



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 6

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, May 1, 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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NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Pauline Frost	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
Hon. Jeanie Dendys	Mountainview	Minister of Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; Women's Directorate

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Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
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New Democratic Party

Liz Hanson	Leader of the Third Party Whitehorse Centre
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, May 1, 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 Sexual Assault Prevention Month

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month. I rise today to pay tribute to everyone who works to eradicate sexualized violence and to those who educate the public about violence and sexualized assault.

Sexualized assault affects all of us, and all of us have a role to play to ensure that our streets, homes, communities and territory are safe places for everyone. The reality is that one in four Canadian women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime and that this number is three to four times higher for indigenous women. We also know that the territories continue to have higher rates of violence than provinces and that young women are much more often the target of sexualized violence. Immigrant women, women with a disability, and those who identify as trans or non-binary are also more likely to experience sexualized assault.

These statistics tell us how broad the impact is, but they tell us nothing about what this personal violation feels like, how it shapes women's lives and how the fear of violence and concern for safety impact all women in all communities. We can and must do better in learning from victims, in listening to their experiences and in responding to and supporting victims to make choices that help their own healing. We are fortunate in Yukon to have several organizations that are working hard to create a cultural shift away from the acceptance and normalization of sexualized violence. This month, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre is hosting a variety of events with other community partners to further the conversation around sexualized violence and supporting victims. The theme of their campaign this year is: "Flip the script" on social norms that encourage violence. Please take a look at their website at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre or you can find them on Facebook to learn more about this theme and these events.

We are fortunate that it not just during Sexual Assault Prevention Month that these groups are hard at work. They work throughout the entire year. With summer approaching, the consent crew will once again be out at Yukon festivals and events. This fantastic group of volunteers has buttons, signs, stickers and information about consent and sexual assault. The consent crew is operated as a joint project between the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and Les EssentiElles. The goal is to share the message that sexual assault is never

acceptable and to ensure that people know the difference between non-consensual sex and sexual assault.

Through the continued hard work of the community partners, I know that we are making a difference in the lives of women and girls throughout the territory.

The Women's Directorate is working with Justice and Health and Social Services to support our government's commitment to improve services to victims of violence and sexualized assault in Yukon. We are taking a victim-centred approach to addressing sexualized violence, putting victims' needs and choices first, whether or not they choose to report and to whom. We know that the reporting rates are still low, especially for sexual assault. Recent media reports, including *The Globe and Mail* investigation on unfounded rates of police-reported sexualized violence, and high-profile cases, have highlighted the challenges victims face in our systems.

It is our responsibility, as a society, to change the way we treat victims of sexual assault. The goal is to improve social response to victims at all levels, whether that is within the justice system and social services, or within our own communities, so the victims feel believed, honoured and supported.

We are all aware of the upcoming work of the commission for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and their mandate to investigate the systemic causes of the increased rates of violence experienced by indigenous women, including sexualized violence.

We know how important the national inquiry is to our territory, and our government is committed to ensuring Yukon plays an effective role in the inquiry and to increasing our government's efforts to improve community safety and reduce violence against indigenous women and girls.

The Women's Directorate, along with First Nations and community partners, will continue working together to address violence against indigenous women and girls. The safety of Yukoners is a top priority for our government. Equality cannot be realized in the absence of safety. Through our violence prevention measures, support for community partners and more inclusive and equitable policy and programming, we hope to make change in achieving both.

I hope that not just this month but every day we can work together to change any aspect of our culture or community that tolerates or turns a blind eye to sexualized violence and to reach out to support the choices and needs of victims.

I would like to introduce Alex Hill — she is a staff member from the Women's Directorate — to thank her for all of her hard work and all of the people who work within our systems, organizations, governments and First Nation governments for the hard work that they do each and every day to reduce violence in our communities.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to those among us who have been victims of some sort of sexualized violence in their lives

and to lend our voice to the campaign to bring public awareness to violence and sexualized assault in our territory.

May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Canada. Across our country, people are raising awareness about the prevalence of sexual violence and assault and offering dialogue and tools aimed at eliminating it.

I would like to share a key slogan I came across as a theme for this month, and that is: “No one asks for it”. This is important for every member of our community to remember. If you or someone you know is a victim, know that the fault lies with the perpetrator. Victim-blaming is a common occurrence. It leads to further problems in our society and is a common factor to the surprisingly low reporting rates of sexual violence worldwide.

One in three or four Canadian women will experience sexualized assault at some point in her life. According to Statistics Canada and a report on trends in sexual offence, only one in 10 incidents of sexualized assault are reported to police.

The rate of sexual offences against women is 3.5 times higher in Yukon than in provincial data across Canada. Sexualized assault is one of the most common violent occurrences against women in our country and also one of the most under-reported. Sexualized violence and assault is the focus of attention and campaigns once a year, but it’s important for people to remember that thinking about prevention and education should be a focus in all communities, schools, workplaces and homes year-round. We can work together as a community to promote bystander intervention as a strategy for prevention of various types of violence, including bullying, sexual harassment, sexual assault and domestic violence. We can adapt our behaviour and learn when to mind our business, when to pay attention and when to take a stand against something that is just not right.

It’s time for our community to stand up against the social norms of silence and turning a blind eye to inappropriate behaviours — to watch out for one another and speak up when something is not right. Teach your children to tell a trusted adult when they see or experience inappropriate behaviours from others. Teach your older children to be aware in social settings — to watch out for their friends and to ask that they do the same in return. Educating our children to use their voices will result in them growing up to be adults who speak out against wrong and bring true realization to the concept of bystander intervention.

I would like to urge the men and women in our community to report incidents of sexual violence and assault. To break the silence is to potentially save someone else from facing a similar situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to acknowledge that, during the month of May, we undertake national and local campaigns to prevent sexual assault. This campaign aims to raise public awareness about the prevalence of sexualized assault in Canada.

Earlier this year, after a 20-month investigation, *The Globe and Mail* released a series of articles about the reporting of sexual assaults in Canada. Their research revealed that one of every five sexual assault allegations in Canada is dismissed as baseless and thus unfounded. In the policing world, there are many ways to shut a case without laying a charge. There’s a code if there isn’t enough evidence, a code if the complainant doesn’t want to proceed, but to close a case as unfounded means that a crime was neither attempted nor occurred. It’s a classification that renders an allegation as baseless, yet leaves the victim voiceless.

I highlight this investigation and recommend that you read the articles because I believe that it will help us answer the question: Why don’t women report rape? It’s important to note that the RCMP and other policing agencies in Canada have made commitments to tackle this systemic problem. It’s also important to note that they won’t be doing this work alone because women’s organizations will be beside them the entire way.

Last May, I found a poem written by a Nova Scotia teenager, Kayley Dixon, who was 14 at the time of writing. It’s hard to understand that women both young and old are still living this reality. Her poem is called “A touch of sexual assault”:

From the age of 12, we were told that if boys pulled our hair, or poked us with pencils, it meant that they liked us. But we didn’t like it that much.

We were 13 years old when we would walk down the street and had men look from our feet to our face, and we listened as they completely replaced our identity from “human” to “object”. As they said cringe-worthy things to us, we wanted to run. We were frozen in place, but continued walking fast-pace, turning on whatever sidewalk was closest just to get away — even if it didn’t lead us in the way that we were originally going. Because Momma always said, “If you see a strange man following you, you go to the other side of the street, and remember, if they ever grab you, scream.” And this is something we had to learn at the age of 13 because we are just young fiends.

We were spanked by the boys at our school, but it was cool because it just meant we had nice bodies. And they rated our bodies on a scale from one to 10. And if you were a 10, you would learn to spend your days hearing whistles, purring, and “damn girl” because if you were a “damn girl” then that meant you weren’t a “damn girl” at all, you were just a toy labeled “Do whatever you want to me, even though I don’t agree”.

And we had to watch what we wore because if too much shoulder was showing, we had to change our clothing because it distracted the boys from their learning. So the only thing we were learning were tips and tricks to tie our shirt up so that it didn’t hang too low, because that would show the guys that we want it because wearing shorts and tank tops meant we were flaunting it.

So when we were 16, we screamed because the men that followed us on sidewalks finally caught up to us. We quietly said, "Please don't touch us there. We know we're asking for it by wearing these heels, but we just feel so uncomfortable, so stop." But that meant go. We said no, but that meant yes, so they grabbed us, and unzipped our dress. They threw us down, where our dignity sank lower than the ground. They hovered over us, and we pleaded for them to stop. They got on top and you don't need to know the rest, because we are some of the 68 percent of victims that will never tell a soul. So we'll just grab our dresses and go home, take a few showers, and try to get some sleep.

In the morning, we will pick out the outfit that is the most discreet, because we want to make sure no other man from the street thinks we look sweet enough to want a taste. We want to make sure that we are as covered as possible so that our identities are not replaced with "walking candy".

And we will sit at the back of the class, where nobody will ask how our weekend was because if they asked we may just burst into tears. And we will live in fear. We will run home so that we never see the same men again that wait for us to be alone.

We went from little boys poking us to men provoking us. We went from little boys pulling our ponytails to watching the trail of tears fall down our pillow every night because we knew once we fell asleep, we would see the men in our dreams — no, sorry — nightmares that caught up to us on the sidewalk that night and left us bare. We went from playing with our toys to being toys ourselves. So boys will be boys, and us women will never tell.

In recognition of Yukon Territorial Skills Competition

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

I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Yukon government to pay tribute to the participants at this year's Yukon Territorial Skills Competition. Last week, competitors from across the Yukon demonstrated their skills in trades and technology at the Yukon Territorial Skills Competition. Over 40 of our high school students showcased their mastery of complex skills in events such as carpentry, electrical, mechanics, hairstyling, baking and welding. The competition showcased the knowledge and craftsmanship demanded by skilled trades and technology.

I'm told that the largest crowd ever also were spectators. Approximately 800 people saw the complexity of building a cabinet and wiring an electrical circuit. Throughout the day there were a number of demonstrations.

Whether it was putting the finishing touches on a delicious cupcake or filing down the edges of a finished weld, these participants took pride in every detail.

I was very pleased and lucky to attend the awards banquet last Friday night, as was the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. It was rewarding — very much so — to see the

students' pride in being recognized for their work and how proud the mentors were of their protégés.

An important part of what makes this event so exciting is the wide participation of volunteers, mentors, judges, staff, organizers and helpers. They're all committed to the event and to supporting trades and technology here in the Yukon and beyond.

Those who work in skilled trades are a key asset to our communities and to our economy. They are responsible for the infrastructure and services that improve the quality of life for all of us every day. They work on housing, power, water, roads, communications, vehicle repairs, esthetics and cooking, and they are experts in all of those fields.

On behalf of the Government of Yukon, I would like to thank the organizations that worked very hard to promote the trades, technology and innovation in the territory, including Skills Canada Yukon, Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, Employment and Social Development Canada and Service Canada, our Advanced Education staff and Yukon College, and Yukon employers and the Apprentice Advisory Board.

Yukon's apprenticeship program has been successful thanks to the collaboration between education, industry and community partners to train the tradespeople that Yukon needs. During this year's Territorial Skills Competition, we were given a glimpse into the bright minds of our trades helping to build Yukon's future, guided and supported by our expert leaders.

Thank you to Skills Canada for organizing and hosting this competition, and congratulations to all of the participants. Some of these students will move on as part of Team Yukon to the Skills Canada National Competition in Winnipeg, which will be held from May 31 to June 3. On behalf of the Yukon government, I wish them all the best and I know that we will be very well represented.

Before I close, I would like to note in the gallery today Tracy Erman, executive director of Skills Canada Yukon and Ryan Cumming, a board member. Thank you for being here.

Applause

Ms. White: It's with great pleasure that I rise and congratulate Skills Canada Yukon on the absolutely fantastic competition last week. It has changed a lot from when I participated because now, in one venue, there are multiple skills and it's really something fantastic to see.

Not only did you have 54 competitors from both secondary and post-secondary education, there were 14 categories, and the real accomplishment is the over 800 students who were able to attend the event — so that is really opening up the trades.

It's important to note that events like this don't happen easily. If it weren't for the tradespeople who volunteer their time and people who volunteer their time for the board, and then the organizers, this would never happen.

Trades recognition across the country is changing and it's in large part due to organizations like Skills Canada Yukon and their dedicated staff and volunteers. Yukon has a large

contingent that will be going to the national competition in Winnipeg, and I don't even think I have to wish them well, because I know they will do really well.

It is really important to mention here while we have both Tracy and Ryan in the gallery that the culinary program at Yukon College has changed in large part and has become a lot more relevant to the industry because of the work that Ryan has been doing. It has gone from a program where retirees used to take it so they could cook better meals at home to being one where people are actually going into it and then they are going into cooking as a trade. We get to see them doing events. They do a lot of catering here in the building. It has been a huge change that makes it really relevant. Thank you very much for that.

Tracy, the event was flawless. It was fantastic. Although I was only at the venue for a short amount of time on Thursday because we had some stuff to do here, what I got to see at the awards banquet and the pride of ownership for the participants was really fantastic. Thank you so much. I will look forward to next year. It can only get better — trades can only grow. We look forward to that in the territory.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Hassard: I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming the president of TechYukon here today, Mr. Rick Steele.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like everyone to join me in welcoming Chief Superintendent Scott Sheppard of M Division of the RCMP here in the territory. With him is Constable Carol Locke. She is with the specialized response unit. Thank you.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming Connor Whitehouse back to the gallery today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling responses to Written Questions No. 4 and No. 13.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the responses to Written Questions No. 9 and No. 10.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling responses to Written Questions No. 6 and No. 8.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling responses to Written Questions No. 2, No. 3, No. 11 and No. 12.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a response to Written Question No. 5.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling responses to Written Questions No. 1 and No. 7.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to research, develop and implement a Yukon early childhood strategy (childcare, development and education) in consultation with early childhood education and health care professionals, parents and First Nation governments in order to improve developmental and educational outcomes.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support Yukon public servants by:

(1) providing political direction, then respecting the work of public servants, while holding them accountable for the delivery of programs and services to Yukoners;

(2) generating more opportunities to public servants to build capacity through professional development (internally and externally); and

(3) reviewing hiring/promotion processes to ensure that they are open and transparent.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure officials with the Yukon Development Corporation, Yukon Energy Corporation, Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to appear in Committee of the Whole to answer questions annually.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to live up to its election promise to allocate \$30 million per year to implement an energy retrofit program for residential, government and commercial buildings.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to live up to its election promise, which stated: “Effective July 1, 2017 the small business corporate tax rate will be eliminated under a Yukon Liberal government”.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make the Financial Advisory Panel’s final report, as presented by the panel and unedited by the government, public by the end of the calendar year.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue the work with small business owners and the Financial Advisory Panel to reduce small business taxes.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to create solutions to promote aging in place in a full spectrum of care by:

- (1) keeping the Whistle Bend continuing care development to 150 beds;
- (2) working with Yukoners, health professionals and stakeholders to find solutions that offer alternatives and transitions between home care and full-time continuing care; and
- (3) providing community-based services which allow seniors to age in place to the greatest extent possible.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to include operation and maintenance costs for new facilities, such as the continuing care building in Whistle Bend, in budget forecasts.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support, either financially or through the provision of land, the Vimy Heritage Housing Society’s proposal for a supported independent housing facility in Whitehorse.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to promote reconciliation by:

- (1) working with Yukon First Nation governments to address the legacy of residential schools by closing the gaps in service delivery and creating a culturally relevant and responsive justice and corrective system;
- (2) advocating for the establishment of National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday;
- (3) working with Yukon First Nations to identify how the Yukon government can implement its responsibility stemming from the calls to action of the commission; and

(4) implementing training programs for Yukon government employees on the legacy and impact of residential schools.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide funding for land-based healing programs, for the benefit of all Yukon communities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Government of Canada to legalize cannabis use by summer 2018.

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

THAT this House urges the government to:

- (1) acknowledge that it has been 10 years since school spring break was extended to two weeks to accommodate for the Canada Winter Games;
- (2) acknowledge that a two-week spring break is an economic burden for many Yukon families; and
- (3) consult with parents, school councils and the Yukon Teachers’ Association on reducing the two weeks before planning the school calendar for 2018-19 onwards.

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

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the Yukon Hospital Corporation’s budget request to the Yukon government for the 2017-18 fiscal year with a detailed breakdown of cost pressures the Hospital Corporation is facing, including but not limited to the following:

- (1) increased cost of chemotherapy drugs and increased number of chemotherapy patients;
- (2) increased volume of patients and services required at the medical imaging and lab departments of Whitehorse General Hospital;
- (3) increased costs due to higher staffing requirements resulting from the emergency room expansion of Whitehorse General Hospital;
- (4) increased staffing costs resulting from Whitehorse General Hospital operating at close to 100-percent bed occupancy rather than its 75-percent bed occupancy, which is what their funding is based on;
- (5) increased costs to meet the needs of patients at the Watson Lake hospital; and
- (6) increased costs to meet the needs of patients at the Dawson hospital.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon emergency response to earthquake

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, this morning, many Yukoners awoke to an earthquake. According to Natural

Resources Canada's earthquake monitoring site, the first quake hit at 5:31 a.m. and was a magnitude of 6.2. The second quake occurred at 7:18 a.m. and was a magnitude of 6.4. The epicentre of the quakes was near the Haines Road, about 20 kilometres south of the Yukon/BC border in British Columbia. There were also several aftershocks.

Our emergency crews responded immediately, and thanks go out to them for their swift and coordinated response. The Emergency Measures Organization emergency coordination centre was initiated. They went to level 2 of preparedness, which indicates a moderate-level event and one where we brought in some of the other departments to address the situation on the ground.

In particular, we brought in the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Education. Other departments were put on call. With respect to our schools, there were some temporary closures, including at Elijah Smith, Ross River, and Whitehorse Elementary. Structural engineers have inspected these schools for safety. Whitehorse Elementary has now been reopened.

With respect to highways, engineers and geoscientists have overflowed the major roads. Initial reports are that there is no serious visible damage to our highways. This inspection work will continue, including inspections of all bridges. Public safety remains our paramount concern.

Power went out in parts of Whitehorse and surrounding communities from Lake Laberge to Southern Lakes. We contacted Yukon Energy and ATCO right away and they began the work to restore power and inspect their infrastructure. The Emergency Measures Organization is coordinating efforts to ensure public safety for all critical infrastructure. Highways and Public Works have done a first assessment and have found that there appears to be no damage other than issues at Blanchard highway camp. Yukon Highways and Public Works will be doing an aerial survey with Energy, Mines and Resources' Yukon Geological Survey to assess any changes along the south Klondike and Haines roads.

The Emergency Measures Organization has been in contact with the Alaskan duty officer and is assessing cross-border effects. At present, there are no reports of damage or injury from Skagway or Haines, Alaska. They are continuing an assessment of critical infrastructure.

With respect to emergency preparedness, the timing of this morning's earthquake falls one week ahead of Emergency Preparedness Week. This morning, I asked staff to distribute our latest preparing-for-emergencies guide to all MLAs. This guide is being mailed out this week to all Yukoners and will be available in government offices and community halls.

We ask all Yukoners to please be prepared to take care of ourselves and our families for at least 72 hours in case of an emergency like today.

Hazards in the Yukon include earthquakes, floods and wildfires. We can experience power outages, communication failures and highway closures. This guide helps us all to assess the risks and to take steps to protect our property and our lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition in response to the ministerial statement. First of all, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Emergency Measures Organization and staff from departments including Community Services, Highways and Public Works, Department of Education and any others that were involved that I may have missed. Thank you as well for your work.

I would also like to thank the staff of both Yukon Energy Corporation and ATCO for their work in restoring power early this morning to areas that were affected.

I conclude by echoing the minister's comments, encouraging Yukoners to evaluate their own emergency preparedness, to recognize the national recommendations on being prepared to last 72 hours on your own through an emergency preparedness kit, and to give serious consideration to things like home heating should an event happen in the winter. If someone has a source of energy that is dependent on electricity, they may wish to give consideration to that, as well as the basic supplies such as food, water and the other items listed in the emergency preparedness guide, which the minister handed out and I believe can be found online at preparedyukon.ca.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party caucus, I would like to thank the Minister of Community Services for his comments this afternoon and on the radio this morning.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the earthquakes this morning certainly did more than jolt most of us awake. It rekindled the importance of Yukon as a community — of having the need for the information and to be able to communicate, not just what happens but who does what when a disaster strikes.

We appreciate the importance of updating the individual and family guide for emergency preparedness. However, Mr. Speaker, as much as we all appreciate that we do have responsibilities as individuals to be prepared, the truth is, in a disaster, it is not enough to base our plans on the idea that just the strongest and the most able among us survive. For example, what about Yukoners with mobility issues or people without vehicles? How and what are we communicating to them? Or in the event the Campbell bridge closes in Whitehorse, how do Riverdale residents know where to go? This information should be readily available — not when the disaster strikes, but in advance to all citizens. Many communities throughout North America — throughout the world — post evacuation routes. We're all familiar with the tsunami evacuation routes in Skagway. But what are the routes in Whitehorse and Yukon communities? What and where are the muster points?

Many Whitehorse residents will remember how 9/11 affected them or their families. That chaos need never be repeated. We look forward to hearing from the minister details on how this government is taking steps to promote information on community evacuation procedures so that in a worst-case scenario, Yukoners can reach safety quickly.

Yukoners simply want to know that the government has evacuation plans — not just one for Whitehorse, but throughout the communities — what those plans are and how to get government updates during an emergency.

We all know that we should have three days' worth of personal supplies on hand at home, but emergencies like fire and earthquakes can happen at any time, including when we are at work, and prevent us from getting to our personal emergency supplies.

What happens when people aren't at home if a disaster strikes? Where do people go when they can't get home? These are not just simply rhetorical questions. Anybody who has family members who lived in Fort McMurray last spring will know that's exactly what happened to thousands and thousands of people, including many in my family. The plans for dealing with these situations surely exist, but they are only useful if they are widely shared with Yukon citizens.

Before I close, I would like to give a big shout out to CBC Whitehorse. Being live on the air immediately after the first earthquake this morning provided all Yukoners with an invaluable reminder of the importance of our national broadcaster and we applaud the professionalism of the local CBC crew. The on-air interview at the second — there was an on-air interview with a seismic expert during the second earthquake — and I have to say that was amazing radio to have somebody talking about the experience of sitting through or crawling under the table during that earthquake and having the seismic expert give advice.

Mr. Speaker, we look forward to working with this government to support the development and wide distribution of a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan for Yukon that's developed in collaboration with municipalities, First Nation governments, first responders and really important community stakeholder groups.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to thank the members opposite for their comments. I really appreciate it when this message is coming from the Legislature.

Just to follow up on the Leader of the Third Party, I appreciate her request to get information out to people. I note that — and I will give a little bit more information because what happens is you have to get the ministerial statement in by 11:00 a.m. and so there are a few updates. I will try to give them to you now. Also I note that Community Services is holding an information media briefing I think at 3:00 p.m. where some of that information will be available. I will do the work to follow up on the request for that information.

First of all, there are no reported injuries and we are very thankful for that. I mentioned that public schools are being assessed. Elijah Smith and Ross River are closed currently due to structural damage. That is the latest information that I have, and we will be informing the public as soon as we hear a change in that. Whitehorse Elementary School has been assessed by a structural engineer and is now open.

Yukon highways have undergone an initial road check and we have not identified any issues at this time. The Department of Highways and Public Works is organizing a

more comprehensive check of all the highways, including bridge inspections.

Just going back to the schools — I note that every fall — I think on October 19 — there is a 10-19 moniker — there is a ShakeOut campaign where we work with our students to get them practised at the “drop, cover and hold on” and I think Sandi Coleman — I don't know if we're allowed to name names — the broadcaster on CBC today, did a very good job of that and I think that was a good acknowledgement.

There has been some minor damage to the Blanchard highway camp. The Blanchard camp was close to the epicentre of the earthquakes and also the Lynn Building here in town has been closed. The Emergency Measures Organization will be giving a technical briefing this afternoon.

Again, I thank all members here today for working with us to make sure that our citizens are safe — and a shout-out to all those folks who have been working to keep us that way today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Hassard: Last week, the Premier released his plan to send Yukon down a long-term path of big deficits and big debt. While the Premier took a record amount of time to get back into the Legislature, many Yukoners were eagerly awaiting to see his plans. Unfortunately, the plan put forward by the Premier means our children and grandchildren will be paying off debt for years to come.

So can the Premier tell this House what year he is projecting that Yukon will come back out of debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What we've done in the budget forecasting is what the Yukon Party should have done in previous budgets, which is to show the real cost of governance and to show the long-term plans and the long-term costs to run a government. It's not as if there's a whole new suite of big, huge promises. We campaigned that way. We said we weren't campaigning on big promises and on big new spends. It's a good thing we didn't, because now that we see the trend of how the piggy bank has been spent down over the last three years from a quarter of \$1 billion to pretty much nothing right now, we're just showcasing that trend into the future. We're identifying that we need to work together here in the Legislative Assembly to identify the long-term spends, the long-term needs, and come up with a plan.

So that's what the Financial Advisory Panel is all about. It's about working with the opposition and working with stakeholders in the Yukon to identify all of the concerns, and to identify the new financial department to see if we're on track there as well, but also to showcase the costs that were not necessarily being showcased by the previous government.

Mr. Hassard: I'll take that as a no — the Premier doesn't have any idea.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's vision of a territory burdened with big, long-term debt is a scary prospect for many

Yukoners and their families. Going from \$93 million in the bank to \$216 million in debt will have big impacts on Yukon. According to the Department of Finance, economic projections and O&M costs in the Premier's new budget don't even calculate for the economic and financial impacts of the Premier's carbon tax scheme. The Premier promised that this budget would show, in his words — and I quote: "The true cost of government." Yet on day one, Mr. Speaker, we find out he left out major new costs.

If the Premier wasn't doing this analysis, as he said he was over the past six months, why did he wait until the end of April to table a budget?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We did commit to the Financial Advisory Panel and, in that good work, we're going to have a better idea of where we are and what measures we're going to go to in order to turn the bus around and to get back to a sound fiscal situation. But again, Mr. Speaker, this is our way of showing Yukoners the long-range plans. It's our way of showing not just what's happening on a day-to-day budget, a year-to-year budget, but moving forward into the future.

It's no surprise to anybody who has been following the budgeting process that we don't showcase the real cost of government. That's what we're doing. We're also showcasing a lot of spending that was done previously that was not accounted. The member opposite talked on the news about \$100,000 for transition, but there is also: \$3.5 million for additional teachers and educational salaries; \$2.2 million to open additional beds at the Thomson Centre; half-a-million dollars for costs associated with the Royal visit; \$1.8 million for the new Salvation Army Centre of Hope; \$2.1 million in demolition costs — the list goes on and on and we will showcase all these numbers.

What we're doing is we're showcasing the costs and how we got to where we are — the costs that were not being calculated by the previous governments — and we're showing a new way of doing a financial exercise. We're very confident that the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel will help get us back to financial solvency and financial —

Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's plan to throw Yukon into massive debt — he has projected economic growth to be far lower than the national average. As we know, the Premier hasn't done an economic analysis of the impact of the carbon tax so, for all we know, Mr. Speaker, this growth will be even lower. Further, his own budget documents say that increased gasoline prices will have a negative impact on Yukon's tourism sector through increases in costs to travel to Yukon, which could dampen visitation. This will obviously hurt our economic growth as well, Mr. Speaker.

Considering that his plan to throw Yukon into a \$216-million debt is based off of incomplete data, we may end up even further in debt.

Will the Premier commit that he will not go further than \$216 million in debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As far as economic context, we know that we built into the economic forecast the impact of the investments that were made through the 2017 budget, including the impact of capital investment, to improve community infrastructure. We've done a lot more than the previous government had.

We will commit to the Yukon Party, as the Official Opposition, to work together to make sure that we come up with a plan with the Financial Advisory Panel to get out of this current situation.

Now, we could go back and forth and talk about who got us where we are as far as this financial situation, but I think the good work this summer will look forward, as opposed to blaming the past. We just have to move past this and, right now, we don't have a piggy bank. That money is gone; \$250 million is no longer here for us.

We do have to take into consideration deficit spending if we're going to access federal funding for infrastructure — that's something we want to do. Do we want to go past our cap? No, we don't. We absolutely don't want to go past our cap, and we're going to work very hard for Yukoners to get back online within the next couple of years. Before the next election — maybe even sooner, and hopefully even sooner — depending upon the decisions we make based upon the Financial Advisory Panel, we'll come back to a situation where we show Yukoners that we're taking a look at the government as a whole and we're going to move forward to make sure that Yukon gets back on to a financial path that works for Yukoners.

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Cathers: Contrary to the Premier's statements, as Yukoners should know, this Liberal government inherited the rosiest financial situation that any new government in the territory's history has ever had on taking office. On Thursday, we learned that the Liberal government plans to increase spending and plunge the territory's finances deep into the red. The Premier plans to spend Yukon's cash in the bank, run a \$58-million deficit in 2019, and spend \$216 million we don't have. Ultimately, it will be Yukoners who have to pay for the Premier's reckless spending through increased taxes and fees.

Will the Premier at least tell Yukoners which taxes he's planning on increasing in the future?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question and the concern from the Yukon Party. Again, forecasts are exactly that. They are forecasts. What they do is take a picture in time — if we continue at the same pace as we are at right now, this is where we are going to be. If we continue at the pace that we were left with by the previous government, these are the problems that we are going to see in the future. What we are hearing on this side in government is that people are thankful that we are showing the real cost of government, that we are showing the trajectory of that piggy bank being spent down — the actual capital costs and operation and maintenance in the budget as well. We can go back and forth and we can discuss how we got to where we are here today, or we can all work together with the Financial Advisory Panel to come forward with a solution so that we don't have to cut services and

hopefully don't have to raise any taxes as well, and we can come up with a plan that works for Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: Again, contrary to the Premier's statements, as he knows, this government inherited the rosier financial situation any new government has had on taking office. The Premier has taken to spending money that he does not have faster than a duck takes to water. On Thursday, we learned that the Premier's plans are written in red ink. The Liberal government inherited almost \$100 million in net financial resources — basically cash in the bank — and they want to spend that and \$216 million they don't have. Why is this Liberal government spending like there is no tomorrow and planning to leave a huge debt for future generations to pay?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: You know what? This is an absolutely ridiculous conversation. We watched for five years as you built and did not plan on how to run those facilities or how to staff those facilities. I look across the way and I see members across the way giggling. I am not giggling. My kids' financial future, when it comes to that government, is in jeopardy. All we saw was lack of planning and spending. We have inherited a situation. We have a \$150-million build that was not planned for. It was rushed. We have problems with the actual structure and now we have to figure out how to staff it. I think there about 200-plus people who have to go into the facility to work there. There is not even a proper human resources strategy in place, and I think the cost is about \$36 million. I think my friends across the way understand exactly how we got here. Some giggle because they may not understand. Some across the way look pretty serious because they know exactly how we got here.

Mr. Cathers: The only laughter on this side was at the absurdity of the minister's claim. The Premier has claimed on several occasions that the previous government did not include operating costs for the new Whistle Bend continuing care facility in the budget and tried to blame his spending problem on the previous government, but there is a big problem with that claim. Not only were the operating costs for the Whistle Bend facility included in the fiscal framework, the Member for Klondike — the Premier — was in the Legislative Assembly last spring when the Minister of Health and Social Services told the House that fact and how much was budgeted for future operating costs. Instead of taking responsibility for his own spending problem, the Premier is trying to point fingers. Part of leadership is taking responsibility for the decisions you make — like the decision the Premier and this government made to delay coming back to work in the Legislature by a record six months. Will the Premier do the responsible thing now and reverse course on this path to massive debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: That is exactly what we are doing. We are reversing the course. We are showing the trajectory left to us by the Yukon Party for the first time. We are doing lots of first-time things — like the economic outlook being in the budget as well. I guess, as opposed to going back and forth, the member opposite is right. The previous government did give us an estimate of how much it is going to cost to run

the Whistle Bend facility. I believe that number was \$2 million.

I think the real number that is being shown right now is somewhere along the lines between \$20 million and \$30 million. If people are listening and they want to know the real costs, they can compare the two. The good news is that we will get to that reality very soon. We will have a cost analysis of how much, because we will have people in that building working and that number will not be around \$2 million. It will be closer to what we were saying.

Again, we're trying to steer the ship the right way. We're going to commit to that. We're looking at a good situation here as well as far as GDP moves forward. We have a good situation. We're looking to the opposition to work with us to make sure that we prioritize the government's commitments moving forward on programs and services. I look forward to working with the members opposite on this pursuit.

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the budget tabled last Thursday confirms that there are fiscal challenges ahead for the Yukon government. Years of reduced own-source government revenues and limited growth under the Yukon Party has led to serious deficit forecasts for the foreseeable future.

Yukoners know that we need to diversify our economy to reduce the impact of the boom-and-bust cycle of the resource extraction industry. In the last election, this government promised to expand the Yukon Development Corporation's mandate beyond energy and to create an economic infrastructure fund to support innovation and diversification, yet Thursday's budget was silent on this promise.

Can the Premier explain why his first budget abandoned his election campaign promise to expand Yukon's innovation sector?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yukon government supports a diverse growing economy that provides good jobs for Yukoners and will target government investment to help diversify the economy.

The Yukon Development Corporation has been directed to establish a \$10-million fund to support economic diversification and innovation, which will increase investment opportunities while helping build sustainable jobs for Yukoners and supporting innovative approaches to existing and new industries.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, the corporation has been tasked with investigating possible models and developing options for the fund, which we will bring forward for government approval in due course. We anticipate the fund will initially be available starting in 2018-19 with a full rollout the following year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, we don't expect this government to fulfill every one of their commitments in its first budget, but when the government forecasts important deficits in the years to come, one would think they would start working on a solution right away and the reality is that this government will have to act. It can't put it all forward. They

will either need to focus on growth and strengthening our economy or they'll resort to cuts in spending and services to Yukoners.

Investing in innovation now is a key opportunity to strengthen and diversify our economy. Hopefully the Premier doesn't need an expert panel to tell him that. It's without a doubt the most effective way to reduce the impacts of the ups and downs of commodity prices. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, it's a question of priorities.

Why did the Premier prioritize cutting corporate taxes over investing in innovation and diversification?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was a lot in that question. I'll stick to the point on diversification and innovation.

As I stated here, we're still committed to diversifying the work of the Yukon Development Corporation with some guidance from the chair and the board of the Yukon Development Corporation. In discussion with them, part of their wisdom was to take a moment to take a look at a governance structure that would work. There have been some challenges in the past when Yukon Development Corporation sort of stretched its mandate, so right now the mandate is to get cheap reliable power and make sure it's there for industrial growth. We have to revisit that mandate. First and foremost, we're still committed to that.

As you go through the budget, you will see that the Regional Economic Development portion — or the RED department — has increased its budget. It's really the only place within Economic Development that we've had growth. We had a \$400,000 budget, now we have an \$800,000 budget, so that gives us a bit more flexibility where we can focus really on the communities and diversifying the economy. That's where I can work with the Minister of Tourism and others here to make sure that we build more assets and products for the tourism sector. We look at still being able to enhance the manufacturing sector while still being able to support what looks to be a very thriving resource sector.

Ms. Hanson: Reliable Internet connectivity is essential not only for the innovation sector, but for Yukon's businesses in general. There is little point in discussing innovation in today's economy if our fibre optic infrastructure is lacking, yet this is another important missing piece in last week's budget.

Everyone agrees on the necessity to create redundancy in our fibre optic connections in order to put an end to regular service outages. Multiple studies have been conducted on the two current possible options — the Skagway and the Dempster loops — yet this year's budget allocates no money to fibre optic infrastructure. Even the long-term plans that look out as far as the year 2021 don't project a single dollar for this project, one expected to cost in the millions of dollars.

Is improving Internet connectivity a priority for this government and if so, why are there no planned investments for the fibre diversification project in the mandate of this government?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'm going to do my best to answer that. I think the opposition will probably be able to help me

with another question here, so we'll be able to make sure we have a fulsome conversation today on this topic. Thank you, because I didn't get to touch on it on the second supplementary.

The fibre optic outage has a significant negative impact on businesses and residents as the Leader of the Third Party has mentioned. The Yukon government is committed to moving forward with a diverse fibre optic link to protect Yukoners from future telecommunication outages. The Department of Economic Development has submitted two applications to the Connect to Innovate federal broadband funding program as of now.

One application is for the Juneau link, which connects Whitehorse to Skagway, Alaska through the south Klondike Highway and interconnects to Seattle. The other application is for the Dempster route — certainly I can get this information to you too in writing if you like — which connects Dawson City to Inuvik along the Dempster Highway and interconnects with the Mackenzie Valley fibre link. The final decision on the fibre lines route will consider the needs of Yukon residents and businesses as well as the results from these funding applications. Hopefully I will have a chance to expand on this a little bit more during Question Period.

Question re: Salvation Army shelter and transitional housing

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sunday was the last night to access beds for individuals using the Kwanlin Dün temporary shelter. The shelter opened this winter as it became clear that the Salvation Army was not able to accommodate every person needing a warm place to stay. The home provided accommodation for 10 individuals and has experienced few if any vacancies since opening. It was a safe and warm place to spend the night for many who had no other options.

With this closure, many of these individuals will be left to sleep in the rough or couch surf. While the spring sun makes for warmer afternoons, most nights still experience below-zero temperatures.

Can the minister explain what options are available for these individuals left in the lurch without housing?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I can say right now is the facility in question is a building that was opened on a temporary basis to get the residents through the coldest parts of the winter. The facility itself is a facility that is not safe and we are not occupying the whole space. We are looking at working with the stakeholders in our community to address a reduction of poverty as well as homelessness and we will continue to do that.

At this point, we are working to open the Centre of Hope facility in the coming weeks and months so that will help to address some of the pressures that we're feeling right now in our society.

Ms. White: We've been told that the new Salvation Army will not be opening until this fall at the earliest. That's at least five months away. The current Salvation Army is always at capacity and the fact is that some people cannot

access this emergency shelter for a variety of reasons. To make things worse, we're in the middle of eviction season and I hope that the minister knows that this is the time of year where people who her department puts into hotel rooms for the winter are evicted to make room for our summer visitors. This means a lot of people end up homeless or precariously housed.

Mr. Speaker, where are these individuals supposed to live? Where are they supposed to find warm and safe shelter?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The department is working with each individual who applies for accommodations. We are case managing each file as it comes in and defining priorities. We are collaborating with the Yukon Housing Corporation as well as Health and Social Services to provide those who are hard to house.

We are looking at options, recognizing that there are immense pressures in our society and we are working and we will work to define strategies to eliminate homelessness in our community. Between the departments, we are assisting and defining some of the pressures. Working with our stakeholders in the community as well is a significant component in rural Yukon — so looking at what we can do to get residents who are currently in Whitehorse from their communities back home to their communities where we know that they are safe and where they do have homes to go to.

It's a bigger — I think broader — Yukon question that we need to resolve and we are working to do just that with the stakeholders, with our communities and with the First Nation governments, as well as looking within the government departments.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm still unclear where people who were accessing that emergency shelter last night will stay tonight.

If there wasn't enough affordable housing in the winter and people ended up staying in hotels, I doubt somehow that they will find affordable housing when they are evicted from those hotels. With the closure of the shelter, spring evictions from hotels and a delayed opening of the Salvation Army, we're in the same place we were when we saw a tent city outside this building in 2011. We've seen the coming and going of the poverty reduction strategy and ongoing work on a housing strategy, but the reality is that little has changed for many individuals in Whitehorse and the communities.

Mr. Speaker, what concrete and immediate action is being taken to address the needs of citizens with no place to sleep tonight and what are the very specific plans for the old St. Elias group home site?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So the question for the 10 residents that occupied that space — it was not a full-time facility and not open 24 hours a day. It was open a set period of time through the coldest part of the winter.

The department is working with the City of Whitehorse as well as Kwanlin Dün to look at alternate options to ensure that those residents who utilize the facility have accommodations. We are again looking at a broader strategy now that it is warmer. As well, as indicated a few days ago, sometimes we

have to go to the emergency measures necessary to ensure that residents have shelter and that might mean putting them in hotels. It's not the ideal solution, but the longer term plan is really to come up with a strategy that works, which is the homelessness strategy and the Housing First strategy that is being considered. Thank you.

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, by throwing Yukon into a record amount of debt, the Premier is essentially mortgaging our future. In the Premier's own budget speech, he said that the further you go down a path, the harder it is to come back. Well, the Premier's budget has set us down a path of long-term debt with no indication we will ever come back from that.

Earlier today, he mentioned that his Financial Advisory Panel will look at a number of issues. We look forward to seeing the terms of reference so we get a better idea of what they'll be doing.

Mr. Speaker, is the Premier telling this House today, though, that he has tasked this panel to come up with a plan to get Yukon out of debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What the Financial Advisory Panel is going to do is take a look at all options. We're going to include local capacity and we've already announced the local individuals who are going to be helping out in that field, but also are relying on a wide breadth of resource and capability from a group of Canadians. The job of the advisory panel, as the member opposite knows, is to take a look at options. It is then our job as government to show that leadership and move forward.

Again, Mr. Speaker, having an economic forecast that is different from normal — it's actually showing the real full cost of accounting and the trajectory on which we are currently — what we're doing is not a politically expedient thing. It's actually showing Yukoners the real situation. Hopefully we'll be able to work with the opposition with the panel to come up with the results and analyze them and move forward. I know that the member opposite was talking during the motion about presenting all of that information to Yukoners and we absolutely plan on doing so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. By digging the Yukon into this massive debt, the Premier is passing the consequences of his decisions on to future generations. Yukon will now be forced to pay millions of dollars in interest payments. In fact, by the Premier's fourth year in office, Yukon could have paid up to \$14.5 million in interest payments. Without a plan to get Yukon out of debt, the Premier is forcing future generations of Yukoners to pay off this mortgage. This is \$14.5 million that could go toward schools or health care.

Can the Premier tell us whether Yukon's interest payments will come out of current departmental budgets or if he is planning on borrowing even more money to pay the interest on all his new debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we are offering Yukoners a whole bunch of options this year. We're changing a lot of things. The first thing that we're doing is the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel. That's an important step as we have shown Yukoners the real cost of governance. We have those numbers down, not only for this year, but moving forward.

This year's budget — which is what we're debating today and the next few months in the Legislative Assembly — is a balanced budget, but we've showcased the issue of what is happening in future years when future pressures come online.

These future pressures should have been identified by the Yukon Party, but they weren't identified by the Yukon Party. As a result of that, not only are we doing the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel, but we are also taking a look at changing the Department of Finance as well. In that change of the Department of Finance, we are going to be better at scrutinizing and making sure that the fiscal responsibility for all departments is there. We will be working on a whole government approach to make sure that the real cost of government is being forecast, not only this year but into the future.

The member opposite realizes and knows that forecasts are exactly that. They are estimates moving forward as we take a look at this current situation — as we take a look at the current trajectory that we were set on by years of the previous government. That is what it is, and we are putting it down on paper so that Yukoners can tell where we are. We are doing the Financial Advisory Panel to get a better understanding —

Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Kent: With respect to the Premier's Financial Advisory Panel, the mandate or the terms of reference seem very open-ended. We are curious on this side of the House. As part of its mandate, will it be looking at budget cuts? If so, are there any areas of government services that are off limits and not open for consideration to budget to cuts, or is everything on the table?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It's a good question, and I have no problem sharing the information with the member opposite. The panel will be engaging with Yukoners on the fiscal and economic challenges that are facing the Yukon and also providing Yukoners with an opportunity to comment and to make recommendations about potential government fiscal, economic and spending options. The public engagement is anticipated to start once the spring legislative session concludes in June. It will break during July and August and restart in September. The work of the panel will not replace any future direct budget decisions between the Government of Yukon and First Nation governments, municipalities and organizations. The information gathered by the panel will be used to determine the future decisions as we get to that situation.

I will reiterate that we do have some tough decisions to make. All together, we have some tough decisions to make. We are governing today on being open and accountable. It was an important decision to make. It was a hard decision to make to showcase the forecasts as we have, showing the full

costs of governance. But again, it is the work that we needed to do and it is the work that Yukoners rely on their government to put out there.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would like everybody in the Legislative Assembly to help me welcome a visiting real estate agent from Vancouver, Mr. Ben Kielb.

Applause

REPORT ON LENGTH OF SITTING

Government House Leader's report on length of Sitting

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 75(4) to inform the House that the House Leaders have met for the purpose of achieving an agreement on the maximum number of sitting days for the current Sitting. The House Leaders have confirmed that the current Sitting should be a maximum of 30 sitting days, with the 30th sitting day being Tuesday, June 13, 2017.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare the current Sitting shall be a maximum of 30 sitting days, with the 30th sitting day being Tuesday, June 13, 2017.

We will now proceed with Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

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

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

Mr. Hassard: I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to speak in response to the 2017-18 Budget Address.

I would like to just begin by thanking my family for putting up with me over the last few years through this political job and for the incredible support that they have provided me thus far. Additionally I would like to thank the constituents of Pelly-Nisutlin, which — I could remind everyone here — is the best riding in the entire territory. I would like to thank them for electing me for a second time into this Legislature, and I would like to particularly recognize all of those who helped out on the campaign and helped me get here again today. I'm extremely grateful to all of those people for their time and dedication during the election period.

It's definitely an honour to be here once again to serve the residents of Teslin, Ross River, Faro and all of the people along the way in between. I look forward to continuing to work not only with the municipal governments in those communities but also with the First Nation governments — of

course, the Teslin Tlingit Council in Teslin and the Ross River Dena Council in Ross River.

With regard to the budget, I think it's extremely important to note all of the hard work and long hours that were put in by the public servants in all of the departments to produce the numbers that we see for this year's government, particularly considering the new way the government sought to roll it out. The work that you do as public servants does not go unnoticed by the Official Opposition and we certainly appreciate all that you do for the territory.

On that note, I will start things off by noting things that I was happy to see. First, I cannot deny that this fiscal year's projection of a surplus, although a modest one, is good. We're always happy to see a surplus. We see no new fees introduced to Yukoners. That's good. At face value, there are a number of commitments that are all good and I look forward to seeing them implemented.

Personally, I am happy to see the Ross River staff housing six-plex project in this budget. We do know it was a project that was established under the Yukon Party government and tendered by me, in my role as the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, and I'm very pleased to see that it is moving forward as planned.

As well, the Minister of Economic Development mentioned in Question Period today the increase in the regional economic development fund, or the RED fund, from \$400,000 to \$800,000. I certainly appreciate that and I look forward to seeing more details as that rolls out and seeing how it will benefit all communities, but my communities in Pelly-Nisutlin in particular.

I was pleased to see the government's commitment to lowering corporate tax from 15 percent to 12 percent. I think that's very important for businesses throughout the Yukon, but there are a few things inexplicably missing from the budget today.

Firstly, as the Leader of the Third Party mentioned in Question Period, is the lack of funding for the dedication of the fibre optic line. The Premier previously claimed that the redundant fibre line project was ready to go in the fall of 2015, and after a significant amount of work and partnership that went into the planning of this project, he is correct. It was set to move forward with design and construction, yet there is no sign of this project in the budget. It begs the question: Is ensuring redundancy for Yukoners not a priority for this government? The previous government was a strong proponent for growing and supporting a robust information, communications and technology sector. We see an increase in the IT envelope included in their long-term plans, but what will be included in this — because there are no details, Mr. Speaker?

Additionally the previous government was dedicated to improving connectivity for all Yukon communities. That included committing investments for new cell towers to bring much-needed cell service to rural Yukon, particularly in the non-incorporated communities. I'm curious if the government considered including this in their budget, or why they didn't consider including this in their budget as well.

Mr. Speaker, will the government work to expand coverage to people without service in these rural areas, including Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fox Lake, Ibex Valley, Junction 37, Mendenhall and Champagne? This is extremely important to these areas considering that, without cell service, they don't have access to important emergency services such as 911.

Something else that we didn't see much mention of — or any clear mention of — was the paving of the Dawson City runway. We see money set aside for various airport projects, so I'm curious: Does this include Dawson City, or is this another broken promise from the Liberal government today? It would be nice to be provided some details on the status, for sure.

Another point that has been raising a few questions is the new Financial Advisory Panel. This is an interesting commitment and may be good in theory, but we certainly are lacking important details like: What are the terms of reference? It was interesting — the Premier spoke about it a bit today during Question Period, but it still begs the question: Does the Premier not have enough faith in the public service, in the staff in Finance and Economic Development to build a budget?

The Premier also mentioned that the Financial Advisory Panel will come up with solutions on how to get out of debt. You know, it's interesting Mr. Speaker. For years the Yukon Party governments were all able to stay out of debt without needing an expert panel — so, interesting.

We've seen that it has taken six months under this Liberal government before the Premier had to seek advice on how to govern and how to clean up his own mess. Like I said, we have not even seen the terms of reference for this panel, so I'm curious. Is he telling the House today that he has tasked this panel with a plan to get Yukon out of debt for sure? It will be interesting to know if they're slashing budgets to departments. I'm curious. There are many questions like that which we certainly have not seen any answers to as of yet.

One thing we do know is that the government has set aside \$250,000 in the budget to run this advisory panel. That's kind of an interesting number because, when you consider that the government spent over \$110,000 on transition for their government, which was one month, I'm curious as to how they expect five people to do work for five months for \$250,000. I guess one of the questions out of that will be whether they will be taking rural Yukon into consideration, or does this financial planning stop at Whitehorse city limits? What communities will they be visiting? If they are visiting communities, I have to ask the question: Will the panel have ATVs and canoes, because many of my constituents are spending their time on the Pelly River or the Nisutlin River trying to ensure that their families have food for the winter. Maybe the panel will be taking their four-wheelers. I hope they stop at Dragon Lake on their trek up the North Canol because that's where my constituents will be. I'm curious. How will they be heard or will they be heard?

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. Even with the Premier's own constituents — that's prime time of the year for them to

be doing their gold mining. Will the panel be travelling to the Black Hills and to the Fiftymile River to consult with his own constituents? How will their voices be heard? How will their thoughts be wrapped into this consultation process?

As I said before, there certainly are some good items in this budget, but I think that all of these good announcements have to be described as “bittersweet”. If you take into account the inevitable debt and deficit this government is going to saddle the territory with to pay for these things, these announcements definitely look a lot less impressive.

Mr. Speaker, after spending five years in government, I certainly do understand that you cannot please everyone at all times. There is always something that somebody wanted to see in the budget that just can’t make it, and I can appreciate that.

That being said, this budget definitely gives us a glimpse into the quickly growing debt and deficit that will be created under this government. It’s safe to say that I really don’t believe that will be pleasing anyone. It’s interesting that instead of focusing on the future, this government is entirely focused on the past and pointing fingers. I think that was shown last week in the media when the Premier talked at length of the trajectory that this government was on. He mentioned that again today in Question Period. It’s a little confusing that he felt — to me it’s confusing anyway — that he felt the need to include this in his speaking points, but he didn’t really feel obligated to take action and correct this trajectory if he felt it was so wrong. In fact, the government appears to be doing the complete opposite.

The Premier stated in his budget speech that the longer you go down the path in the wrong direction, the harder the trip back will be. I’m curious. If the Premier really believed that the government was on the wrong path, why wouldn’t he turn us around instead of doubling down on debt and deficit and then blaming the previous government for it?

I heard some scoffing during Question Period when the Member for Copperbelt South mentioned the bank account having \$93 million in it when the Liberal government took office. The reality is — and it’s even in the Liberal’s own budget — that it shows that, yes, there was in fact \$93 million in the bank when they took office. The economy is showing signs of improvement, so why did the Premier feel that it’s necessary to take \$84 million out of those saving for this year? It shows that his small surplus of \$6.5 million really doesn’t mean a whole a lot when it’s followed by three consecutive years of big deficits — and I mean big, when we’re speaking of up to \$60 million — and \$216 million worth of debt by 2020.

It appears that the Premier will be spending at least \$216 million that Yukon just doesn’t have. Ultimately it will be Yukoners who have to pay for this reckless spending, and we’re assuming that will be through increased taxes and fees. We have to ask the question: Will the Premier at least tell us which taxes he’s planning on increasing in the future to pay for this spending? When are we going to have to start paying it back? Is this going to be my children paying it back — my grandchildren, great grandchildren? Where do we stop?

As well, how long does he anticipate it will take to pay back all of this debt? The forecast that the Premier has put forward is only to the end of his mandate, so you have to wonder if he does not care who is going to paying this debt off or how it will be paid off. We’re essentially leaving it to our children and grandchildren, as I said, to worry about. I would have to ask: Why is the Liberal government spending like there’s no tomorrow and leaving a huge debt for future generations to pay for?

The \$216 million doesn’t even account for the interest on that debt as well. In fact, in the Premier’s fourth year in office, the Yukon could pay up to \$14.5 million in interest payments alone, and that’s \$14.5 million that I feel could be spent in a much better fashion.

Can the Premier tell us whether Yukon’s interest payments will come out of current departmental budgets, or is he planning on borrowing even more money to pay the interest on all of this new debt? The alarming lack of details isn’t — I don’t feel — being transparent about the true cost of government as we’ve heard so much about. In his own plans for debt, debts and deficits, the Premier is still trying to blame his spending problems on the previous government. It’s important that the Premier understand that being in government means taking responsibility for the choices you make, such as taking responsibility for why it took so long to get us back here in the Legislature or taking responsibility for promises that have already been broken. Instead of taking responsibility for his own fiscal mismanagement the Premier continues to blame the previous government.

Another big issue that we see is, due to the government’s non-interest in doing the work to analyze the impacts that the carbon tax will have on the economy, that wasn’t factored into the budget. The government’s own budget documents say that increased gasoline prices will have a negative impact on Yukon’s tourism sector through increases in costs to travel to Yukon. This doesn’t take into account the cost of the carbon tax. It is fairly common knowledge that increased prices in gasoline are certainly going to affect visitation numbers. When visitors are considering coming up north, we know that they are going to think about that cost and it will be a key factor in where they choose to go. If costs are significantly lower to stay in the United States or somewhere else, then obviously there is a better chance they are going to go there rather than here. Of course, we can only assume that because we still have not been provided with the details to back up any claims on the carbon tax. This seems to be a growing trend with this new Liberal government — a lack of details.

The Premier’s new budget plan is projecting our GDP to grow at a much lower rate than the national average. As we know, the Premier hasn’t done an economic analysis of the impacts of the carbon tax. For all we know, this growth could be even lower. The same goes for the debt numbers. Is \$216 million going to be enough? Considering that his budget plan is based on incomplete data, we may end up even further in debt. This to me does appear to reflect the true cost of government.

If the Premier wasn't doing this analysis as he said over the past six months, then why did he delay returning to the Legislature so long? Why did he feel the need to wait until the end of April to table the budget?

Another example — if you look at the economic projections for the resource sector and its anticipated contribution to GDP, those projections don't account for the costs of carbon tax as well. The actual projections will likely be lower. Yet we are still here and we are still waiting to hear what the Premier has found out with regard to how much this carbon tax is going to cost Yukon families and businesses. Not only do we have no information, a mere eight months from when the carbon tax will be implemented, the projected debt and deficit could potentially be much higher than they are initially claiming. Omitting important information like this certainly isn't being open and transparent with Yukoners.

The Premier has a number of times referred to the net financial assets as the "piggy bank". Traditionally a piggy bank contains nickels, dimes, quarters, loonies — one time mine even had a \$5 bill in it — but the point is that piggy banks are a great way for children to learn the value of money and saving money — not so for governments. In all seriousness, we are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars, not quarters and loonies, and you cannot minimize something like that. Yukon taxpayers are not children and I don't think that they should be treated as such.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party spent years building up that bank account and I know people are going to scoff at that as well, but the fact of the matter remains. The Yukon Party put that money there and the reason they put that money was so that when there were economic slowdowns, we had savings. We had an economic slowdown and thankfully we had that money in the bank and we were able to ensure that the impacts of the global economy's downturn had fewer negative effects on the Yukon than it may have, had those savings not been in the bank.

Because of all the work that the previous members in this Legislature went through to ensure that money was in the bank for all Yukoners for those economic slowdowns, I don't think that gives this current Liberal government the right, or the social licence, to spend the money right into the red all in one fell swoop. I have said before that a wise man once told me that no matter how hard you try, you cannot spend your way out of debt. That is such an important little anecdote for the Premier to take to heart.

This new government boasts about evidence-based decision-making. Well, I have a question: Where is the evidence that running a deficit and creating enormous debt is a good idea?

We can talk for days about how great it is to see more companies investing here in the Yukon — these large companies like Newmont and Barrick are just a couple in the growing list of companies investing here in the Yukon. That's great and everyone has agreed that it's wonderful to see that. It makes me question even further that if things are getting better in the Yukon, then why is the bank account being emptied further, rather than growing? If this is how things are

when the economy is improving, what will we see out of this government if the price of gold goes to \$700 an ounce and Newmont, Barrick, Goldcorp and Agnico Eagle all say, "We're just putting these projects on ice for now". Then what do we have? We don't even have the savings account left to fall back on.

It's very interesting, but meanwhile we're seeing campaign promises being broken or amended right here on the floor of the Legislature. We've heard promises of seasonally dependent contracts being tendered before March of each year. Now it's May and we've heard, "Well, next year". Next year doesn't help Yukoners get through this summer and this coming winter.

So I have to say to the Premier that if you're going to make promises to Yukoners, it's important to ensure that you can actually follow through with them. They promised to eliminate the small business tax by July 1, 2017. That's something that we in the Official Opposition are always going to support. We would also support you living up to those promises, because two is a small number, but it's certainly not a zero. How many more broken or amended promises are we going to see?

Another thing that I would like to mention — that the Premier spoke about — was that he told Yukoners that they would be seeing real change with this government. I'm pretty sure that I heard the federal Liberals using that when they were campaigning too. We've taken a look through the budget. We worked on finding the substantial changes the Premier was talking about and I'll give you a list of a few of them, Mr. Speaker.

We know that with the previous government — the government that I was involved in, so that's the government that I will speak about — we saw five years of surplus budgets. In just one short year, this government will be turning that into deficits for an entire mandate, so yes, that's a real change. This government's predecessor left \$93 million in the bank and no net debt. The current Finance minister is quickly depleting those dollars and is set to take over \$216 million in net debt by 2020. Again, real change.

When the former Premier took office, his government showed the territory that it's possible to ensure Yukon's finances stay in the black, even through tough economic times. This Premier is showing us quickly how he can turn a plus sign into a minus sign — again, real change. From a government that met all of its election commitments and took meeting them very seriously, to one that is breaking or amending these promises and minimizing their importance — real change, Mr. Speaker. From a government that stood up for Yukon on the national and international stage, to a government that stands up for Ottawa — real change. The list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker. After a decade of a government that was concerned about getting to work right away after the election — truly hitting the ground running, Mr. Speaker — we see a government that is dragging its heels on moving forward.

My final comment today, Mr. Speaker would be: If this is what this government considers “hitting the ground running”, I would hate to see it if they just hit the ground walking.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his reply to the budget speech. I know it was well thought out and considered. Although some of the points in it I may not consider to be entirely valid, I'll move on with my take on it.

First off, I would like to say I am pleased to be here on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün and the Ta'an Kwäch'an nations. I also would like to thank the staff working very hard behind the scenes in all the departments to help us put this budget together. It took a lot of late nights, a lot of working back and forth. Our ministers did a great job — my colleagues. Once again, thank you to them.

Sound financial decisions are the hallmark of good governance and this budget will positively affect the lives of my constituents in Copperbelt North and the rest of the Yukon in many ways. We heard about the wants and needs of Yukoners at the doors during the campaign and many of these requests are reflected in this budget.

As I said in my reply to the throne speech about how it set the tone for our government, this budget is a fiscal road map for government and Yukoners. They can see both where we are and how we plan to get further on down the road.

Let's reflect on that map for a minute. The map is going to be created by the following principles outlined in the budget: Infrastructure — we are reinvesting in aging infrastructure. I am seeing over \$90 million just in the highlights here alone for highway restoration, bridge projects, airports, infrastructure — things that have been left to go fallow under the previous government and now we need to catch up. You can only let things go for so long before those chickens come home to roost.

Wellness is another big part of our platform and our budget — a people-centred approach to wellness. We are putting \$771,000 into enhanced home care. We are funding new full-time addiction and mental wellness workers in eight communities. We are supporting the land-based healing program, which seems to be working quite well. Just in pure stuff that we use every day — \$650,000 is going toward the purchase of four new ambulances.

New health care positions — enhancements to home care; a commitment to e-health, which will help take some of the strain off of our overworked doctors, nurses and other health care professionals; and 11 new full-time addiction and mental wellness workers. These and land-based healing, working toward First Nation relationships and reconciliation — all of these things are important in moving forward, and we move forward collectively working with our First Nation partners and other Yukoners.

Education — we have made a commitment to lifelong learning. A new school curriculum — my sons are going to be beneficiaries of this new curriculum, a curriculum that will help them understand First Nation culture, understand the

diversity that is the Yukon, and understand that, moving forward when they become the leaders of tomorrow, they know we have to work together. We are increasing school staffing where it seems appropriate and needed. These types of resources — because our children are some of our most important assets, and we have to make sure that their education outcomes are satisfactory so they can continue to help and improve life in the Yukon for their families and for themselves.

How about moving Yukon College more toward a university? Once again, my sons will be the beneficiaries of this type of innovation. They can stay in the Yukon to get a good percentage of their post-secondary education through the college itself, through distance learning sponsored by the college and supported by this government so that in the end the costs to parents, the costs to the students themselves — a quality education is provided for them and put within the reach of a lot more people.

Supporting the Carcross/Tagish learning centre is another very important budgetary commitment we made to move forward with children at a young age to help them make education a more important goal for people — make it something they want to move forward with and desire.

Our environment is also foremost in our minds when we're doing these sorts of things. We're looking right now at innovative ways to help power the Yukon. We have a shortfall of capacity right now. That needs to be addressed, and not with just the standbys of diesel and so on, but with innovative renewable resources, partnerships toward helping in the communities to come up with community-driven projects. First Nations also need to partner with this and help us to move the Yukon to a point where our power is stable, our infrastructure is good, and we can move forward with our economic growth.

Lowering corporate taxes, something the member across touched on — that we only lowered it one percent for the small businesses and three percent for large businesses. This is putting us squarely in the competitive field with the rest of the jurisdictions in Canada. By reducing corporate taxes, we are making more money available to Yukon businesses to reinvest in the human resources in their companies in the Yukon, which will help to create good jobs for Yukoners and our kids who are returning here and want to make a life, a family and a living here.

Innovation and growth are also being supported. We are starting research on developing an open data repository. This will help to put all the information that people are seeking within government — to do business with government and to do business themselves — where they can access it easily, cutting down on their time, costs and so on when they're trying to come up with a new project.

I already touched on e-health, another great way — we as a family have touched on e-health from some of the other provinces when we've had issues with allergies and so on with our kids when they have been travelling. It was quite supportive.

We are trying to develop a diverse and growing economy by connectivity, by putting forward a commitment to the redundancy in cable. We are just waiting now for our federal counterparts to see how much funding they are going to come through with and then a decision will be made.

Something new — the Financial Advisory Panel to work with Yukoners to engage them in how government exercises fiscal options to help grow the economy. We are not looking for someone to tell us how to do our job. What we want to do is have a vehicle to present to Yukoners the options that are available to get us where we want to go, all the way back to the road map. When we're driving from Whitehorse to Dawson, it may only look like there's one road but there are options. You can turn off at Carmacks; you can turn off here.

These are the options that we have to present to Yukoners. Give them the options. Option A will take us here and option B will be take us there. Let them be involved in the process of government and how we deal with their financial future. This will be our report card. This will be our road map.

We campaigned on being heard and that's what we'll do. The committee will go out and talk to Yukoners. They might have to jump in a canoe or on a four-wheeler. Heck, they're going to have to fly to Old Crow. We'll get them there. We want to hear from Yukoners. We want to hear the ideas. We campaigned on there being some great ideas out there, and we need to hear them. We are not an island over here. We're looking forward to working with the rest of the House and Yukoners to diversify our economy and make it stronger.

This budget is a thoughtful, measured and responsible financial framework — one that is evidence-based in focus, and it will serve Yukoners and my constituency very well.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to this 2017-18 budget, and I do want to thank all those who worked so hard to prepare it — the staff and the members opposite.

I would like to first take a moment to thank my family here: to my wife, Donna, on whom I rely for so much and who is always there through thick and thin, busy schedules, lots of time apart, but home will always be with you; to my two sons, who put up with the politics thing when I'm sure they would rather be talking about something else; to my mom and dad, to whom I owe my solid foundation as a person — your love and support will always be appreciated; and to my sister Harmony — your guidance in the past five years — and I'm sure in the next five — is appreciated. You are quite politically aware and savvy. Without the incredible support and understanding of my family, I would not be able to do my job to the best of my ability and I thank them.

Likewise, without the continued support of my constituents, I would not have the chance to represent our amazing riding of Kluane. I wasn't going to, Mr. Speaker, but there are a few new members in the Legislature today and I just want to highlight sort of what my riding looks like. It starts at the Takhini River bridge and there are oodles of folks who live at the Takhini River subdivision and in between there and Mendenhall, and in between Mendenhall and

Champagne, and in between Champagne and Canyon, and in between Canyon and Haines Junction. It heads down the Haines Road, and there are constituents scattered out there — the further one being in BC, Lance Goodwin. I told him I would get his name in Hansard, so Lance's name is in Hansard now. Then you head north, up the Alaska Highway to Haines Junction. You won't get very far and you're at Kloo Lake, then you're at Silver City, and then there are folks up to Destruction Bay. Then all the way from Destruction Bay, there are people in between Destruction and Burwash, and from Burwash all the way to Beaver Creek — and now we're starting to see a few more people in between there. Some of the older highway lodges are disappearing, but you're still starting to see people living there. It's a big, diverse riding, and my constituents, I believe, are those to whom I own so much. I'm proud to serve them and I thank them for their guidance.

I guess I would be remiss if I didn't thank those on my campaign team who helped me this time around, especially Libby Dulac and Jennifer McPhie. You two were a rock and I'm so thankful for that.

For those who came door-knocking — and I know we all had to door-knock — it was a pleasure and we had so much fun. We met so many interesting people, some of them new, some of them we've known for a long time and never a dull moment. There was lots of listening and lots of writing. I commit to each and every one of you to represent your concerns, ideas and needs, both at home and in the Legislature.

We have heard from the Premier of his government's priorities for this year. There are some really wonderful things in the budget and there are some other things that maybe I'm a little disappointed in, but I'll talk about some of that. After years of our government delivering forward-thinking balanced budgets that Yukoners could be proud of, I was a bit disappointed with the budget that this government has had a record six months to prepare. The conclusion I came away with after hearing the budget speech from the Premier was that essentially this government has much work to do in order to understand the needs of Yukon. Their lack of detail leads to many presumptions and questions and we'll get those questions out. Their heavy funding allocation to some groups and disregard for others has been noted and we've heard it from Yukoners. They have begun to build a picture of what our territory will look like under a Liberal government and it's not a picture that includes all Yukoners.

I would like to talk about a few of the government's shortcomings with regard to this long-awaited budget reveal. I will have many questions, most of which will be highlighted as we go through the details in the department debates. I have spent many years working with the United States government to reinstate the building and maintenance work of the Shakwak agreement on the section of the Alaska Highway — the transportation bill, the MAP-21 — since its removal in 2012.

I have spoken with senators, governors and Canadian federal government counterparts. I have sent letters

highlighting the importance of this fund to rebuild this critical linkage of Yukon and Alaska. Two of my most recent were sent out only this year as the MLA to area residents who depend on this highway and on the benefits that the US highway tourism brings to their businesses and our towns. Our former Premier travelled to Washington to advocate for continued US funding. I remember back then there was a bit of criticism for our lobbying efforts, but it isn't important. I can only hope that our new Premier sees the importance of continuing these efforts and from what I'm hearing, it sounds good from his new position.

As the previous Highways and Public Works minister and the MLA for Kluane, I'm curious to know whether the Premier's reference to a funding allocation for the highway repair and maintenance in his budget speech includes critical ongoing maintenance to ensure the highway between Whitehorse and Haines Junction and beyond remains a safe and reliable mode of transportation to residents and visitors. The future of the Shakwak project remains unclear. Like I said earlier, I do urge the government to continue lobbying efforts, but also to continue funding repairs on that stretch of highway. If they don't continue the work required, I'm one who can tell you that progress made up until this point will deteriorate and the costs will build.

I worked hard in the last five years brushing along our highways and I am hoping funds allocated continue for public safety on our highways. We need to continue on the previous government's work on highway signage for communities. I think there are some positive things moving forward with that, working with the municipalities, our local area committees, First Nations and chambers of commerce.

This will benefit with the signage I was discussing, so standardization and updating policies will help the tourism industry and all of the travelers on our highways. Staying on public safety on our highways, it has been brought to my attention there is a need for turning lanes in the Mendenhall, Canyon and Takhini subdivisions. I travel the north highway often and I definitely see a need.

Civic addressing was being implemented for rural Yukon and this government needs to continue on with this and I can just say that an example is there are three Takhini subdivisions, so you can see where there would be some confusion for emergency responders.

I will be looking to get an update on how reconciliation with White River is coming along. It was something the previous government had been working on.

With some of the Building Canada fund folks in recreation, I look forward to finding out when the new community centre will be built in Beaver Creek.

I'm a bit frustrated with the fact that the government is not prioritizing the maintenance upgrades needed to the Destruction Bay marina. Studying is not good enough. I think action needs to be taken. I sent a letter right after the election highlighting the issues. Subsequently the Kluane Lake Athletic Association, chambers of commerce, individual businesses and more have sent letters and correspondence. The Government of Yukon has an MOU with Kluane First

Nation to develop cottage lots on Kluane Lake and that's where boat access comes in with this. I still haven't had much of a response, but we're studying it and I do believe it should be a priority. I know my constituents sure do.

In the budget, I see no mention of the school in Burwash Landing. There is also an MOU between the Yukon government and Kluane First Nation to move forward with this. I look forward to this.

New key infrastructure too that is needed in our communities are, for example, a nursing station in Destruction Bay. I believe it's at the top of the list next to the Old Crow nursing station to be replaced and I have heard from constituents — and I am hoping and maybe this is a bit of a shout-out to the ministers — that they have not yet come to the community to talk with the local LACs and community members about this. I'm hoping and I'm sure they will probably be on tour this summer to chat with everyone.

There is an MOU between the Yukon government and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations on local area planning between Takhini River and Haines Junction. I don't see that in the budget, but I sure hope that this work is going on. Local area planning as we know is key so we move forward on opportunities for Yukoners.

When I was made aware of the Liberal government's plan to point the Yukon's financial ship downwards into deficit and debt, I was disappointed for the future generation of Yukoners — for my kids and grandkids. I thought of the hard work it will take once again to right the ship. Floundering with the territory's finances cannot be good no matter how this government tries to justify it. On behalf of my family and my constituents, I ask that this government take careful note of the financial situation that it projected going forward, look at all the potential negative repercussions of this discussion and reconsider following in the federal footsteps down the path to debt. The Yukon is very unique and we should be treated as such.

You were left a gift of a good financial situation and record from our Yukon Party government. The Premier has said himself — and I think we've heard this — that they are determined to ensure strong public sound finances for Yukoners. That is not the result of strong sound public finances, so with all due respect, I think our Premier got it wrong.

Playing games with the public purse is not to the benefit of Yukoners; it simply mimics Ottawa. I note the lack of funding for sport and recreation with great interest. I could not help but take note of the increased tobacco tax and think that the best way to encourage our youth not to start smoking in the first place would be to encourage physical activity and allow options and support to youth to develop skills in their chosen sport. I believe that lowering the rate of smoking within the Yukon Territory starts with investing in our youth. Our government could have added resources to help smokers on their quit path. While more expensive cigarettes might seem like a perfect way to get people to quit, it really is simply a money-maker for the government. Help people to work on their addictions rather than taxing them. I would like

to see this government use the funds derived from the tobacco tax in full for prevention in youth through sport investment and into programs to help people quit smoking. Allocating these funds back into prevention and solutions would give this tax meaning.

While I also noted that the government will be investing in youth groups, which I am in favour of, I would also have liked to see similar specific funding being allocated to sports organizations. Taking away sports funding and removing letter grades for students in grades 4 to 9 does not reflect highly on this government's regard for our youth. I believe our children need to learn to measure themselves against others. This encourages goals and a sense of self. When our children measure their progress against that of their peers, they will be encouraged to make positive decisions to do better. Children also achieve this determination to succeed within sports and recreation.

I am disappointed with the choices this government has made with regard to student assessment and sport funding. I hope they will change their tune and reconsider the path they are taking. Our children will have to live with our decisions, so make them good ones.

There is a special group of Yukon's population that did not receive any mention of the government in the Premier's Budget Address or elsewhere. This government covered lot development. He covered some staff housing, low-income housing and housing retrofits, but nowhere in the budget did the Liberal government make any indication that it will provide for seniors housing.

Our seniors have not been recognized. No funding has been allocated to ensure that they are taken care of. More specifically, I speak to my riding of Kluane. The Yukon government had committed funding to complete phase 2 of our seniors housing in Haines Junction. This is a necessary project and I am disappointed in this government for not taking note of the importance of this funding for the residents of Haines Junction, aging populations and for those local surrounding First Nations and residents who live up the north highway. This has been a priority of mine as the MLA for Kluane, and I will probably always be talking about it.

I would like to hear why this government overlooked not only this important project, but the housing requirements of seniors across the territory. The Premier said himself that the Yukon will have more seniors in the future and we must begin planning for the services that we will need. Unfortunately, there was no mention of what those services might be. I am thankful the previous government invested so heavily in seniors housing and hope the current government will realize the need for continued investment in projects to house and to serve some of the most important members of our communities.

The Premier mentions continued support of the fibre diversity project. It is not surprising that there is no further detail regarding this important investment in our territory. I believe we asked the government to confirm that they plan to go ahead and build upon the work done on the Dempster fibre line. Their response was that they were considering other

options going forward and will not commit to continuing with the project.

I think that this is unfortunate, based on the time and money already invested in the project, not only by government but by private industry. I would encourage the government to re-examine their path going forward and weigh the benefits of the northern fibre loop. Mr. Speaker, providing Internet reliability and redundancy to northern communities is important going forward and this investment must be made on behalf of all Yukoners.

The government has committed to a significant sum of money to celebrate activities regarding Canada's 150th anniversary. I was hoping to see that our rural communities would receive a bit more, as the funding allocation is mainly to Whitehorse and to perhaps Dawson; \$300,000 is quite a budget to plan celebratory activities.

I would like to remind the Premier and his team that, while 150 years is an important milestone for our country, Yukoners can't help but notice the lack of funding for so many important areas in this budget and wonder why celebrations are more important than fulfilling the number of old promises that the government had made.

I anxiously await the release of more capital projects to benefit our communities, as do many Yukoners. With the opening of the new F.H. Collins school and the Sarah Steele Building, we have important projects with immense positive impact on our community come to an end. The Salvation Army Centre of Hope is nearing completion. We will soon enough be opening the doors to a beautiful new continuing care facility to relieve pressure on other critical health care facilities. There are a number of critical projects that should be in the hopper, waiting for the green light from this government — projects that would address community problems and needs in the long term and provide a continued stream of work for our construction sector in the short term.

Schools are nearing their life expectancies — I spoke about the one in Burwash. Seismic testing undertaken during the last term of government shows this — and I was glad to see today that we were so fast at inspecting our schools and our government infrastructure, and I thank the minister. I listened to him on the radio bright and early driving into town — good work there.

I have already touched on seniors housing and another good example of this project brought forward to the government by the Vimy Housing Society. They are a determined group and made seniors housing a priority. They have performed extensive planning for the benefit of all seniors in our community. We will all grow old and we will all need somewhere to live, so I would urge the government to reconsider their stance on this project and the others of this nature for our communities. I think I read a motion in the House today.

The Premier stated that this government is allocating \$250,000 to the Dawson City Airport planning. While this is no surprise, as he has been a star advocate for paving the Dawson runway — we have heard him many times in this House — there is no specific mention that this is what the

money will be used for. Is this money going toward expanding the terminal or paving the runway? Has this government reviewed other community airports and aerodromes across the Yukon to determine whether changes and upgrades are required in other communities? This is a vague commitment and should actually have Dawsonites asking for clarification and other community residents asking: “What about us?”

This budget contains money to plan and replace three group homes in Whitehorse — once again, no mention of rural Yukon.

Additionally, there is no mention of this government putting money into other aspects of live-in childcare. Yukon needs foster families. There is no mention of incentivizing foster families to care for Yukon children as an alternative to group homes. The government had six months to consider all problem areas and chose to put planning dollars into group home replacement instead of maybe tackling the areas that would see more positive results immediately.

I look forward to digging down into the Liberal government’s 2017-18 budget by departments. There will be news releases with what you are doing and we will learn more. I am hoping that your ministers will be able to provide some thoughtful detail about the questions I have outlined today and many more to come.

By this time in the last mandate, as a new MLA for Klune, I had been given a ministerial portfolio — that was relatively large, I might add. I was also almost through my second Sitting and a barrage of Question Periods. We had had our budget out and contracts were plentiful. I say this not to boast, but to identify that I was new, I was learning and I was overwhelmed. It took me awhile to adjust and figure this out, as I am sure folks across the way can attest to in this House today. I am thankful for the staff I had in the departments who guided and advised me. I am also very happy for the patience back then of my family and friends. It was much appreciated. I also learned something early in life from my family — not to judge or paint people with a broad brush, but to take time to get to know those around you.

In conclusion today, I do look forward to the next five years. We are new and we are getting to know each other — working with the members opposite — so we can keep the Yukon the best place to live, work, play and raise a family.

Mr. Gallina: I stand before you today to reply to the first budget being tabled by this new government. There are several themes I see coming from this budget and the Premier’s recent address that I would like speak to, as well as their relation to my constituents in Porter Creek Centre.

First, I would like to recognize the team who put this budget together. This team that I am a part of owns this budget along with its delivery and management. Our caucus has done the difficult job of making responsible financial decisions based on our vision for this territory, which is a result of what we heard from citizens. I want to take this time to thank civil servants for their contributions to the preparations of this plan. As someone who has been through the corporate financial planning process, I can appreciate the

condensed timelines, collaboration required and adjustments needed to be made in light of a government transition to get this budget and financial plan prepared. For their work and dedication to their job and commitment to Yukon people, I say thank you.

Sport and youth initiatives — in my experience as a community investment manager in this territory, I have been fortunate enough to work with many sport and youth organizations. This government has committed to continuing and increasing core funding to a number of youth organizations. This year, our government is investing \$220,000 in additional funding for youth groups. We are investing in resources and supports that help children and youth.

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 Yukon Towards Equality and the Youth of Today Society. We’re also investing \$60,000 in the Singletrack to Success program. This will expand the development of mountain biking trails by youth so that young people working on the project will build a sense of achievement.

We’re increasing the rate of tax on cigarettes and loose tobacco in order to promote health among Yukon residents, including youth.

I see the value of engaging youth and adults in sporting activities. 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 help to train Team Yukon as they proudly represent us at the North American Indigenous Games in July.

Our early childhood development strategy — I’m the father of a young family who has accessed many early childhood services offered here in the territory. I feel fortunate to live here with the services available for my children. During the recent campaign leading up to the 2016 election, I had the opportunity to participate in an early childhood education forum at Yukon College where candidates heard from parents, childcare workers and other interested parties throughout the territory. The format was a question and answer period and the participants were passionate and united in wanting commitments to improving the delivery of early childhood care services in this territory.

At this forum, I listened and heard many questions and concerns. I heard that parents want what’s best for their children. Parents of children with special needs face often insurmountable obstacles to receiving adequate services to address the needs of their children and this has an impact on their everyday lives and the lives of their children.

I heard that childcare providers want to understand the children who they are entrusted with caring for every day. They come from a place of caring. When they enter the childcare field, it is top of mind that they foster and encourage development in children and provide support to families. I heard that the participants want firm commitments on

addressing the multiple issues they see every day concerning children. They want less talk and more action. We've heard Yukoners and 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. That also helps to improve school readiness. Health and wellness begins by helping young people get a good start in life. Yukon is stronger when young people have hope and confidence. A healthy childhood and adolescence is the beginning of success in school, work and life. We are investing in resources and supports that help children and youth.

The reconciliation process — as we look forward, we believe a better future for Yukoners requires a renewed government-to-government relationship with First Nation people of Yukon built on partnership, cooperation and respect. We are wholeheartedly committed to the path of reconciliation. That is why we have committed annual funding to host the Yukon Forum four times per year. After a very successful first meeting of the Yukon Forum earlier this year, we look forward to more productive discussions at the next meeting later this month as we continue to develop a strong working relationship between Yukon and First Nation governments.

We are also investing money to support the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle in delivering training to communities and to Team Yukon to attend the North American Indigenous Games in Toronto. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recognizes the North American Indigenous Games as an important pathway to reconciliation. We are happy to support the athletes and support staff heading into these major games, which promote positive impacts of sport and wellness in indigenous communities.

The government is spending money to coordinate our participation in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which will begin here in our territory at the end of this month, and is also providing funding for indigenous women's organizations. The budget also includes funding for the First Nation housing program as well as a Yukon-made land-based healing program, including renewed commitments to the Jackson Lake healing centre. There are many areas where we can work in partnership with First Nations to ensure that all communities in the Yukon continue to grow and thrive, and the Yukon government is taking a whole-government approach to reconciliation with First Nation governments. By working collaboratively with First Nations, we are moving in a new direction toward a future that will benefit all Yukoners — our whole-government approach.

Beyond forging reconciliation with First Nations, our government is committed to taking a whole-of-government approach to improve the lives of all Yukoners. By coordinating the operations of various departments and corporations, we are ensuring that we take a focused, measured approach to investments in jobs, people, and communities across the territory. By making investments in aging infrastructure, we are protecting the roads, highways,

bridges, airports and airstrips that connect our communities and allow people and goods to move between and beyond them and setting the foundation for future projects and development. By working with First Nations and communities to find innovative energy solutions for the north, we are moving toward a more sustainable future that meets the needs of our growing economy while reducing our impact on the environment. By investing in education initiatives, we are supporting learners of all ages and the teachers and the staff who help them to advance and achieve their educational goals. By spending money on data and tech-based services and initiatives, we are fostering innovation and growth in the territory.

Through investments in home care, addictions and mental wellness, staff and land-based healing programming, we are supporting Yukoners' well-being with effective programs and services. By changing corporate tax rates, we are making Yukon more attractive for investment and growth. Investments in the arts, regional economic development and a territory-wide tourism strategy will help sustain and create good jobs in a diverse and growing economy.

The creation of an expert Financial Advisory Panel will contribute to our efforts to incorporate public input into evidence-based decisions that meet the needs of Yukoners now and into the future. On the Financial Advisory Panel, I see this as an act of responsible government. This isn't about coming up with a scheme to solve all of our problems or a campaign to tell people what we as elected officials think should happen. This is about being open and accountable to the electorate. This is about collaborating with the business community, governments and the community-at-large in an effort to truly outline our financial situation and work toward achievable, well-thought solutions.

As we've seen with a significant reduction in our surplus, if we don't begin to get our financial house in order, we'll be in a situation where Ottawa and other provinces and territories look to us and question the value and benefit of the support they regularly provide us.

This advisory panel includes established Yukoners and qualified financial technicians who know how to properly engage with community stakeholders and report their findings in a non-partisan manner. Mr. Speaker, the benefits of this panel are unquestionable and I look forward to working with my constituents to engage in this process.

In closing, I believe this budget is people-centred, takes an approach to wellness and helps Yukoners thrive. It's strategic and will help build healthy, vibrant communities. It focuses on strong government-to-government relations with First Nations and it will foster reconciliation.

It will help to diversify and grow economies to provide good jobs for Yukoners in an environmentally responsible way.

Ms. McLeod: I would like to begin by thanking the residents of southeast Yukon for their continued support and their trust in me to serve them as MLA for Watson Lake. I'm proud to represent such an incredible, diverse and spirited

group of people and I look forward to the work I'll do on their behalf in this term, both in the riding and in the Legislature. The people I represent are resourceful and strong, and they expect to be respected as a vital part of the whole network of Yukon communities.

They entrust me with their questions and concerns and hold expectations for me to get back to them with answers. I work diligently and quickly with those questions and concerns and respectfully ask that the members of this government do the same — to treat the people of Watson Lake with the same respect they do for their own constituents. I look forward to having critical and meaningful conversations with the new ministers on their behalf.

First, I have to say that I really love budgets. I love budgets from all levels of government and I follow them quite closely and always have. Budgets — especially the territorial budget — affect Yukoners on a very broad level and there are few who escape its effects. My constituents — like most other Yukoners, I'm sure, who pay attention to budgets — all want to know: What's in the budget for me? They all want to know how this budget is going to affect me. How is this budget going to improve my life?

That, of course, is the eye that I turn to when I read the budget. I want to know what's in there. What's going to help? My understanding was that this budget was going to be improved. What I have found is that there is a lot less detail in it. It's a lot more difficult to find out what the money is being spent on, but that's what we have Committee of the Whole for. I'm sure we can dig down into those details because that is where we're going to find out exactly whether or not this budget is doing what it says it does.

I have to convey my disappointment and dismay in the projections that are shown in the budget. For the Yukon to go from no net debt to shocking debt by the end of the Liberal government's mandate is quite simply a misguided and irresponsible approach to handling our taxpayers' money.

As a homeowner and a taxpayer, when I run out of money I have to quit spending. I can't continue to take on debt. It doesn't matter what the family wants. It doesn't matter what I want. I have to stop spending.

Yukoners need to know that their government is not going to follow the federal lead into debt, which, I can assure you, most Canadians are in shock over. They want to see their government live within its means. This is not the picture our government has painted so far, and we are six months in. To claim the good as its own and to pass the buck on whatever is negative — this is what we have seen so far. I hear it over and over again, even though the Premier today sat and said, "We are not going to do that." Then the very next speaker did that.

It has chosen to place blame on the previous government for leaving them with a deficit this fiscal year, complete with the convenient omission of the fact that their government shared almost equally the spending of the 2016-17 fiscal year. The actuals for the 2016-17 year have yet to be released. It blames a \$29.4-million special warrant on the previous government rather than accepting any responsibility for reconvening the Legislature at such a late date — well beyond

the start of a new fiscal year. Living within its means is something that the government cannot show with an infographic. It is shown through thoughtful effort and detailed commitments. I know that we have been criticized over the years for doing that thoughtful work and making a commitment to a balanced budget because, you know, you can't please everybody and somebody is not going to be happy.

But we provided balanced budgets year after year, and I urge the current government to focus on prioritizing. From one look at their projections, our grandchildren will be paying for this government's mistakes for years. The Premier said in his Budget Address that Yukon's current path was leading to further fiscal uncertainty. I cannot imagine what fiscal uncertainty our children and grandchildren will face if this government continues on their new-found path to debt.

The Premier has stated that his government will evaluate the implications of lowering the small business tax rate before making future decreases and, obviously, as the interim Leader of the Official Opposition has said, we would support this. This move obviously involved considerable calculation. If only the government could commit to being calculated and measured with the implications of a carbon tax on citizens before lending its solid support to the notion of the carbon tax. The government has given itself an out if their promise to eliminate the small business tax goes south. Is this going to be what we have to look forward to? A governing team who makes excuses for breaking promises before they even try to fulfill them just in case they don't go the way that they want.

The Premier mentioned in his Speech from the Throne the negotiations his government had with Ottawa for the \$11.4 million in federal contributions for home care and mental health initiatives. This money is stretched over 10 years. We all know that. The \$520,000 per year is not going to go very far. I look forward to seeing how the communities will benefit from this money. Yukoners are well aware of the unique challenges each rural community in Yukon faces with regard to mental health.

I heard earlier today that there are mental health workers — new ones hired and distributed. We have no details on where, when or how, but again, it's one of those things where the devil is in the details and at the end of the day, this money has to go toward helping Yukoners, not simply providing additional jobs. As I say, I look forward to seeing how this figure breaks down and would appreciate seeing a breakdown of how this money will be spent and the analysis that led to the decision of how much to put where.

This government is — I don't want to use the word "indifferent" because that might not be really what I'm trying to say. It hasn't paid enough attention to the fact that Yukon is in need of additional funding for medical travel. That's the conclusion we have to draw from the lack of effort they put in to securing this critical funding during medical funding negotiations with Ottawa. I have not seen any reference to medical funding measures planned for in-Yukon and out-of-Yukon travel for Yukoners, over and above what we have seen already. I have not seen proof that any federal health

funding can in fact be dedicated to medical travel as the government has suggested.

I would like to hear more regarding the investments made to support 11 new full-time addictions and mental wellness workers in rural communities. Again, I'm assuming that was rural communities because I don't think that was actually said. I don't know where these positions are going to be deployed. Again, those are the details we still need to hear, but I am interested to hear the details of the plan and how the government means to allocate funding and personnel.

There is no mention whatsoever to increasing the number of foster families in our territory and I'm disappointed to see that a government that can come up with money to replace group homes can't find the money to look at ways to increase the number of foster families across the Yukon. This would relieve the pressure on group homes. Ideally we would like to see more Yukon children placed with Yukon families. Yukon foster families need help from the government finding ways to attract more foster families. That would see us reduce the strain on the group homes that are not always in favour.

The Premier mentioned in his throne speech the clean water and wastewater projects that will be key priorities this coming year. As I previously stated in this House, Watson Lake has three projects that are approved, they just need to be released for tender. Watson Lake residents have been questioning when these projects will be started for some time, and I hope the Minister of Community Services gets these projects out the door as soon as possible.

I mentioned the aging infrastructure and the importance of upgrades to the town for residents and tourists alike. The Watson Lake Visitor Information Centre is past the point of repairs and upgrades, none of which have been discussed in this budget. This should be a key priority for this government. Replacing the visitor information centre in Watson Lake would be an important step in making Watson Lake the place we all want it to be. As the first impression of Yukon communities to visitors — as the gateway to the Yukon — we need Watson Lake to be a thriving and sustainable community. If government begins with those infrastructure projects already approved and work to identify the next priorities, Watson Lakers have the drive to excel and improve. Upgrading the bones of the community — the aging infrastructure — will increase the quality of life for residents. It will give certainty for the future as my community deserves — and indeed all communities across the territory deserve.

The budget highlights make vague reference to investments in aging infrastructure. This of course piques my interest since once again I realized there are very few details contained in this budget. There is no information as to which communities will see these investments, although we did hear that the City of Whitehorse will be getting some major projects funded. There is no information on whether new projects have been identified.

The government has changed the way it highlights the budget. Instead of breakdowns and concise points showing where the government plans to place the money to be spent, they have infographics, pictures of telephone lines and bridges

prepared with bold text. I can appreciate creating a document with visual appeal, but it unfortunately leaves many of us wondering how each picture might apply to our communities. I say it again: when communities read the budget, they want to know what is there for them and how this is going to improve their lives.

The budget depicts \$30 million for infrastructure investments in communities across Yukon. It mentions \$35.8 million for all Yukon highway restoration and rehabilitation projects. It mentions \$6.5 million for restoration and rehabilitation of Yukon airports and airstrips. I'm left wondering what these figures mean for the people of Watson Lake. Do we have more money for infrastructure projects coming our way other than the projects identified and approved under the previous government? Is there restoration and rehabilitation money coming our way for our section of the Alaska Highway? Is our airport and airstrip going to see improvements?

For the safety of the travelling public, brushing of Yukon's highways is of paramount importance. I didn't see any money in the budget for this. The Liberal government has committed to allocating funds to 30 infrastructure projects, naming a number that were underway from the previous government, and it would be nice to see these projects move forward. I look forward to seeing when these tenders will be put out for contractors to bid on and prepare for work so they are busy this year.

I'm encouraged to see that within the government's reflected priorities and visions for Yukon, they included strategic investments to build "... healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities". That's a quote. This is my priority as well. This is my priority for my colleagues and it has always been a priority. I look forward to seeing what this government has in store for our rural communities.

I would like to bring attention to the Liberal plan to make land available for lot development. I appreciate the continuation of lot availability in Whistle Bend as the previous government had worked continuously to make lots ready for families. It's a little hard to understand though why Whistle Bend is the only area referenced for lot availability after the Premier stated his government would ensure land is developed. Does this government have any plans beyond Whistle Bend?

While it's a compliment to us, I guess, to see this ongoing development and funding, I have to wonder what else is going to be developed for the folks around Whitehorse, because there are a lot of people who don't want to live in a subdivision. They want to see some rural development. They want to see some larger lots and some country residential lot development. The people in Whitehorse are not alone there. I think that there are many communities that have not seen land development in many years. I know in Watson Lake, it has been probably 30 years since there has been subdivision development. I'm not even sure that's the way to go at this point. What I do suspect is that there has been no discussion with the Town of Watson Lake in this regard.

What I do suspect is that there has been no discussion with the Town of Watson Lake in this regard.

With regard to tourism, I am happy to see the number of commitments the government has made to the tourism sector within this year's budget. It will be interesting to see when an economic analysis is finally done on the implications of a carbon tax on the tourism sector and whether these investments will be enough to keep the visitor numbers up. I look forward to seeing this — perhaps when Ottawa has time to dedicate to understanding this task on behalf of or in collaboration with our territorial government.

I look to the government's commitment to sustainable economic growth providing good jobs for Yukoners, and I wonder how this relates to southeast Yukon. We know that forestry is at a standstill, and now the Liberal government has suspended the staking of mineral claims for another year. So what is the plan? I look forward to these conversations as we go forward to look more closely at the budget.

I am encouraged to see this government making investments for youth groups a priority and, after all, we agree that our children are our future. I am concerned, however, that certain groups were specifically mentioned and I would like to know what sort of funding is offered for our rural youth. We have heard the Premier comment on funding allocated to the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle to deliver traditional sport development and leadership across the Yukon. That is an incredible way to focus on First Nation traditional sport and I appreciate seeing it in the budget. I look forward to seeing how my community can benefit from this funding. I have not yet come across any dedicated funding to other sport and look forward to hearing more about the other sport funding that this government has dedicated this year but failed to highlight in the budget.

The only reference to physical activity is an investment of \$2.5 million into the F.H. Collins track and field. I understand that, since the track at F.H. Collins was moved due to the construction of the new school, it is warranted and I am happy that it is progressing. But I would like to make note that Watson Lake also has a need for maintenance and upgrading of their track and field. Our small town is having trouble coming up with the \$22,000 that we need for it. Perhaps this government could package that into this \$2.5 million and the worry of raising funds could be eliminated. I bet that Watson Lake isn't the only community affected by a lack of attention to their sport fields. I do want to thank the Department of Education for the contribution that they have made so far in upgrading this track and field. However, it is a job half-done and that is not very good. We have seen almost no investment for a number of years.

I would like to hear the breakdown for the cost of this new track and field during budget debate and see perhaps if there is room to dedicate some of this funding to other jurisdictions. I would also note that, with soccer in full swing, we haven't heard anything from this government on the repair and maintenance of soccer fields across the territory.

While track is an important feature, there are a number of other projects and organizations that should have had

significant enough funding to be listed along with this project. With the dedication of the Department of Community Services in past years with the previous government to funding for other sports organizations, I cannot imagine that the current government has bypassed funding altogether, so I will await news on the funding for sport and sport organizations when we delve into those departments.

Having a couple of Olympians who began their love of sport in our small town, Watson Lake residents hold sport and recreation dear and have a continued appreciation for all sport and what it has to offer our youth.

I'm happy to see just how much this government has built on the good work of the previous government. For the Liberal government to speak at length about all of the hardships they inherited from the Yukon Party, it's rather flattering to see a number of good things coming that are a continuation of our hard work.

They have left out many groups and perhaps that's simply an oversight in speech drafting and I'm sure we'll find out more about that when other organizations stand up and say: "Hey, I think you forgot us."

I can say that Yukoners may benefit in some way or another from this 2017-18 Liberal budget. I'm inclined to believe that a selection of Yukoners will benefit greatly — others, maybe not so much. We have not heard any detail on how this spending will affect rural Yukon or whether the communities will see results. I look forward to going into the budget in greater detail and hopefully it will receive a number of clarifications and answers to my questions.

Just before I conclude, I want to acknowledge that over the years and even as a Yukon Party government, we don't always get what we want for our communities — our ridings. It doesn't mean that today it has to be a hindrance. There are things that I have asked for, for my community for a while. I didn't get them before. I see no reason why I can't continue to work on those projects and why a new government wouldn't support them as being good for Yukoners.

I want to thank everyone for their attention this afternoon and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to rise and respond to the Budget Address on behalf of the good people of Whitehorse West. My little riding is compact — a microcosm of the greater Yukon, rolled up in a neat little package. It is a diverse neighbourhood. There are a few home-based businesses. It has our territory's first and only French-language school, though that is soon to change. I'll advance that in more detail later.

This riding's strength is its people — a diverse, thoughtful bunch who come from across the territory, indeed from across the entire country and the world. These people speak a dazzling array of languages. They reflect the globe's cultures and they come from all walks of life, all professions. So make no mistake, Whitehorse West's issues are the territory's issues and, prior to the last election, the people of Whitehorse West — indeed, the people of the Yukon — asked to be heard.

As I walked the riding last year, I heard from hundreds of people. I heard what they wanted from their government. I heard what direction they wanted the Yukon to go. I heard about education, schools, teachers and curriculum. We're dealing with all that today. I heard about health, mental health and hospitals. Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with that today. I heard about housing and poverty and social work. I am pleased to say we are dealing with those issues today in this budget.

I heard about the need for prenatal nutrition. I heard about libraries and their continued importance in this digital age. I heard about truth and reconciliation. I heard about our jail — about what it's like to be a jail guard.

I heard about what it's like to be a nurse, and I learned what it's like to be a nurse who has been beaten by a patient, about what it's like to be a teacher or a teacher's assistant, and views about how the teaching association or the government's union handles its members. I heard about what it's like to be a police officer and how staffing affects the job. I heard what it's like to be a social worker, about the pressures and the successes in that field. I heard what it's like to work in the hospital's warehouse — a place few of us get to visit, but that, according to those who work there, plays an important role in the supply and delivery of hospital care. I listened to those people; I heard what they had to say, and I'm actually convinced that the warehouse is very important to the way our health care is delivered, but we don't often get there and we don't often pay it much heed.

I heard about homelessness and hunger. I heard what it's like to live on a pension or live without one. I heard what it's like to be a single mother or father and how difficult it is to manage childcare in this territory. I spoke to a woman who had health problems and was forced to sell her trailer because she couldn't afford the mortgage. She was transitioning to social housing and had to leave behind many of her possessions — find a place to store them. She is particularly sad, Mr. Speaker, about moving away from the concrete fireplace she had made that was imprinted with her recently departed dog's paw prints. She was very sad about that, Mr. Speaker. We shared some tears that evening.

I heard what it's like to be in a wheelchair and the challenges around getting regular exercise in this city if you do find yourself in one. I heard about unemployment in industry and mining, and commuting to Saskatchewan for work. This was last year, Mr. Speaker. I also heard about what it's like to commute to the Yukon from Kelowna for work.

I heard about the need to protect our environment and about our trail system in Whitehorse and the territory — some of the challenges about managing use on that trail with ATVs, skiers, hikers and dogs, and how this growing population is going to deal with that.

I heard about our campsites and that they need a little love. We are going to deal with that this afternoon in this budget.

It's a long list. It's quite a list, but it could be a lot longer. It only scratches the surface of some of the things I heard from Whitehorse West residents. I could go on and on and on, but

I'm not going to this afternoon. I'm going to save some stuff for the next several weeks and parse out this information to my colleagues and those on the other side of the House. I'll tell these stories because this is why I'm here. Yukoners asked to be heard. They asked to be heard. This budget — our first budget, this Liberal government's first budget — is putting what we heard in action. All that information is rolled up in this document — this very first effort on the part of my colleagues. It is quite a process building a budget like this — of this size, of this importance. You can imagine a bunch of people fresh out of an election campaign trying to figure out their departments, forging new relationships with their deputies and other managers, learning how this machine works, buffeted by daily issues, and long-existing ones — ones that have existed for years — and simultaneously familiarizing yourself with the rules around the drafting of legislation and committee structure and the job of being in the Legislature, trying to get those committees reformed — committees that have sat dormant for years and that this government has put back into place to represent the people of this territory. We had to familiarize ourselves — learn about being a legislator — all of us have here. Meeting the staff — hundreds of people, each with a story and a role in this civil service, each with their own needs, wants and pieces of advice.

All the while we've been doing this, we've been working out the numbers — working together as a team, trying to juggle the needs of Yukoners and of our constituents with the commitments that we've inherited. We've inherited a lot of commitments. You guys have mentioned them. There's engineering work and environmental screening that has to go on, and all that stuff we've inherited and we're making it work. We've been listening to our departments and the needs they've identified — combing through them, seeing what's vital, and what is perhaps a “want to have” and not a “need to have”.

Fortunately — and I say this seriously, Mr. Speaker — I have a bunch of people around me, both in this caucus and in these departments, with a lot of real-world experience — people I have grown to trust, people who I know will check my own biases and assumptions and will challenge me and will help me do the good work of this government, people who will listen when I tell them what the people of Whitehorse West have told me. Through that process, working together — all of us working together — hammering out this document, having tough conversations and thinking things out, looking at the data where it was available, Mr. Speaker, because it's not always available — we're going to work on that too. We crafted this document.

It took a tremendous amount of work on the part of the civil servants. Our departments were shepherding this new crew through literally billions of decisions — or, rather, decisions worth billions. They worked really hard, exceptionally hard. They put in a ton of hours, a lot of late nights, a lot of time away from their family and their friends. This is what public service is all about, and I'm grateful for the efforts so many put in on our behalf and the people of the

Yukon. This is where we landed. When we began this process, things were looking grim.

The righteous indignation we have seen on the other side of the House is a little rich, Mr. Speaker. Yukoners know what's going on. They do. They're an intelligent, thoughtful and resilient bunch. You just have to look at the media, Mr. Speaker. If they turned to the *Whitehorse Star* on Friday, they know how things are working. "The current government has shown a badly needed degree of wisdom in choosing to tap experienced private-sector advice to launch a major review of how spending decisions are initiated and how the process can be streamlined and improved.

"In fact, the advisory panel the premier announced Thursday is a step that should have been taken several years ago," but wasn't. "Just scan the budget for evidence of that."

They know what's going on. They know where we've ended up.

Some on the opposition benches are a bit befuddled by this government's economic projections. I'm not surprised. They didn't do it. They're not familiar with it. They don't know how it works. This is something new and something they don't understand — planning, looking to the future and giving a true account of the cost of government. That's all new. But they will begin to understand. They will see the wisdom of this transparent, realistic approach to budgeting that this government has taken.

There was a lot of red ink, a lot of commitments — not a lot of planning for those commitments. My colleagues, all of them, rolled up their sleeves and started the hard work of governing. We were and continue to be prepared for that work. As I've said, it took weeks and weeks of late nights and early mornings, a lot of reading, a lot of interpreting, a lot of discussions and poring over the ledgers, talking, evaluating — discussing. Hard questions were asked and answered and eventually things started to come into focus to a better place — not the best place, mind.

It would have been nice to have \$250 million in the bank. It would have been nice to have \$93 million in the bank. It would have been nice even to have \$15 million in the bank, but those days are gone — squandered, I would venture.

Yukoners should look around and assess what they have to show for the Yukon Party spree. What's the legacy? What was the plan? Where were we supposed to land? They haven't said. They're not saying anything. They won't say now. We're legislators, not illusionists, not conjurers. There were no rabbits being pulled from hats, their legs flailing to the delight of the crowd. We have limited resources, so as the Premier noted that when we build a facility like Whistle Bend and do not factor in the cost of operating that facility — a cost that will be between \$20 million and \$30 million, perhaps more — well, it's baffling how you could do that. Citizens in the territory might have another name for it. I will let them weigh in on that on their own. I know they have their opinions.

When you don't account for things like that it will eventually have an effect. As my good friend, the member for Copperbelt South just said, chickens will come home to roost. Well, this Liberal government inherited a few chickens and, to

be honest, we suspected we might. We're prepared to deal with them on behalf of all Yukoners. We were in fact elected to deal with them, and this first budget is our start at dealing with them.

It is not going to be easy, of course, but a little hard work on behalf of a good cause and for a brighter future for this territory and its citizens — well, who can begrudge that? The people on these benches will deal with it. My colleagues are a thoughtful, committed and deeply experienced crew. We are considered and measured. Yukoners are an innovative and hardy bunch. Working with our constituents and all citizens, we will bring order to these finances. We will bring order from the chaos. It has already begun with the document the Premier tabled last week. Deficits were pared back. This year, everyone expected a deficit, but we didn't want one. We didn't want a deficit. We worked hard to pare and prioritize, to plan and to execute a new way of doing business. As I said, it took weeks and we delivered a small surplus — a sliver of a surplus. That was a clever headline, Mr. Speaker — hats off to the scribe who penned that one. The hard work is not over. There is much more to be done. With Whistle Bend, the French school and other infrastructure we have inherited, once all that comes on line we will face deficits. We are being open about it. We are talking about it. The members opposite don't quite understand that approach, but that is all right. That is what we were elected to do.

These deficits are not what we wanted. It is not something that we ever wanted this territory to contend with. A \$250-million surplus would have been far better — or \$93 million, as I have said. We have nothing — less than nothing in fact. However, by sharpening our pencils and getting to work — a lot of hard work — we created a \$6.5-million surplus this year. We have started turning the ship. It is a big ship and it will require a lot more effort to turn it further, but this little government will turn it. We will do it. As I said, it is not where we want to be, but it is what we have inherited and we will deal with it methodically and with consideration, with planning and reason, with transparency and cooperation.

Of course, we have things we wanted to do and because of the finances we inherited, we had to reassess. We have had to reprioritize. We had to delay their implementation — delay, not eliminate. For example, our good friends on the Official Opposition benches are chattering a lot about our promises and, yes, we wanted to drop the small business tax to zero. That was our promise. We take promises seriously on this side — very seriously. It was painful for us to see the books, to realize the trap we had stumbled into — that the cupboards were bare and there was just a mess of IOUs in the cupboards. That was a much-publicized \$9.4-million surplus. It was actually an \$8.2-million deficit. That is a shock. As I said, my talented colleagues went to work and, working together, we made decisions — hard decisions, responsible decisions, tough ones. They still grate on us, believe me. None of us like this. It would have been easy to push on, ignore what we have learned and just execute on a promise to lower taxes to zero. Why didn't we? It was not the right decision today.

Things change — things were not as they seemed. They were not what the public had been told, given the circumstances — the real circumstances, not the illusory. It was not in the best interest of our citizens of the territory. Our situation has changed and we as Liberals assessed that. We did the right thing, not the easy thing — the hard thing. That is the devil's bargain. That is the job and we will do the job. I have heard that steely resolve in my colleagues — that resolve to serve all of our citizens' best interests. We put our good names on the line to serve Yukoners, so we are and we will.

In this one case, our promise was taken from us with the poor management that preceded us. We'll take our lumps. We'll make the hard decisions, not the expedient ones, and we'll serve Yukoners.

By expanding mental health services in the communities — my constituents asked for that and this government is delivering on that promise. It will diversify the delivery of health care in the territory.

For more than 20 years, I've heard about efforts to incorporate midwifery into the Yukon health care system. This government — my colleagues are going to do it. It's fixing primary health care, making sure citizens have access to doctors, nurse practitioners or nurses with expanded roles. It is expanding the services that can be delivered by pharmacists. Expanding services — that's what we're doing. We're not building stuff; we're expanding services. We're training new nurses annually instead of every 18 months. My constituents asked for that. We're delivering on that promise, Mr. Speaker. We're listening. We're investing in addiction services at the Sarah Steele Building and on the land — land-based healing. This government is investing in childcare. As I said earlier, we'll build a new French high school. We have \$8 million dedicated to that project.

This government is also pushing ahead with reconciliation with First Nations. We're an active participant in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We're amending the *Human Rights Act* and the *Vital Statistics Act* to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender identity or gender expression — again, things that my constituents and constituents across this government asked for.

We're investing in affordable, accessible and safe housing across Yukon. In Whistle Bend, we're investing \$9.8 million in lots and we're doing phase 4 planning. Why? Because we're looking down the road a little bit — that's what we do when we're a government. We look ahead and see what demands are going to come when we build a Whistle Bend facility that requires hundreds of new staff. Where are they going to live? Planning for housing lots is important to this territory to make sure that we don't run into that sort of shortage that our predecessors orchestrated.

We're going to eliminate diesel as a primary source of energy in the Yukon. We'll do this methodically through considered and measured investments and retrofits, renewable energy and alternative energy initiatives.

We are working with First Nations and municipalities. This doesn't cost money, but it makes financial sense working

together, because working together we spend money more efficiently. Our citizens across the territory — all citizens — get better bang for their buck. This cooperation brings more planning, more certainty for our resource sector.

Part of this reconciliation process is healing. There is a new statutory holiday. That holiday — with all its trimmings — as it evolves, will create new economic opportunities for businesses and communities throughout the territory. We will all be richer for it.

We are working to expand the tourism sector. We are working with the agricultural sector to build on initiatives of Yukon farmers and agricultural producers. We are delivering on a lot of promises. Because of this, the territory's citizens are optimistic; they see a lot of promise. For me — I'm working to improve airports. We are gathering all of the information we need to make an informed decision on the Dawson City runway paving. We are doing what we said.

We are completing a review of the territory's airports and aerodromes. There are four airports and 25 aerodromes in the territory. Once that review is done and once we have the information, we will invest properly, methodically considered. We will invest in our airports to enhance economic activities and improve community safety.

I've listened to pilots, I've listened to air carriers, I've listened to those who own aircraft, I've spoke to a couple of people who jump out of aircraft — fixed-wing and rotary-wing enthusiasts, owners, pilots, people who love aerodromes, people who are just enthusiasts. They have told me what their frustrations are — their long-term frustrations, years-long frustrations. They have told me what their hopes and dreams are and how they would improve airports. We are listening and we will work to improve this important community infrastructure.

We are investing, as my colleagues across the House said, \$6.5 million to improve, restore and rehabilitate Yukon airports and aerodromes. As the Leader of the Official Opposition has noted — and I appreciate his support on this: in this budget, we are buying the gear we need to keep improving our community runways.

This government is starting to pull together an open data repository. We want to get more information before the public we serve. We are developing and implementing e-health services for our citizens. We will spend \$1.6 million on that this year, Mr. Speaker — improving health care.

We are starting to improve our *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. We want easier and broader access to government information that balances the privacy of our citizens. We are working hard to increase the technology envelope to support economic diversification and innovation in the information and technology sector. As my esteemed colleague from Porter Creek North has said, we have two applications in on bandwidth to improve and bring the redundancy that this territory needs to diversify and improve its tech sector.

We are improving hiring to create an open, transparent and inclusive civil service. We are supporting, as I said, reconciliation with First Nations. My colleagues and I are

working to improve staff housing and to fix procurement. We want to increase the ability of local businesses and First Nations to secure government tenders through changes in how government buys goods and services. This is a huge job, Mr. Speaker. It requires a lot of work and attention. We have been gathering the information, reading the reports, poring over the documents, discussing the problems and opportunities. We know where the frustrations with the business community lie. We know where the frustrations with the chambers lie. We know why the contractors are frustrated. We are now working to fix the problems. We are working to get the large seasonal contracts tendered by March 31, 2018. We are working on getting a five-year plan — a plan, Mr. Speaker — so contractors know what is coming and can prepare their businesses, to get the partnerships and skills necessary to do the work that is coming down in the future.

The goal is to be measured and considered. We want to seek out information and do the research to consider what we're doing. That's important. That's what Yukoners want. That's what they asked for — to be heard, to make sound decisions based on real information and to make the tough decisions when the information warrants it. That's what this government committed to; that's what this government will do.

This Yukon Liberal wants to make Yukoners' lives better — all Yukoners. We're focused on creating jobs, strengthening and diversifying the economy and protecting the environment. We are working together as a government and we're working together with other governments, with First Nations and municipalities. We're working with the unions. We are working with the business community, with the chambers, with non-profit organizations. We want all communities in the Yukon to grow, to be healthy, diverse and thriving. This is a whole-of-the-Yukon approach, comprehensive and inclusive because nobody has a hammerlock on good ideas.

We have reached out to the opposition, to both parties, to work together on behalf of all Yukoners to turn this government around. It's a real offer. It's a real change. We want to work together. We're working within the fiscal constraints created by the past government's mismanagement. That has forced us to adapt to take a hard look at our promises and make some hard choices, not blunting our resolve.

We have a long-term plan that will create jobs and improve the quality of life for all Yukoners. Our government is committed to strengthening and diversifying the Yukon economy. It is committed to making life better for all. We are investing in our people. We are investing in our businesses and in our industries to diversify the economy. Yukoners asked for a coordinated approach to the economy. Yukoners asked for a methodical, evidence-based approach to governance. They asked for collaboration. They've asked for a lessening of the corrosive partisanship that has marked other legislative sessions. We're prepared to do that, Mr. Speaker. We're prepared to work together. We're providing the government Yukoners asked for. We're providing the

leadership they asked for. Yukoners asked to be heard. This budget demonstrates that we're listening.

Mr. Cathers: It gives me pleasure to rise and to speak to the budget tabled. I would like to first of all, in rising in this Assembly, begin my budget speech by thanking my constituents for the opportunity to continue to serve them and work with them as their MLA. It has been a pleasure working with them and representing them during the past 14 years as MLA for Lake Laberge, plus the months since the election campaign.

I would also like to thank everyone who helped with my campaign, including family and friends, several of whom had spent several weeks of their time last year helping me with my re-election campaign. I am especially grateful to those people who donated large portions of their time, putting their own lives on hold, to help me in that regard.

I would like to begin by talking about some of the good things in this budget before I point out areas where I think it's lacking.

I look forward in future budget debate — during department-by-department debate — getting information about whether priorities of my constituents are reflected in this budget. I understand from the briefing by officials that there is something contained within the Highways and Public Works budget for the Takhini River bridge which, as I identified in a letter to the Premier, is the most common capital priority I've heard from constituents — wanting to see the pedestrian and cyclist walkway that we planned to add this year put on to the Takhini River bridge to improve safety, and also to begin the longer term planning for replacement of the Takhini River bridge on the Mayo Road with a wider bridge.

My constituents are also interested in seeing continued investments, such as in Ibex Valley. The Ibex Valley Local Advisory Council has, I believe, written to the government, identifying their interest in seeing a community well developed in Ibex Valley. That is a request that I support, as MLA for the area.

I am pleased to see that there is continued funding in this year's budget for programs that came from my constituents originally as ideas, including the rural well program. This is notably one that has, as of the last figures I had, resulted in over 320 families receiving wells drilled as a result of the program loaning them money. It is set up in a way that the loans are 100-percent repayable.

I would also like to commend — I look forward to hearing a breakdown of where the new fire trucks that are included in this year's budget are to be located. I also look forward to hearing information about where the ambulances that are being purchased are planned to be sent to eventually, or what the rollout schedule is for them. I should correct myself — typically the ambulances begin their life of service in Whitehorse to test them out, but I'm interested in hearing from the Minister of Community Services what communities will get the ones that had recently been in Whitehorse during that test phase.

I would also like to commend the Liberal government for continuing our practice of — in the last five years, we've made significant investments in both fire and EMS with a significant purchase of new vehicles every year. I notice that, this year, the purchase of ambulances is actually higher than what officials had recommended to us in the past, which was the replacement of two per year, but I'm certainly not going to criticize that additional investment. I commend the government for recognizing the need to continue to invest in these areas, as we did during our time in government.

I'm also pleased to see new funding for the rural mental health and addictions positions. I look forward to hearing more details about that spending. I'm pleased to see funding for EMS with — let me get the exact wording of that commitment here. I believe that somewhere in my notes, there was a notation of increased funding for the electronic information system at EMS, which I'm pleased to see.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to note — returning briefly to constituency priorities — that I have appreciated the opportunity to have a conversation as well as correspondence with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Community Services about the interest a number of my constituents have in developing increased recreational opportunities within the area. The opening of the research forest is something that was important to my constituents. It used to be walled off from the public and only accessible to government staff. In fact, through developing it, there are many people who are not only appreciating the forest and the opportunity for increased recreational activity, but they also understand the research better, so that research is going to a far broader audience than it previously would have. As I noted in correspondence with both the ministers I referred to, there is an interest by my constituents in seeing increased recreational opportunities within our area, which includes Ibex Valley, Hidden Valley and MacPherson, the Takhini Hot Springs Road and the Mayo Road areas. That interest includes seeing the trails within the research forest potentially packed by a snow machine under limited access in the winter to preserve the generally non-motorized nature of those trails while allowing for uses such as kicksleds to have a better packed trail within the area.

There is an ongoing discussion now about the possibility of developing a community centre. As I briefly conveyed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources during a conversation, there is an interest in seeing a community centre — the most commonly thought of location I am hearing from constituents, and which came up at a recent meeting I held to discuss recreational infrastructure is the potential for developing that at the research forest area through simply adding an addition on to the existing building that is at that location — to better meet the needs of the community. I look forward to continuing to talk to ministers opposite about that and to receive more information on it.

I was disappointed that there does not appear to be money in the budget for the expansion of cellphone service, as the Leader of the Official Opposition noted. We would like to see — are urging the government to move forward with the

expansion of cellphone service to areas including Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fox Lake, Mendenhall, Junction 37 and Champagne. That would build on the work that we did during our time in office of supporting the expansion of this communication service and emergency service to a number of Yukon communities that otherwise would probably still to this day not have cellular phone service. That has provided a benefit to Yukoners, both in terms of economic and social means as well as emergency services in times of need. It has allowed them to call 911. I would be remiss if I did not note that as we are now still into the first year of rural 911 service, I would like to again thank the officials in both Community Services and Justice who I worked with on that, as well as thanking previous colleagues who contributed to those files, including the honourable Currie Dixon and the honourable Elaine Taylor.

I would like to thank as well Northwestel and the RCMP for their assistance in both the creation of the new 911 call centre and the expansion of 911 services to all Yukon communities.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be talking at great length on the speech. I'm very interested, as I know are my colleagues, in digging into the details in departmental debate. We are, quite frankly, concerned about the numbers shown here in the Liberal government's new projections. It flies in the face of the information that we had from Finance officials.

I have to start in beginning my critique of the budget that I'm disappointed that there seems to be the notion on the government side that somehow the Finance officials in the Yukon government and senior managers within other government departments don't have a handle on the financial picture. Quite frankly, having worked with all these people, I know that they do have a very good understanding of the finances of each and every government department and the territory. They have an excellent understanding, particularly within the Department of Finance, of the areas where typically government lapses and revotes money, both in terms of O&M and capital, and have a good understanding of cost pressures that can emerge within the fiscal year.

I would also like to note that when the members — there seems to be this notion or the assertion on the part of the Premier and most recently the Minister of Highways and Public Works that somehow supplemental budgets are a bad thing and that increased spending is due to poor decision-making. I would point out to members that there are a couple of good reasons why that is not always the case. A notable one is increases in the wildfire season that can have a very significant impact on the fiscal picture. In the 2013 fire year, we had to spend an additional \$7.5 million over what had been budgeted, due to a much higher than normal year for wildfires. Budgeting for wildfires is not something that can really be done. Climatologists can, to some extent, predict whether a season is thought to be or is likely to be warmer and drier, but those predictions often go awry because of the imperfections of trying to predict long-term weather patterns.

Again, an area like that is one where I would think most Yukoners would agree governments should maintain cash in

the bank to deal with an unexpectedly high fire season. When there becomes a need for more resources than normal, government has no choice but to invest in increased personnel on the ground as well as increased helicopter time and air tanker time simply to keep Yukon communities safe.

Another example of an area where I would point to the government that funding in the supplementary budget is not a bad thing is in the area of new and emerging pressures and priorities. I'll give an example of one of those that occurred after the start of the 2016-17 fiscal year and which the Minister of Tourism and Culture was a part of. I commend her, as well as Kwanlin Dün, for their work with us on the community safety officer program that was put in place by Kwanlin Dün.

That is an area where, when Kwanlin Dün came to us with a request for that — they had first approached us early in 2016 — but Kwanlin Dün First Nation did not itself have final numbers on the program when the budget was tabled in the Legislative Assembly, so government had two options. We could have partnered with Kwanlin Dün, as we did, and got the program up and running, or we could have left it to the point where we would still be in this Assembly today and there would still not have been funding for this program, which, from what I hear, is working quite well.

I would again point to that as an area where the current Cabinet might want to rethink their views on this and realize that, sometimes when those emerging pressures and requests emerge, I would hope they would share our view that it was better for government to step in at that point and partner with Kwanlin Dün than it would have been to say to them, "We've done our budget for the year, and you're going to have to wait until April or May 2017 before we're in a position to consider this request."

I would also note that one of the things that has not been noted by the Premier and others in some of the narrative around the budget is areas where the previous government had booked more as a contingency than ended up being required. In fact, if they were to sit down with Finance officials and officials from departments and actually work with them and listen to their advice, they would develop a much better understanding of the budget and would realize that, rather than bringing in a bunch of so-called "outside experts", they can actually get a better understanding of the budget by working with the dedicated and competent staff of the Yukon government.

I hear the Premier scoffing at that, but I would point out again that the picture presented by the current government, in terms of their projections, is significantly different from the best information we had from officials when we left office. Quite frankly, we are concerned by that. We don't know whether they have overbudgeted so they can, after the Financial Advisory Panel, claim a victory in solving the problem that didn't actually exist in the first place, or if they've made mistakes in those projections or if they're planning to significantly increase spending beyond what is necessary to continue the current government services.

I do have to point out to the public, who may not be aware of all the details in the budget, that if you look to the significant difference between what we had tabled in the Legislative Assembly — which was, I would point out, developed by the Yukon government and senior officials — there's a very big difference in those numbers. While the members of the new government like to stand up and try to paint a picture, as the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission said — let me get his exact words here. The Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission referred to the need to bring — in his words — order from chaos.

Quite frankly, on behalf of officials of government who work with government and provide advice on what needs to be tabled, I am offended by those comments — that they have indicated that officials would be part of such a chaotic approach and need this new Financial Advisory Panel somehow to help get them out of this supposed swamp.

I would also note that for Yukoners who are listening or reading this in Hansard, we see a significant reduction in the information provided in the budget highlights in this year's budget compared with the budget from the last fiscal year. The budget as tabled by then Premier and Finance minister Pasloski in April of last year included 11 pages of budget highlights. There was, for the Department of Community Services alone, over an entire page dedicated to that department. Likewise there are other departments, such as Health and Social Services — also more than a page dedicated to that department alone. With a breakdown for everything, Health and Social Services listed the amounts budgeted for construction of Whistle Bend, the amounts budgeted for the Salvation Army Centre of Hope, the replacement of Sarah Steele alcohol and drug services and MRI and emergency room expansion. I won't go through the entire list here in the interest of time but again, that department alone had over one page dedicated to it. We've seen the 11 pages of budget highlights whittled down to a mere four. Quite frankly I question that decision. It seems to demonstrate less transparency and less accountability from a government that promised to be more transparent and more accountable.

In the four pages of budget highlights included in the budget tabled by the Premier, in fact there is less information on those pages than was included in the last budget. The budget that was tabled in 2016 has pages full of text. It's not pretty, but it provides a lot of information. The budget tabled by the current Premier is prettier because the pages are taken up with pictures and infographics — and there is less information. I don't see how that is becoming more transparent and more accountable. From my perspective, there is less content, less detail, simply more fluff and platitudes, but less transparency.

Specific areas that I'm particularly concerned about include the amount of red ink in this budget. I should return to something I missed mentioning — I thought about something else, but I should return again to pointing out for Yukoners who are listening the difference between the surplus and the deficit for the 2018-19 fiscal year as presented by the Yukon

Party government last year and the difference projected by the current government this year.

In the budget tabled last year, which reflected the best available information at the time, it showed for the 2018-19 fiscal year an anticipated annual surplus of \$29.03 million. For the 2019-20 fiscal year, there was a projected annual surplus of \$17.5 million and we, quite frankly, are baffled and very concerned about how the current Liberal government has changed the 2018-19 projected estimate from \$29 million in an annual surplus to an annual deficit of \$48.9 million and how they've changed an annual surplus in 2019-20 from the \$17.5 million annual surplus projected to a projected deficit for that fiscal year of \$58 million — also notably comparing the net financial assets end of year of what we understood to be the case last year and tabled in this House to what is tabled by the current government.

We've seen the net financial assets in 2018-19 — we had projected net financial assets end of year at \$38.079 million — effectively \$38 million of cash in the bank, on top of the fact that there was going to be an annual surplus for that year. Again, the net financial assets — i.e. cash in the bank — for the 2019-20 fiscal year was \$27.62 million. The current Liberal government has changed that \$27 million of cash in the bank to \$216.25 million in red ink.

Mr. Speaker, we can think of three potential reasons for the change: either planned increase significantly in spending beyond what is necessary, a deliberate over-projection — for example, it's potentially the —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Minister for Community Services, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I just heard the member opposite suggest that we were giving a deliberate overprojection, which sounds like we are misleading. I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I'm unaware of the exact — 19(i) or 19(j) or whatever it is — but that's what I'm raising as an issue.

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

Mr. Cathers: I believe the Standing Order the member meant to reference is 19(g), and I don't believe that I have contravened that Standing Order. I was explaining three different potential reasons. I did not accuse anyone of lying. I suggested that perhaps there was overprojection.

Speaker: Are there any other submissions on this point of order?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I support the point of order. It's the second time the honourable member has come very close — I almost stood the first time — but I think, in context, what's important is that he is suggesting that there could be falsehoods being put forward by this government that will later be corrected.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, I suggest that you refrain from using the term “deliberate misstatement”. In my

view, that does come within — I can review it later, but that comes within the purview of section 19(g) of the Standing Orders, so I would suggest, in your submissions on this debate, to avoid the reference to a deliberate misstatement.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will of course respect your ruling on that and I will rephrase that as an overprojection of costs.

If the overprojecting is occurring, it may be a case of perhaps another explanation. Explanation number two is that perhaps they simply don't understand the fiscal picture and don't understand things such as typical lapses in everything, such as personnel and capital, or naively believe that government can completely avoid those lapses.

The third potential reason is potentially that government plans to increase spending significantly to — if I may quote the Premier while in opposition — “buy the hearts and minds of Yukon voters”. Again, we do not believe these numbers are accurate or reflect the finances unless one of those three reasons has occurred, and we believe that it is entirely a choice made by government, not a reflection of basic needs. If the current government chooses to go from a fiscal picture that would have seen government with cash in the bank and an annual surplus in the 2019-20 fiscal year to their plan, that would see government \$58 million in an annual deficit and \$216 million in red ink or long-term debt, and we don't believe that represents a responsible trajectory.

I look forward to digging into the details of this in future debates with members. I also note that this has been made more difficult for anyone to dig to the bottom of because of the choice to use two special warrants and spend almost half-a-billion dollars through those measures. It does make it easier to potentially blur the lines between the fiscal years and, certainly for the media and anyone not intimately familiar with the government's finances, it makes it harder to see where this government has — as we know they have — made choices to spend during the last half of the fiscal year that represent new spending. As I noted to the media, in fact some of those initiatives are good initiatives but they are new spending.

I would also note that we have a situation where the choice of when to book the pension plan solvency deficit for both the hospital and the college was a new, emerging issue that could have and should have been booked in this fiscal year and the choice to book that roughly \$4-million figure in the past fiscal year counts for \$8.2 million of the supposed deficit and would reduce the current financial surplus for this fiscal year to a mere \$2.5 million, down from the current number.

I would also note that we see a reduction in corporate taxes. We also understand from officials that this will lead to an increase in personal tax revenue as a result of that. I think that the Premier should be up-front with Yukoners about who is going to be seeing a tax increase and why.

Other specific projects that I don't see included in this budget — we are concerned by the lack of funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation, both in terms of O&M and for

specific projects. Those include the Meditech replacement system. For Yukoners who aren't familiar with that, Meditech is an electronic health information system used by the hospital. It is also used to share information with specialists and hospitals Outside. That technology is in need of replacement. The fact that there does not appear to be money for that is of concern because that system is reaching a point where it is not interacting as well as it used to with Outside systems. That has a real impact on the efficiency of the system. Because of the importance of the situation they are dealing with, it is also something that can potentially be a matter of life and death — whether the system is running. Not to overstate the situation, but I would note that this is a critically important piece of the hospital's infrastructure, and I would encourage the government to recognize that need and fund that replacement project as early as it is humanly possible to do.

We are also concerned — as alluded to in the motion for the production of papers by my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake and the Health and Social Services critic — that we had understood, based on projections, that the hospital's needs for this fiscal year are higher than what we see included in this budget. This is based on our understanding of the projections for costs, based on increased cost pressures, including the increased costs of chemotherapy drugs, increased volume of chemotherapy, increased volume in the medical imaging and lab department and increased staffing costs associated with the emergency room expansion and last, but not least, the fact that the hospital's current funding agreement funds it based on an estimated 75-percent occupancy and it has currently been running closer to 100 percent. Based on all of those reasons, our understanding was that simply to maintain its current level of services, the Yukon Hospital Corporation needed fully three-percent more of an increase to its budget than is included within the budget tabled here in the House.

I would again note that, in saying that to the members, I am not going to paint any doom-and-gloom scenarios. I am going to simply say — and say sincerely — we believe that you have underbudgeted for the Hospital Corporation and you need to recognize the cost pressures. If they don't have the funding they need, their only option is to look for areas to reduce services. As noted by my colleagues, despite all the claims of accurate budgeting and fully projecting costs, we not only see the reduction of the pages showing the budget highlights, but we see the fact that there is nothing budgeted for a carbon tax that will come into place within this fiscal year.

In the area of Whistle Bend operation and maintenance costs, as I pointed out to the Premier and Minister of Finance earlier today, not only did the Minister of Health and Social Services state the costs, what he said in the House was substantially higher than the Premier referenced. In fact, he stated those costs while the Premier and then-Member for Klondike was sitting in his seat in this Legislative Assembly last April. Again, we would encourage him — in fact he may

wish to review that and consider whether he wishes to retract his remarks and apologize for that statement.

One thing on my list of positive things that I missed mentioning is that I am pleased to see that the Liberal government has continued funding for the physician recruitment and retention initiatives, the health education bursaries and the nursing education bursaries. We had heard rumours that they were considering eliminating those and we believe that those programs have been very useful at providing over 100 Yukoners with training in health professions, as well as being an important part of our overall initiatives in attracting and retaining physicians here in the territory.

I meant to — in my earlier remarks — I will correct that error now and I thank the Official Opposition Leader for the roles that he has entrusted me to take on as critic for the Official Opposition, which include Finance, Justice, the Protective Services area of Community Services and Sustainable Resources from Energy, Mines and Resources. I would like to thank him and all my caucus colleagues for the opportunity to continue to work with them and their support for me in those roles and in this Assembly.

I would also like to thank our staff as well as many volunteers from the Yukon Party for their continued support of all of us in doing the work that we do. Without all of them, we would not be able to be as effective in these roles as we intend to be during the life of this Legislative Assembly.

As I drop my books, I would like to note as well that, as my colleague the Member for Watson Lake pointed out, it's important for Yukoners listening that the new Liberal government was government for the latter half of the 2016-17 fiscal year. We are not going to spend as much time talking about the past as the future, beyond the fact that we will point out to Yukoners through debate in this Assembly — we will demonstrate the fact that, in fact, contrary to the assertions of the government, we did leave them with cash in the bank and an annual surplus for the 2016-17 fiscal year.

In fact, when you look at spending decisions that they decided to take on in the latter half of the year, as well as things that they decided to book in the 2016-17 fiscal year — when you take those numbers away, Yukoners can see that we left them over \$100 million of cash in the bank. Net financial assets are commonly called “cash in the bank”, but are literally cash and cash equivalents. I would point out to members that when the Yukon Party took office after the Liberal government's time in the Cabinet offices, we were literally a million dollars from triggering the *Taxpayer Protection Act* because of the situation they had left government in. The Liberal government, under the Premier of that day, had literally been paying interest charges to meet payroll during that fiscal year.

I know members are looking at the budget and I think they may even be finding it a genuinely daunting task, but it's important to recognize that times aren't as tough as you think they are and no other new government has ever inherited \$100 million of cash in the bank.

The pressures you have for future fiscal years — if you're looking for help on how to find your way through it, you will find that, contrary to the plan to get in a bunch of Outside experts, the advice you need is within the Department of Finance, as well as within some recently retired Finance officials — if they're looking for Outside advice — who can tell them exactly how to understand the budget and how to improve and manage governments, both within the fiscal year and understanding how to accurately project for future fiscal years.

I'll just briefly rebut a few of the outlandish statements made by the Minister for Highways and Public Works, the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, and note that, contrary to his assertion that the government has reinvigorated committees that sat dormant for years, there's one committee that hadn't met in recent years, of all the standing committees, and that is the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. That committee actually hasn't gotten down to work yet, but I would note that one of the reasons it wasn't active in previous years was that there had been no request from either the Official Opposition or the Third Party to reactivate that committee. While we'll give the government credit for calling a meeting of this committee, I would also note that we had suggested that and suggested to them two areas where this committee should focus its efforts on studying the way that regulations are interpreted and consider making recommendations to the government on improvements in those areas. Just for public knowledge, those areas that we have proposed — we have suggested the committee should review how the building inspections office is interpreting the Building Code — and the way the appeal process that is theoretically in place has never actually been used under the act, so we are suggesting that's an area for review. We have also suggested a review of the way that Environmental Health Services is conducting its work, and considering whether changes are necessary in that area. That's based on what we've heard from Yukoners on the doorsteps, both during the last election and since that time.

While I won't spend a lot of time rebutting the former editor of the *Yukon News*, a long-standing critic of everything Yukon Party — and previously of the Liberals, by the way — I would note that, contrary to his statement and assertion that we're befuddled and there's something new, something we don't understand, the only thing we don't understand is where you're getting your numbers from. We had a detailed picture of the future cost pressures of government presented by officials and tabled in this Legislative Assembly last year by the former Premier. We can only see the three explanations I listed for the dramatic change in this government's projections.

I will note my very sincere disappointment that government seems to have so little confidence in senior managers and Finance staff that it's calling in so-called Outside experts to fix the problem. I don't see a problem with them calling in someone to provide additional advice, but it's really notable that on this committee they don't have a single member of the Yukon government public service. There is no

one currently from the Department of Finance; there are no past employees, no past senior managers. There seems to be an attitude from the current government that these people didn't know what they are doing. In fact, I believe that to be fundamentally wrong and mistaken.

Understanding that I'm wrapping up my time and I talked longer than I thought I did, I will simply note that, in conclusion, the government will find that we will be tough critics but they will find that points we are raising are ones being raised by Yukoners and are points that need to be made.

It will find as well that in areas — if they are willing to work with us as they indicate they are on things such as the priorities of our constituents, if we make a request and get a reasonable response, we will also give credit where credit is due for the fact that they've chosen to work with us in those areas.

With that, I will wrap up my remarks and look forward to further debate on the 2017-18 budget.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: With respect to addressing the Member for Lake Laberge — I'm new at this as well, but what I would say to you is that I understand that there is a fundamental disagreement with respect to how numbers have arisen and how they have been arrived at, and I would hope that, during the course of this legislative session, there will be a wholesome debate as to how the numbers are arrived at and you will receive, hopefully, satisfactory answers going forward.

I understand your concern. Obviously you have concerns as to how the numbers going forward have arisen and I look forward to the debate.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Before I move into the discussion on the budget, I would like to thank the members of the Official Opposition for bringing some of their personal insights into their speeches today, as many of us did last week. I appreciate that — for you to take this opportunity to do so.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members, friends, people of the Yukon, I rise in the House today to stand with my Liberal colleagues in support of our first budget for 2017-18.

We deliberated long and hard over this budget. We found ourselves in a much less fortunate situation than we expected coming into office and had difficult choices to make. Our values and enduring priorities are reflected in this budget.

The values and priorities of Yukon people as we understand them are reflected here as well. They are the foundation of all we do. This budget has been said to be a careful budget. I agree that we have been careful with Yukon's public purse and careful not to be more disruptive than needed as we take our leadership responsibilities.

I believe careful and incremental change can lead to bold outcomes to make our inspiring vision for Yukon come alive. I also believe in using evidence and good advice in moving forward, and I will not speak on behalf of our Minister of Finance. I'll leave that to him to discuss the panel and the decisions made around that.

Moving forward, this includes honouring our First Nation traditional knowledge and lived experience as an important source of wisdom. Our government is working with Yukoners to make lives better. The budget includes responsive investments in programs and services to support Yukon individuals, families and communities. Yukon businesses are the backbone of our economy and we are committed to working with them to diversify the economy, create more jobs and build business opportunities. The environment is the legacy inherited from our ancestors and we are stewards for the future generations.

Our amazing landscapes and healthy environment is foundational to the growth of tourism. We can grow a sustainable economy and create opportunities at the same time as we protect our environment. It is very important to us as Yukoners.

During my campaign, I promised to lead with integrity. I promised to carry out my responsibilities in a respectful way. I made a commitment to bring people together to create our own Yukon version of reconciliation. My intentions remain the same as I do my best to carry out my responsibilities and support my Cabinet and caucus colleagues as we work together.

I deeply respect the role of public servants — the people who serve Yukoners each day at the front lines, as well as many people in support. The management roles are essential to the quality of life for the Yukon. We could not do what we do without dedicated and inspired public servants. I remain committed to contributing to the best quality of work life possible for those individuals working with me.

Government-to-government relationships with First Nations and fully engaging municipalities are both key to building vibrant communities. Our budget invests in working together.

Our budget in Tourism is just over \$32 million. Although a small budget in relative terms, Tourism and Culture plays a significant role in the territory and the lives of Yukon people. Over this next year, the department will invest \$9 million in local businesses and non-profit organizations to support development in tourism, historic sites, heritage resources, arts and archives. Operations funding will be provided to 11 museums and seven First Nation cultural centres as well as the Yukon Historical and Museums Association.

Approximately 100 Yukon tourism businesses will leverage \$700,000 in marketing funding to support their investments in marketing. In Tourism we are investing in a multi-year tourism strategy at a cost of \$150,000. We hope to involve as many tourism operators, those knowledgeable about the industry, First Nation tourism leaders and Yukoners in creating an exciting path forward.

We are also planning a winter tourism summit to explore building a longer tourism season with further product development and marketing.

Two big anniversary events that we have heard spoken about here today — Canada's 150th anniversary and the 75th anniversary of the building of the Alaska Highway — will receive funding. I would like to elaborate a bit, and I thank the

Member for Kluane for raising this matter. Most of the contribution that this government will make will go to communities. It will be done through the Culture Quest program. Our events within the City of Whitehorse will be done in partnership with the City of Whitehorse. There was \$100,000 already committed to projects before we even came into office. When we came into office, decisions hadn't been made other than for two projects. We did our best to pull together a plan that will address these anniversaries. I am pleased with the partnerships that we are going forward with. The majority of this funding will go to communities for events as they see fit.

Our arts and culture funding programs account for \$4.5 million of our budget. The Yukon Arts Centre will be hosting an arts summit at the cost of \$75,000. We are investing \$500,000 in a digital development tool that will engage a global audience in sharing the wonder of Yukon online. Six information centres employ 15 full-time staff members and account for \$1.2 million in salaries and benefits — mostly in the communities outside of Whitehorse.

I would also like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for raising the concerns about the Watson Lake visitor centre. This is an aging facility that has come to the end of its useful life. There is no question about that. Repairs and upgrades for the current facility are complicated by the age of this building. The planning process to propose a new visitor information centre has begun, and I am happy to say that here today. It is currently undergoing review within Yukon government. Following the initial review process, planning for a new Watson Lake visitor information centre will require community consultation and the commission of a business case. That is what we are working on right now. I recognize that some work had been done late in the mandate of the Yukon Party, and we will build upon that. I will personally go to Watson Lake to have those discussions. I am really sorry that the Member for Watson Lake did not successfully accomplish this on behalf of her community. It is a really big part of building tourism and putting in place those mechanisms so that tourists have a place to obtain the information that they need. Thank you for raising that.

We are planning a two-year comprehensive visitor survey at a cost of \$200,000. The Carcross/Tagish First Nation learning centre is a new facility and our government will contribute \$145,000 to operation and activity funding related to the cultural component.

The Yukon Archives vault expansion will keep up with our ever-growing collection and preserve even more historical documents. The second half of our \$3 million commitment to the expansion of MacBride Museum of Yukon History will be made to support the completion.

A historic sites planning position was made ongoing to support implementation of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and support the development of heritage management plans and the continued work with our Yukon First Nations.

During previous years, this position was considered one-time funding, year after year. It was clearly an ongoing need and was budgeted as such. This is one of the costs of running

this government that was not accounted for and is now accounted for in the out years. This is a small example of that, where it was a position that clearly needed to be ongoing and was year after year budgeted for as a one-time funded position. I just want to point that out that this is one small example within my department.

The tourism and culture sectors provide over 3,000 jobs and \$250 million annually revenue for Yukon businesses, which represents four percent of our GDP. Investing in culture, heritage and tourism is important to the vibrant Yukon and opportunities for all communities and people.

Before I move on to other areas of responsibility, I would just like to touch on a concern the Member for Watson Lake brought up on the impact of carbon pricing on tourism. Yukon government has committed to ensuring that all funds collected through carbon-pricing mechanisms in Yukon will be returned to individual Yukoners and businesses through rebates. I know we're said that several times, and I'm just going to relate it back to tourism.

This means that tourism businesses will pay slightly more for fossil fuels; however, this will be offset by rebates. For example, a tourism business that pays more for fuel will also see a corresponding rebate. Therefore, the prices of products and services offered should remain unchanged. By 2018, all Canadian jurisdictions will have carbon-pricing plans in place, giving no jurisdiction a perceived competitive advantage. That's something that's very important to keep in mind — that this is Canada-wide and that this is a federal carbon-pricing program.

The Women's Directorate is a partner with First Nations, other Yukon government departments and aboriginal women's organizations in the work of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

We are supporting three aboriginal women's organizations with a one-time allocation of \$150,000, which will assist them in working with us on supporting engagement and truth and reconciliation and the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls processes. Now, this program is one of the programs that will be reviewed this year. In addition, we are investing \$97,000 per year to support a senior advisor for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls for a two-year term. Transfer payments to women's groups and equality-seeking organizations will continue, along with the allocation of \$200,000 through a violence against aboriginal women's fund. The women's equality fund provides \$300,000 and the women's community projects funding offers \$10,000. These are allocations to assist with training, organizational development and program expenses.

Overall, these funding mechanisms, along with funding to support staff positions in key organizations, total \$1 million per year. Yukon government education on domestic violence has been advanced through the Violence Ends with Us training program, which has been delivered and supported by a number of departments. The recently completed gender and diversity action plan will guide future activities, including internal training. Gender and diversity analysis support will

continue within government policy, programming and legislation.

I am delighted to support my colleagues in rolling out new initiatives on home care, mental health and wellness, health services, youth programs, housing and land-based healing. I know that many of you are aware of the work that I've done in the Yukon and these areas are of vital concern to me. I am very committed to working with my colleagues to make them more successful than they have been in the past. Improving resident mental health and addictions front-line capacity in communities with 11 new workers will make a real difference in access to relevant support. Of course our priorities will be to those communities previously left behind.

A renewed commitment to fund building a path to wellness — the four-week Jackson Lake wellness team, mental health and addictions treatment will ensure the program continues to serve all Yukoners while planning is completed with Yukoners, particularly Yukon First Nations — is an important commitment.

Local education of health care professionals that are needed to serve our aging population will be enhanced with new investments into the nursing program at Yukon College. Using technology is important in all industries and I believe we can become a global leader in the use of e-health and other applications to better serve our population. In my work in Whitehorse and the communities over the years, I've seen the gaps in programs and services and I'm grateful that our government is in a position to begin filling these gaps.

The commitment to the Yukon Forum and investing \$100,000 in coordination and support will ensure meetings are productive and delivering on the five-year action plan.

The commitment to reconciliation must become core to all of our work in government. We must find ways to renew relationships and work together to create the change needed. I believe we have the capacity to work with First Nation governments and all Yukon people to create our unique path forward toward reconciliation. I see it as an exciting opportunity to build on treaties and create a positive future together.

In closing, I appreciate your attention as I share my thoughts on the budget. I look forward to presenting the details of this budget for which I am responsible to you later in this session and I also look forward to engaging in a good respectful debate as we forge our way forward together.

Mr. Kent: I thank colleagues for the opportunity to respond today to the first budget of the new government. There are a number of things that of course I want to touch on during my time on my feet here throughout the balance of today and possibly into the next opportunity, but first of all, like others in here, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the constituents of Copperbelt South.

Here I would like to take the opportunity to thank the constituents of Copperbelt South. This was a new riding for me, having moved — as many know — from Riverdale to Marsh Lake. I chose to run in a different riding in the last election and was successful. I would like to thank Lois

Moorcroft, Jocelyn Curteanu and Philippe LeBlond, the NDP, Liberal and Green candidates respectively, for their work during the campaign and for what they put in and all their volunteers as well. I know these campaigns aren't simply done by one or two people. It takes a lot of effort on behalf of a number of individuals who believe in you as a candidate and believe in your party and what you're trying to accomplish, so a big thanks to all the volunteers — not only, as I mentioned, in Copperbelt South, but throughout the territory — who helped each candidate, whether they were successful in being elected or not successful.

A special mention to those who worked on my campaign — first and foremost, my wife Amanda, and my son Eli. Amanda was instrumental, as she was in 2011, in me winning again in 2016 and my success in the election, with all that she does for me and for Eli. Although he was too young to be pounding in signs, knocking on doors or any of that stuff, he spent a lot of time away from his dad during the campaign and the lead-up into the campaign. I know that others in here with children or family experienced the same thing. He was pretty excited to see November 7 roll around — on November 8, there was a lot more time spent with dad out at our new house. It was great that I was able to spend that additional time with him after the election, as I think a number of people did spend time with family after the grind of the election itself.

I would also like to thank my mom, who was the primary babysitter for Eli during the campaign. It didn't matter when we needed her or what time, her door was always open to Eli helping her out and erasing a few apps from her iPad and other things like that. We're still trying to rebuild some of those, after not only the election campaign but this last weekend.

Mr. Speaker, I think most members here and people listening who know me know that I come from a fairly large family. I have four brothers and two sisters. We all live in Whitehorse, or in the surrounding area, and make our homes here. Many of my siblings have families. There are actually four generations of my family who now live here in Whitehorse. I would like to thank them as well. Each and every one of them helped out in some way during the campaign. I wouldn't have been able to do it without them. I wouldn't have been able to do it without my mother-in-law and father-in-law, Tom and Louise van Soldt, who were here for the back half of the election campaign and helped out at home as we knocked on doors and talked to constituents.

There's a long list of other friends and volunteers to thank. They were all great and very helpful in my success.

It's the third time I've been elected, and it's the third different riding I've represented, which may be a first for members in this House. It started out of course with Riverside in 2000, Riverdale North in 2011 and now Copperbelt South. I've never run as incumbent and I don't think — until this time — I had ever run against an incumbent either. As I said, it was a great experience and a great opportunity to get out and talk to a number of individuals — reacquaint myself with old friends and meet a bunch of new people as well and listen to their concerns and what they thought they would like to see

the Yukon be over the next four or five years. It was a great opportunity for me to wander through the riding of Copperbelt South. It's a very different riding from what I'm used to representing. In Riverdale North, as you would know, Mr. Speaker, you can walk to almost every household from your door, other than those ones down the Long Lake Road and Wickstrom Road, so for me to spend more time in a car driving to meet constituents was something that was an interesting change of campaigning strategy for me. I certainly couldn't get to as many doors in an evening or a day as I used to be able to in the Riverdale area when I ran there.

Mr. Speaker, before I start to talk more specifically about the budget and the general things that I would like to address and then getting into the specific critic roles that I have, I would like to just take a moment to pay tribute to a former Finance deputy minister from here who passed away recently. Mr. Charles Sanderson, who was a long-time official with the Yukon government and was the Deputy Minister of Finance for a portion of my time in government — between 2000 and 2002 — has recently passed away. I heard the news from a former deputy minister of mine who lived closed to him on Vancouver Island. I know there is not going to be a service, at Mr. Sanderson's request, but I just wanted to send wishes from us. I believe I'm the only one in the Legislature today who worked with Mr. Sanderson before he retired. He was a great deputy minister. I had a lot of time with him and respect for him and learned an awful lot from him. I know that he'll be missed by his family and all those friends who worked with him in the Department of Finance, whether they are still here in the Yukon or have retired and moved on to other places. Again, my condolences to Mr. Sanderson's family.

I would also like to echo what other colleagues have said on this side and the other side of the House and thank the staff and the officials who have taken the time to put this budget together, whether they are Yukon government officials, or caucus and Cabinet staff, or staff of the Official Opposition or Third Party in helping us to critique the budget and make our way through it. Without their help and assistance, we certainly wouldn't be able to have this document before us and be able to ask the questions about it as we proceed through the balance of this Spring Sitting.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up a little bit more on the advisory panel that was announced by the Premier during his budget speech and then later on that day via press release and hope that perhaps members of the government, perhaps the Premier himself, would provide us with the terms of reference, or the mandate letter, for the panel.

That would help us get a better sense of what they are going to be doing and, maybe more importantly, what they aren't going to be doing. I think there is a lot of speculation with respect to their role and I think that would assist in debate in the House and help some of our constituents and other Yukoners who have been asking the question as to what the role of the advisory panel will be.

It came up during Question Period today; there were perhaps more questions generated from what we heard from the Minister of Finance, the Premier. Perhaps many of them

would be able to be answered if we had access to the terms of reference or a specific mandate letter. Hopefully he would consider providing that to members of the Legislative Assembly so we can get a sense for what they will be doing in June and in September.

This is something that we've heard from Yukoners, that the window is very tight for consultations. I recognize that obviously the Premier chose — I believe he said today in Question Period — and I apologize if I am not correct, but I think he said that, once the House rises, they will do consultations for what will be now after June 13 — the back half of June. They will take a July and August break and then be back at it in September. It's a really tight window if the Premier and his colleagues want to ensure that they get the full picture.

Obviously in June, as the days start getting longer and schools start to get out, many Yukoners choose to take their holidays and they may miss some valuable input. In September, school is back in for the fall and parents and Yukoners are busy. There is the traditional harvest that also happens in September, so the Premier may want to consider in his mandate to the Financial Advisory Panel extending that consultation period somewhat. Again, from past experience and seeing what has happened, he may miss an awful lot of people if it's that tight of a window. If he wants to hear from as many Yukoners as possible — and I take him at his word for that — he may want to consider a bit of an expanded consultation time or delaying it somewhat. When we did the Procurement Advisory Panel, I think the consultations were held throughout the winter. Perhaps we got what was a fuller response from the people who wanted to provide input on that.

Like other colleagues on this side of the House, and I mentioned it in Question Period as well today, we are quite concerned with the deficits that will start to accumulate. I did mention today that we are fortunate to be one of the few, if not the only jurisdiction in the country, that does not have a line item in the budget to service the debt — to pay the interest payments. It would be good to get a sense from the Premier on what that will look like — the interest, as we look to the full picture of governing, as I believe he has mentioned in some of his news releases and some of his speeches.

Hopefully he includes that cost to service the debt when he starts to build this budget out a little bit more.

Speaker: Thank you, Member for Copperbelt South. The hour is 5:30 p.m. We will hear from the Member for Copperbelt South at a later date for continuation of his comments.

Debate on Bill No. 201 accordingly adjourned

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

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following legislative returns were tabled May 1, 2017:

34-2-1

Response to Written Question No. 4 re: Yukon vision for education (McPhee)

34-2-2

Response to Written Question No. 13 re: community safety, property crime and illegal drug trade (McPhee)

34-2-3

Response to Written Question No. 9 re: carbon tax in Yukon (Silver)

34-2-4

Response to Written Question No. 10 re: health care transfers (Silver)

34-2-5

Response to Written Question No. 6 re: Yukon resource gateway project (Mostyn)

34-2-6

Response to Written Question No. 8 re: government transparency (Mostyn)

34-2-7

Response to Written Question No. 2 re: compensation for owners of placer and quartz mining claims (Pillai)

34-2-8

Response to Written Question No. 3 re: communication infrastructure (Pillai)

34-2-9

Response to Written Question No. 11 re: communication infrastructure (Pillai)

34-2-10

Response to Written Question No. 12 re: Yukon's agriculture sector (Pillai)

34-2-11

Response to Written Question No. 5 re: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Dendys)

34-2-12

Response to Written Question No. 1 re: review of the medical travel program (Frost)

34-2-13

Response to Written Question No. 7 re: emergency housing for Ross River (Frost)