who were 66 and older made up 10.3 percent of our population, but by 2030, it will be at 15.5 percent. We need to begin planning for the services we will need. Those seniors will want to live full and engaged lives.

Our challenges originate outside our borders. Mining and tourism are two of the largest economic strengths. These sectors are directly impacted by shifts in the global economy. Trade can be volatile. Technology is changing. Competition is increasing. We need to invest strategically to weather the occasional and inevitable economic turbulence.

Of course, the future is not just about the challenges that face us. Yukon is truly coming into its own. There are new opportunities for jobs and new growth. Our talented people are dreaming of, and acting on, new possibilities. Our budgeting and financial management need to create the right conditions for them to thrive. First Nation governments and

businesses are an emerging source of growth and prosperity. Modern treaties and self-government agreements have opened many economic development opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I've listed challenges; I've outlined sources of opportunities. There is difficult and important work ahead of us, but we know Yukoners are up for the task. People who shy away from doing hard things rarely find themselves living in the Yukon. Our people embrace challenge. They are drawn to opportunity. They have put down roots in the territory where growth and prosperity take real effort.

That effort is richly rewarded by a quality of life that no other place can match. Our government is determined to present a series of budgets over the next several years that will create an environment for Yukon's people and economy to thrive.

Planning that more prosperous future means reconsidering our current path. The reality is that Yukon's current path leads to further fiscal uncertainty. As Yukoners know, the longer you go down a path in the wrong direction, the harder the trip back will be. Better to stop, look around, get your bearings, determine the course — the correct course directions — and take stock of what you need and get headed in the right direction toward a new destination.

We need to make such an assessment ourselves together, as Yukoners. Yukon needs a real conversation about choices. This is why our government is establishing an expert financial advisory panel. The panel will be chaired by a Yukoner and it will include members with backgrounds in business, government and research. It will balance local knowledge with Outside expertise and experiences. It is not a political or a partisan exercise; this is about bringing in a new voice. It will be true dialogue.

The financial advisory panel will inform and provide Yukoners with facts, options and ideas. They will listen to and hear from a broad cross-section of Yukoners. The panel will engage with First Nations and municipal governments. It will hear from business, labour, environmental and social organizations.

Yukoners will have choices to contribute to this discussion. The panel will bring their work in, in June, to provide recommendations in October. That input will inform our government's 2018-19 budget and future budgets. We've allocated \$250,000 to cover the cost of the panel's work, including broad public engagement.

We will put Yukon's finances on a sustainable path together, through open and honest dialogue about our shared future.

Mr. Speaker, to make the right choices, we need accurate information. We need to fully understand the nature of our challenges. We need to be able to quantify measurable progress toward our goals. This is why we are improving the Yukon government's financial planning capacity.

For example, the government has been forecasting tax revenues based on a share of Canadian forecasts. We need Yukon-specific forecasts, Mr. Speaker, so we are making changes. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics and the Business and Economic Research branch have been moved to the

Department of Finance. This will help to create a consistent population and economic forecast so future budget forecasts will be Yukon-specific. They will contain more data, which will make them more accurate and evidence-based.

This will help avoid the need for significant adjustments, as we have seen in recent years. In fact, we are making the *Yukon Economic Outlook* available at the same time we table the budget. This is a first and it will become a standard. More than that, in future budgets, we will show how decisions were influenced by the *Yukon Economic Outlook*.

We will provide the “what” — the budget decisions. We will also give the “why” — the underlying realities that informed them. However, this is just a start. We are fully committed to evidence-based decisions. Evidence defines problems. Evidence shows progress. Evidence helps to understand what plans should be adapted because circumstances have changed.

Like any government, we have made commitments. We have made them in the belief that they’re “what” is needed. However, they must pass the test of evidence. If they do not, we need to adjust and we will own up to that. As Minister of Finance, I will accept that responsibility. To me, this is the ethical and the responsible choice as stewards of public funds. In government, you do what the evidence shows is right for the Yukon. You do not simply do what political expediency tells you is the right thing for your party.

Evidence is also crucial to reconciliation and partnerships with First Nation communities. Our new relationship is built on trust, on goodwill and on mutual understanding. Better information helps build a partnership based on truth. To do all of this, we need more capacity in government for gathering and for analyzing information. We will reorganize the Department of Finance’s lines of business and make an overall investment of \$1.96 million. We will modernize budgeting and reporting systems. We will create a program evaluation unit within the department as a part of this strategic investment.

To sum up, we need to move from a department of budgeting to a true Department of Finance, one that is making full use of the talents of our public servants. This evidence-based approach will be guided by our priorities. As outlined in the Speech from the Throne, these enduring priorities will be our people and their well-being, our healthy, vibrant communities, strong government-to-government relationships fostering reconciliation and cooperation with First Nations, and sustainable economic growth providing good jobs for Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, our budget will help create the conditions for making lives better for Yukoners by working with Yukoners. Our people and their well-being is truly the foundation of Yukon’s prosperity. We all know what our health and wellness means to each of us. It supports all we want to achieve in life. It’s the same for Yukon as a whole. We need everyone at their best to reach Yukon’s true potential. This is why many budget investments focus on health and wellness.

To support progress, we have had productive conversations with the Government of Canada. We reached an agreement on annual increases to the Canada health transfer payments. The increase will be three percent annually or the rate of nominal growth in gross domestic product, whichever is higher.

We’ve also negotiated another \$11.4 million over 10 years in funding to enhance mental health and home care. The agreement came into effect on April 1, 2017.

Mr. Speaker, health and wellness begin by helping young people to get a good start in life. Yukon is strong when our young people have hope and confidence. A healthy childhood and adolescence is the beginning of success in school, work and in life, so we are investing in resources and supports that help children and youth.

This year, our government is investing \$220,000 in additional funding for Yukon youth groups. This will fund drop-in centres, leadership training and after-school programs to help young people build confidence and self-esteem. It will support the Boys and Girls Club, the Heart of Riverdale community centre, Bringing Youth Towards Equality and the Youth of Today Society.

We are also investing \$60,000 in the Singletrack to Success program. This will expand the development of mountain bike trails by youth, so that young people working on the project build a sense of achievement and we will all have a world-class trail network to generate tourism and good health.

Our government is supporting an early childhood strategy to improve developmental outcomes. Additional federal funding will help increase the number of subsidized childcare spaces in rural Yukon. This also helps to improve school readiness.

To encourage physical activity, our government is investing \$2.5 million over two years in the track and field and recreation site at F.H. Collins School.

We also commit to working with Yukoners to reduce the impact of alcohol-related harms. This will include addressing fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, including enhanced supports for rural communities and for children with FASD. We will engage the commitment and expertise of organizations, such as the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of Yukon. This will also align with work being done under the Yukon government’s mental wellness strategy.

In addition, we will be developing and expanding online education and outreach including the Be a Responsible Server program and an age-verification system at our retail outlets.

Promoting health also means discouraging smoking, so we will increase the rate of tax on cigarettes and loose tobacco. It will rise from 21 cents per cigarette or gram to 25 cents on July 1, 2017. It will further rise to 30 cents on April 1, 2018.

Mr. Speaker, this budget enhances access to health care in a number of important ways. The *Canada-Yukon Agreement on French-Language Services* will provide almost \$14 million from 2017-18 through 2019-20. It will provide significant improvements in delivering French language in primary,

emergency and mental health care. For example, the government will study the feasibility of a bilingual primary health care clinic. We will also move forward on a bilingual staffing plan. This will allow our government to designate additional bilingual positions with a strong emphasis on health services.

Nurses provide the skilled, compassionate care that is the backbone of health care delivery. Many of our young people want to choose this vocation. This is now a little bit easier. The Yukon College practical nurse program will now take in a new class every 12 months instead of every 18 months.

We are also enhancing home care by investing \$771,000 to support care for complex patients in their homes as well as those in hospital awaiting a continuing care bed. We will provide funding of \$650,000 toward the purchase of four new ambulances. We will provide \$120,000 to enhance the Emergency Medical Services electronic patient care reporting system.

E-health holds great promise in providing caregivers with quick access to important clinical information on patients. It improves access to care and quality of care. Yet e-health comes with a duty to protect privacy. So our government will invest \$1.6 million to support e-health programs and services, as well as security enhancements.

Addiction can be one of the toughest struggles that a person can face. When Yukoners need help, we do not want them to face this struggle alone. We are investing \$160,000 in capital costs and \$1.49 million in operating costs to support 11 new full-time addictions and mental wellness workers in eight communities outside of Whitehorse. An additional \$1.46 million will support operation and maintenance at the newly opened Sarah Steele addiction treatment facility.

Land-based healing has also been shown to be valuable to many people. The pilot project at Jackson Lake has shown great potential. We are continuing our investment in this facility. Our government is also investing \$150,000 in beginning to plan a Yukon-wide land-based healing program.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the nature of work is changing. New technology impacts every industry. Jobs that exist today may not be among the jobs of tomorrow. At the same time, our children may do jobs we have not yet imagined. We do not know exactly what the future holds, but we know our young people will need to be ready to adapt. We are providing \$422,000 to put greater emphasis in education on skills and experiential learning.

We also know First Nation governments and corporations represent emerging economic drivers. Yukon's future leaders, entrepreneurs and workforce can benefit from exposure to First Nation culture and history. We will enrich education in these ways while maintaining academic standards and raising graduation rates. We also need to close the education gap for youth in Yukon First Nations.

Our government will continue developing a joint education action plan with \$451,000 in funding. There is a proverb that says, "When you fall down seven times, get up eight." When Yukoners experience a setback in work or in career, they get new skills and they find new opportunities.

To help them on this journey, our government is investing almost \$16.8 million in education and training. This will support student aid, literacy programs, skills retraining, and other ways that Yukoners can take positive steps forward. When you invest in Yukoners, there is no telling how far that investment might go.

This is because there is no limit to what our people can achieve.

Mr. Speaker, fostering reconciliation is a morally necessary exercise. We are better able to understand how actions in the past continue to impact First Nations today. We are better able to focus our sights squarely on the future. Reconciliation is an act of choice, one that takes real effort. We do more than imagine a better future — we commit to action. Building shared prosperity can only come through sustained effort. This is what we will do.

On January 13, 2017, Yukon took an important step toward its future. At the Yukon Forum, the declaration *Working Together* was signed. It was signed by all Yukon First Nation chiefs, the Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations and all members of Cabinet.

This intergovernmental declaration is a commitment to work together in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration. It confirms a commitment to a constructive relationship, one that contributes to and promotes good governance for all Yukoners. The declaration sets out the commitments to four Yukon Forum meetings each year. This will be a venue for frank discussions on issues in a respectful manner. We will learn about the positions and interests of others. We will achieve outcomes that will move the territory forward in a sustainable direction.

Senior officials will also meet to develop a joint five-year action plan. The plan will zero in on specific common priorities and lay out clear steps for their implementation. To build on the intergovernmental declaration, our government will transfer \$100,000 annually to help coordinate the Yukon Forum.

We are supporting the resolution of issues relating to transboundary First Nations and Yukon First Nations without final agreements. As part of this commitment to reconciliation, we are adding one additional permanent position to the Aboriginal Relations division. Creating this new senior consultation advisor position will have a cost of \$130,000.

Mr. Speaker, here in the Yukon and across Canada, we need to keep talking to each other about the legacy and pain and injustice experienced by indigenous people. There must be dialogue on the continuing issues faced by indigenous people as a result of that legacy. This is truth we must always confront.

In this budget, to support truth and reconciliation, one-time funding of \$150,000 will support three aboriginal women's organizations. They will complete work on recommendations from the 2016 Yukon Regional Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the second Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summit and contribute to the national inquiry in Yukon.

We will also support a two-year position with \$97,000 per year in funding to coordinate the Yukon government's participation in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The Yukon delegation that attended the national roundtable showed true leadership in advocating for a regional process. Our government is committed to support an inquiry process that reflects the Yukon experience and context. This initiative must lead to real progress in addressing the urgent issues of violence against indigenous women and girls. Reconciliation will be a continuing theme throughout our government's agenda.

For example, legislation to amend the *Employment Standards Act* to include June 21 as a statutory holiday has been prepared and is ready for introduction this spring. This will contribute toward reconciliation. The Government of Yukon will provide \$325,000 to support the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle to deliver traditional sport, development and leadership training in all communities. This will also help to train Team Yukon as they prepare to proudly represent us at the North American Indigenous Games this July.

Yukon's Wildland Fire Management works with First Nations to build capacity through contract fire crews. There are currently 11 First Nation contract crews in the Yukon helping to provide lives, property and community assets. To expand this important work, our government is investing \$149,000 for a 12th crew this summer, for the Kluane First Nation.

A seven-year agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon emergency measures organizations will formalize the delivery of services to White River First Nation, Ross River Dena Council and the Liard First Nation. To achieve this goal, \$1.6 million will be provided over seven years, including \$70,000 in 2017-18.

Mr. Speaker, First Nations have identified housing as a priority. Many communities struggle with overcrowding, overdue repairs and affordability. A good home is a place to rest, study and succeed in education. A good home enables a nutritious diet and contributes to good health. It provides the stability that enhances confidence and supports success in life. This is why our government is providing \$1.5 million for the First Nation housing program. It will support First Nation governments, development corporations and housing providers in making improvements. It will also provide rent supplements on newly constructed units.

Clean, reliable and affordable energy also supports community growth. Yukon communities want to get past the diesel era and enter the renewable era. To help, our government is providing \$1.5 million for the innovative renewable energy initiative. Supporting small, community-driven renewable energy projects is the best way of increasing the supply of sustainable energy in First Nation homes and communities. In doing so, it improves economic prospects and the quality of life, which in turn supports reconciliation.

To further the work of reconciliation, we will seek ways of preparing more public servants for engagement in government-to-government relations with First Nations.

A diverse and growing economy provides the means for Yukoners to build a high quality of life. We know that when Yukon businesses and workers have the right environment, they can compete and win. We know that Yukon's strong and entrepreneurial culture is among our best assets in seizing new opportunities in emerging sectors. To boost competitiveness, our government is taking the first steps to lower taxes. However, as I said earlier, our government is also committed to acting on evidence. In this budget, we deliver our promise to reduce the general corporate tax from 15 percent to 12 percent. In 2017-18, we are also reducing the corporate tax rate for small corporations from three percent to two percent. We will then evaluate the implications of this change before making further decreases. While we committed to a zero tax rate, we must ensure that this move is the best one toward achieving our overall goal of ensuring sound public finances.

Mr. Speaker, a strong economy is one that values everybody's contributions. We will provide one-time funding of \$60,000 to support the Yukon Human Rights Commission in researching equal pay for equal work.

Yukoners have worked hard to build a range of industries in the territory. We all know tourism is one of the most promising of those industries. People want travel experiences that are meaningful, that are authentic. They want to meet interesting people. They want to feel a connection to the natural world. They are fascinated by Yukon First Nation culture that stretches back millennia. They want stories to tell friends and family.

Yukon occupies a special place in people's imaginations and hearts. We offer year-round experiences from hiking under the midnight sun to experiencing winter under the northern lights. Last year, images of royal family members enjoying our outdoors were seen around the world. International media have featured Yukon travel. This is a time to build on our profile.

To reach new audiences, our government is prepared to invest \$500,000 in a digital development tool that will engage a global audience. It's a significant investment, but one that is needed because we are competing online for eyeballs, and Yukon has a wealth of engaging images and stories.

We want the wonder, awe and fun of being here to come across online. To help our businesses hone their pitch, our government is providing \$50,000 to look for ways to share more information online with Yukon tourism operators. We will invest \$200,000 this year as part of a two-year effort to conduct a comprehensive survey of visitors. This will help tourism businesses learn more about their customers so they can make more informed business decisions. We will also invest \$150,000 in a tourism strategy, one focused on measurable results.

To help share our heritage with the world, we are providing \$700,000 to the Yukon Arts Centre to host an arts summit. A \$50,000 investment will be provided to begin developing a broad-based arts and cultural policy to support

growth in this sector. We are also supporting the Carcross/Tagish First Nation's learning centre in creating a community gathering place. Our government will contribute \$145,000 to operational and activity funding related to the cultural component of this new facility.

Mr. Speaker, so much of the prosperity Yukon enjoys today has been supported by the strength of our resource industry. Resource development will be as important in our future as it has been in our past. However, we also know our industry must keep pace with changing technology and changing expectations around mining activities. We are adding \$830,000 in a one-time funding this year to the Yukon mineral exploration program, bringing the total investment to \$1.6 million. It helps prospectors and exploration companies with early-stage work, which usually leverages additional funding from the market.

For every dollar invested by government, over three dollars in private sector investment has been leveraged in the same year. A number of significant mineral discoveries have been made. In addition to the three existing program modules for mineral exploration, this year the government is considering a new module specifically for placer exploration.

It is also worth noting that our government approved an amendment to the Minto Explorations Ltd. mining plan and issued an amended quartz mining licence on December 13, 2016. The amendment means the company can begin work on its new open pit at the Minto mine near Pelly Crossing. The new pit should allow the mine to continue operating through 2017.

The government will continue working with the Yukon Mining Alliance to attract investment dollars into Yukon's socially and environmentally responsible mining sector. One of Yukon's strongest value propositions in mining will be the full engagement of First Nation governments and corporations in advancing projects that reflect community priorities.

To support this advantage, we will continue to support implementation of the Government of Yukon and self-governing Yukon First Nations memorandum of understanding, which was signed at the Mineral Exploration Roundup in Vancouver in January.

While mining has contributed to the prosperity and the quality of life that we enjoy today, future prosperity will be further enhanced by a diverse economy. Our government has made a commitment to develop a fund for promoting economic diversification and innovation in Yukon. This year we will be completing the groundwork needed to successfully launch this new initiative.

To stimulate the development of economic opportunities in Yukon communities, the regional economic development fund's budget will be doubled from \$405,000 to \$800,000. To support the growth of local brewers and distillers, the Yukon Liquor Corporation will review its pricing policies to ensure that there is the right balance between profitability and supporting local producers.

Let me say here that our government appreciates the advocacy and contributions of business groups and other non-government organizations. Yukon businesses compete with

each other, but they also know that Yukon competes with the world, so they value collective action that supports the growth that benefits all of our businesses. We are committed to listening and leveraging their knowledge.

In the spirit of listening, we have heard from Yukon's burgeoning media industry. We heard the Yukon film production fund and the Yukon film development fund had not kept pace with matching federal funding programs. Specifically, these two programs did not allow for the funding of digital media elements. Federal programs require digital media elements, so we have fixed this to allow Yukon media producers to take advantage of innovations and technological changes, while providing them with enhanced access to national funding sources.

We need to make it simpler and easier to do business with the government. We need to reduce red tape in registering with government. We will invest \$100,000 in the case management system of the Employment Standards and Residential Tenancies functions. This will improve customer service and it will reduce red tape. We are also addressing the need to reduce red tape in the professional regulatory licensing system with an investment of \$90,000.

The Government of Yukon recently launched phase 1 of the Yukon corporate online registry. Our government will continue implementing this multi-stage project. This suite of new e-services will reduce red tape for Yukon businesses and organizations and will make it easier to interact with the Government of Yukon.

When the Yukon government spends, Yukon businesses should be benefiting as much as possible. At the same time, governments must get the best possible value for public investment. Improving government procurement systems and services help to achieve both. We are investing \$150,000 to continue modernization of procurement.

In the land title regime, Yukon is breaking new ground. This year we will be contracting for services to develop a new system for the Land Titles Office. Among other benefits, it will support First Nations in seeking market financing of settlement land. It is believed to be the first initiative of its kind in the world for a land titles system. It will also support housing availability by allowing the Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations and municipalities to create condominiums on leasehold title.

Yukon's infrastructure needs to be renewed. Every day we benefit from the foresight and vision of previous generations. They built roads, highways and community infrastructure that transformed life in Yukon. They were ambitious and determined to create the Yukon of their dreams. Today, our generation is called upon to do the same.

Yukon infrastructure must be renewed and it must be transformational. It must serve growth in our communities and economy. It must address inequality by connecting people to opportunity and by improving their quality of life. We will plan carefully and strategically. We will make investments that consider multiple generations. We will do this through a five-year capital plan for infrastructure.

This year, to support the movement of people and goods, we are investing \$15.25 million for bridge repairs. This budget invests \$33.4 million for highway maintenance and repairs. The budget also continues to support the restoration of critical highways.

Infrastructure for the future also means investing in institutions of learning. We will support the ongoing transition for Yukon College to provide university education.

We will also provide \$8 million this year for the continued development of a new French language high school. We will invest over \$11 million in the maintenance of government buildings, including schools — work that will include radon remediation.

Mr. Speaker, just as the economy relies on the movement of goods, the new economy relies on the free flow of ideas and information. Connectivity is a gateway to global opportunities in learning and commerce. We also need to make it easier for Yukoners to connect with government services. Our government will continue supporting the fibre diversity project to ensure more reliable and consistent connectivity.

We have also heard from businesses and other shareholders that they can benefit from more access to government information. Government, in its operations, collects a lot of data, a lot of information. Inside of government we do not always see the full value of that data. Businesses and other organizations often see innovative ways that data can be leveraged to benefit the economy or to help citizens. For example, as I said, we are already putting more tourism information online so businesses can use it. We are in the early stages of planning for open data. This year we will invest \$100,000 on developing an open data repository.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are very proud of their territory. We work in common purpose together. We are also deeply connected to our communities. That is why our government has also committed to healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities. More people are recognizing that Yukon communities offer a wonderful quality of life. People growing up in the Yukon want to create households of their own and build a life in the place they love.

To support that dream, our government will ensure land is developed. This year, we will invest \$9.8 million to develop new lots in Whistle Bend. A total of 79 new lots will be ready for sale for the public in the fall of 2017. Work is underway on Whistle Bend phase 4 design, which will provide 170 lots.

We are investing \$14.3 million in 2017-18 to build surface works and underground utilities this summer. To support the growth of smaller communities, \$30 million will be invested across the territory under the Government of Canada's small communities fund and the clean water and waste-water fund.

This will support over 30 projects, including a solid-waste investment in Haines Junction, Mayo reservoir upgrades, a Watson Lake wet well and lift station, Old Crow lagoon upgrades, and a Faro pump station — just to name a handful. This budget invests \$660,000 to plan for the replacement of

three group homes in Whitehorse so residents can fulfill their vital services to people in need.

We will invest \$553,000 to support the Salvation Army Centre of Hope to fund 25 shelter beds and 20 transitional living units. To support the building of affordable rental units, we are also investing \$1 million in the municipal matching rental construction program. Our government has also provided Habitat for Humanity with \$500,000 in support for a new multi-family affordable ownership project in Whitehorse.

Our government is investing \$200,000 in energy retrofit projects. This will help plan, design and implement energy retrofit projects in Yukon government buildings. In doing so, we reduce operational costs, increase local economic benefits and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To improve air connection in Dawson, our government will invest \$250,000 to Dawson City Airport planning. Again, we are taking the time to do it right. We are seeking the best information to make the best decisions so that we meet the goals of Dawson residents. The airport is a vital connection. We need to make sure investments meet community needs today and into the future.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are proud Canadians. They are excited to be celebrating the 150th anniversary of Confederation. This budget provides \$300,000 in funding for celebratory activities, including for Music Yukon, and Canada Scene signature events. We are also investing \$130,000 in developing a heritage management plan for historic sites in Yukon First Nation final agreements.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, budgets are not only a product of the government. They also are a reflection of the people — of their hopes, their concerns, challenges and opportunities. Yukoners are hopeful about the future of our territory. They are realistic dreamers. They chose dreams that take work. If you walk down any street in our territory or you visit any river or lake, there's a story. These stories are about previous generations that transformed the Yukon — stories that shape our present day. Well, there is history happening in Yukon today. We are shaping a future. Decisions we make now will reverberate in decades to come. This is why our government will focus relentlessly on making decisions that are credible and stand up to scrutiny because we know that they will be tested by time.

Evidence-based decisions — it sounds technical, it sounds dry and it seems detached, but our government sees it differently. We see it as the most hopeful way of governing. It's not blind hope. It's a confidence that Yukoners can confront their real challenges — that we have come of age. It speaks to a belief that we can solve any problem we see — that we can accomplish and achieve any goal that we set.

Yukon is already leading the way on reconciliation and partnership with First Nations. There is no place in the world like the Yukon so there is no lead we have to follow. This budget supports the commitments and hard work that Yukoners are willing to put in. It is the first budget in a series that will build a brighter future in the territory. Work has already begun. We're only just getting started. Real change is coming.

Let me assure Yukoners that they will see the evidence that it's happening. They will be part of the transformation. We're stepping boldly toward Yukon's future. We're doing so with confidence and we're doing so together.

Motion to adjourn debate

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill No. 201 agreed to

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. Monday.

The House adjourned at 3:00 p.m.