



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 139

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, April 9, 2014 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME CONSTITUENCY PORTFOLIO

Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Education; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Community Services; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation; Yukon Lottery Commission Government House Leader
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Yukon Energy Corporation; Yukon Development Corporation
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Environment; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Highways and Public Works
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Justice; Tourism and Culture

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Vuntut Gwitchin
Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

Elizabeth Hanson	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, April 9, 2014 — 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 the Battle of Vimy Ridge

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I rise today to pay tribute to the thousands of Canadian soldiers who fought and won the Battle of Vimy Ridge 97 years ago. What does it mean to be a nation? Ninety-seven years ago today Canada added to our definition of what it means to be a nation. As I noted in my comments last year, the Battle of Vimy Ridge was a pre-eminent and iconic event in the history of our country.

Canada's soldiers left their homes as young colonials and returned as Canadians. It represented the first time that all four Canadian divisions — with soldiers drawn from all regions of the country, including Yukon — attacked together. Legendary Yukoners like Jack Hulland, who fought at Vimy Ridge, or others like Joe Boyle, George Black and Sam Steele, who raised and armed regiments or supervised the training, each contributed to Canada's success that day.

In the early morning hours of April 9, 1917, after meticulous planning and strategizing, all four Canadian divisions stormed Vimy Ridge. Three days later, Canadians controlled the seven-kilometre stretch of land. A victory at Vimy Ridge did not come without a cost. Sadly, 3600 Canadians were killed and another 7,000 were wounded. Canadian soldiers fought this courageous battle with the greatest of goals in mind: to protect our democracy.

We gather today to acknowledge the courage and sacrifice our forefathers made when they joined the Canadian forces and ventured far from home to make a difference. We owe a debt to our veterans that can be repaid only through remembrance and reflection of their contribution. So today we say thank you to those who gave their lives 97 years ago on a battlefield far, far from home.

In my opening, I asked what it means to be a nation. It has been said, Mr. Speaker, that when Brigadier-General Alexander Ross looked across the battlefield at Vimy Ridge, he was witnessing the birth of a nation. But what was it that made this event so monumental in our country? I would argue that it was the fact that Canadians of all races, religions, political affiliations, economic status, social standing and, most importantly, all regions of the country were there — and there voluntarily. They were there because of a shared belief in our Canadian values, had a shared conviction that our rights

and freedoms were worth defending, and a shared commitment to stand by our word and defend those in need.

Canada has a long and rich history of being a sturdy prop to the defenceless and a strong friend to those in need. In Canada, everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including the freedom of the press and other media of communication; freedom of peaceful assembly; and freedom of association. These are our values and Canada has stood firm for them and has committed to defend them no matter what the cost, even when that meant going to war.

Canadians understand the difference between peace and appeasement: one is strength; the other is servitude. Millions of people around this world live in servitude. They do not enjoy the democratic freedoms that we have here in Canada. We enjoy these rights because of Canadians before us, including those who fought at Vimy Ridge, voluntarily laying down their lives to secure and preserve our freedom. This is what being a nation means to Canadians. Vimy Ridge signified the beginning of a Canadian identity and affirmed the value of freedom we share across this country today. Today, by flying flags at half mast, we remember and commemorate those who served.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the sacrifice made at Vimy Ridge. I would like to acknowledge the sacrifice and the work of our veterans, Mr. Speaker, such as yourself and the MLA for Kluane. We are grateful for your contributions to our country. Thank you.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.
 Are there any returns or documents for tabling?
 Are there any reports of committees?
 Are there any petitions to be presented?
 Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 104: *Paid Lobbying Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Ms. Hanson: I move that a bill, entitled *Paid Lobbying Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition that a bill, entitled *Paid Lobbying Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 104 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT a Select Committee on Lobbying be established;

THAT three members of the government caucus, as identified by the Premier, two members of the Official Opposition caucus as identified by the Leader of the Official

Opposition, and the Leader of the Third Party be appointed to the committee;

THAT the *Paid Lobbying Act*, be referred to the committee;

THAT the committee inquire into and provide its advice and recommendations, including proposed amendments, to the Legislative Assembly with respect to all aspects of the bill;

THAT the committee shall have the power to call for persons, papers and records, and to sit during intercessional periods;

THAT in exercising its power to call for persons, papers and records, the committee may invite the following to appear as witnesses or provide input through other methods:

(1) officials from the Government of Yukon on technical matters;

(2) officials from other jurisdictions with experience in the regulation of lobbying;

(3) experts in matters related to lobbying;

(4) representatives of Yukon First Nation governments and local authorities; and

(5) stakeholders and interested parties, including non-governmental organizations and members of the public;

THAT the committee shall provide its advice and recommendations, including proposed amendments, in a report to the Legislative Assembly no later than one year from the date of its first meeting; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the committee.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to collaborate with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation government to create a long-term plan for the construction of future winter roads to the community of Old Crow.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has failed in its management of the Fraser River sockeye salmon and is failing in its management of the Yukon River chinook salmon, and that therefore, this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the Yukon River Salmon Sub-Committee and the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council to implement a plan to protect Yukon River salmon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to live up to a commitment made last fall to work with the Yukon First Nations to hold a Yukon Forum.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Tourism industry promotion

Ms. Hanson: Tourism dollars stay in the Yukon. Money spent in the tourism sector brings a 28-to-one return on the dollar. This return on the investment in tourism spending is a great example of how the industry benefits all Yukoners. The key components of the success of the tourism industry are the small local businesses that give visitors an authentic experience of Yukon.

These businesses are also the driving force behind the innovation and diversification of Yukon's tourism sector. A good example is work done by the Southern Lakes area residents to develop Carcross as an international mountain biking destination. In support of this, the Contagious Mountain Bike Club won a national contest and donated a \$10,000 prize to the Carcross-Tagish First Nation single track for success program.

In contrast, what has the government done to promote Yukon as an international mountain bike destination?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: In addressing the member opposite, the Yukon government — specifically through the Department of Tourism and Culture and the Department of Economic Development — markets Yukon as a whole. Departments don't necessarily dive down into the specific components of what the product is. That would be something that the individuals or companies offering the product can approach the government about — either through Economic Development or Tourism and Culture for assistance in that marketing.

I have to give credit where credit is due. Within the partners or stakeholders and within tourism in Yukon — we have seen a record-breaking year in 2013 with an eight-percent increase in tourism overall. We have seen a significant increase in the Canadian market specifically — a 17-percent increase. The Department of Tourism and Culture will continue to work with Yukon stakeholders to market the solid Yukon brand in North America and in the overseas markets.

Ms. Hanson: This summer the community of Beaver Creek will be without one of its major economic pillars. The Holland America bus tours will no longer be stopping and staying the night in the community of Beaver Creek. This means one less hotel, substantially fewer jobs and job opportunities for the residents of Beaver Creek.

The community of Beaver Creek relied on this seasonal income and now it is gone. Has the government done anything to help the community of Beaver Creek ease this economic loss?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: We work regularly with our stakeholders throughout the territory. We work with the MLA for the Kluane region in addressing the needs of places like Beaver Creek. But, as a whole, we see the move with Holland America — a private sector company, I might add, that needed to make a business decision to better serve our territory and the tourists coming in. They have made that business decision to fly people from Fairbanks into Dawson City, and then people will be bused from Dawson City down

to Whitehorse and then the reverse. We look forward to working with Holland America with a number of their different business plans in the territory to bring tourists to our region so that they too can see the beautiful product that we have in our territory.

Ms. Hanson: The government increased overall government spending by \$220 million this year. The Department of Tourism and Culture received only \$1.7 million of that increase. At 0.7 percent of the budget, this increase does not represent a meaningful investment in tourism. This lackluster spending commitment is indicative of the disregard that this government has for the hard-working men and women of the Yukon tourism industry. Their inaction on promoting mountain biking tourism and supporting the community of Beaver Creek are prime examples of this lack of leadership. Another example is this government's refusal to follow the tourism association's recommendation for investment in a domestic marketing strategy. The tourism industry is showing its resilience and potential despite this government's reluctance.

When will the government commit to a long-term strategic and properly funded tourism marketing plan to improve Yukon's economy?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The members opposite brought this up when we were in budget debate on the Department of Tourism and Culture. Again there's a clear signal that the members opposite weren't listening or weren't reflective of Hansard, because I indicated to them that they were welcome to go on-line and look at the Department of Tourism and Culture's strategic plan from 2013 through to 2018.

This government will continue to work especially with the Department of Tourism and Culture and the Department of Economic Development and with funds like the community development fund, which I might add, worked with the individuals in Carcross to promote that product.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with stakeholders, one of which will see a 25-percent decrease in small business taxes. We on this side of the House are very proud to promote the good work that is being done within the tourism realm throughout the territory.

As I mentioned before, we have seen consistent growth in this market. Going back to about 10 or 12 years, there has been a consistent three-percent growth per year. Last year, we were looking at \$200 million contributing to the tourism economy. Now it's \$250 million. We will continue the good work.

Question re: Health care facility planning

Ms. Stick: When it comes to stories of capital mismanagement, it's true: the Yukon Party is the gift that keeps on giving. But here's the thing: Yukoners are looking for a different way. Criticism of what is not working is only one step. The next step is a vision of what could work.

The Yukon NDP is willing to consider that temporarily housing the MRI machine may be the best the minister can make of a sorry situation. Yukon has purchased an MRI machine and we agree with using it as soon as possible, but

the government is talking about hospital expansion and it has a lot of mixed messages about the needs assessment.

Yukoners do not want decision-based evidence making. Is the Yukon Party committed to hospital expansion no matter what the needs assessment says?

Hon. Mr. Graham: First of all, we have to correct a couple of misstatements made by the member opposite. The facility that will house the MRI is not a temporary facility. As I explained to her yesterday, the facility that will house the MRI is a permanent structure that will be repurposed once the MRI is moved to other uses by the Hospital Corporation. We're not talking about a completely temporary structure. We are talking about a temporary location that is convenient to be used by the emergency department. It is convenient and it's located in an appropriate area.

Having cleared that up, we are committed to working with the Hospital Corporation to investigate the need for changes in the emergency department and an addition to the hospital, and we will continue to investigate that.

Ms. Stick: The emergency department is expensive to run. It should be for emergencies. That's what it was built to provide. The fiscally responsible thing to do is reduce the use of the emergency department for non-emergencies. The Referred Care Clinic is now caring for some folks who used to have no other place to go for care, other than the emergency department. There are other folks who should also have other options, such as the doctorless patients and people with chronic conditions.

Before sinking millions into another capital project debacle, the government should commit to providing appropriate care to doctorless patients and folks with chronic conditions — not in the ER.

Will the government commit to eliminating inappropriate use of the emergency department first, before it commits millions of dollars to hospital expansion?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I am so happy that the member opposite agrees with some of the things that we have done to date to reduce the use and reduce the pressure on the emergency department. We will continue to look at alternatives to the continued use of the emergency department, and we look forward the members opposite not only agreeing with those changes that will be made over the next few months, but that they will enthusiastically support the changes and they will indicate so in this Legislature.

Ms. Stick: In 2011-12, 63.9 percent of visits to the emergency department at the Whitehorse General Hospital were less urgent and 13.1 percent of the visits were non-urgent. Less urgent visitors definitely need care, but the emergency room is not the appropriate place. Mr. Speaker, 77 percent of visits to the ER were not emergencies. For the members opposite, I table this information from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, and I remind this House that ER care is the most expensive model of health care delivery we have.

Yukon Party political health care decisions are proving to be fiscally irresponsible. This inappropriate care is not suitable, and it is not serving Yukoners well. Before spending

the money, will the minister commit to providing more appropriate care for the 77 percent —

Speaker: Order please. The member's time has elapsed.

Hon. Mr. Graham: As I've said, we've taken some steps already with the Referred Care Clinic. We are also attempting, as members opposite know, to recruit more doctors to the territory. We have had some success to date. We expect to have more success in the very near future. We passed the nurse practitioner legislation. We're implementing nurse practitioners in a number of areas throughout the territory. We hope to continue that practice. We will continue to reduce the inappropriate use of the emergency department. We are fully committed to that. I really look forward having the comments of the members opposite when we accomplish what we've set out to do here.

Question re: Continuing care facilities

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Services about the government's new continuing care facility. Last week, the government confirmed it was barging ahead with the largest construction project in the territory's history, despite the fact that no business case analysis was done. A decision has already been made to build a 300-bed facility. It seems a bit futile to spend \$7 million on a design and then ask the public what they think when the design is already completed. By the time the government is ready to go to the public, the only decision left to be made will be: What colour will the curtains be?

When is the minister planning to consult with Yukoners, exactly?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Once again, I'll make every attempt to educate the member opposite in the process by which capital projects are undertaken by this government. When a need has been indicated by a department, a needs assessment is then done. That needs assessment has been done. That needs assessment showed us that — through the use of home care, through the number of seniors that is rapidly increasing here in the territory and a number of other indicators — that the long-term care use in the territory will increase by at least 300 to 320 beds in the next 10 years.

Once that needs assessment was done, this government took the decision to go ahead with planning for a 300-bed facility. As part of the planning process, we entered a business case phase of the program. That is the current phase we are in. As part of a business case development, the numbers that we produced during the needs assessment are reviewed. That is currently being done, and it found that not only were our numbers accurate, they were perhaps a little low. That is the phase we have now entered.

Mr. Silver: The Yukon Party government has time and time again been criticized by the Auditor General of Canada for its failure to plan for major capital projects, and we are seeing the same mistakes repeated on this new continuing care facility.

On March 27, the minister told a local paper that the government would like to see a mix of government, non-profit

and private operators in the territory when it comes to continuing care facilities. The government already operates 182 beds and has announced a plan for 300 more. If the government wants to put more focus on the non-profit and the private operations, what is the rationale for not developing these sectors and, instead, barging ahead with a new 300-bed facility?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to educate the member opposite.

There are a number of different phases of aging. The member opposite has obviously not entered any of these phases. I have.

Mr. Speaker, you have to be aware that people don't all require a continuing care facility. There are secondary care facilities, there are a number of graduated facilities where seniors can spend their time. We are hoping and we are encouraging the private sector and the non-government sector to enter into those other areas. Secondary care is a perfect example. An NGO or a private operator would probably do very well in the provision of secondary care to Yukon seniors. What it is about is offering options to Yukon seniors. I realize the Opposition doesn't want to see that happen. We would like to see that happen.

We understand that continuing care is a responsibility of this government and that's why we're proceeding on the path that we are. We would like to see other sectors of the society take an interest in seniors as well and provide care in various stages.

Mr. Silver: If continuing care was such a priority for this government, then why was it not identified as a platform item in their 2011 election campaign? If it was such a priority, then why has it taken this government three budgets to bring it to the table?

If the government has already decided to build a 300-bed facility, surely it knows how much it will cost to operate, run programs and how it will be staffed. This is another recommendation from the Auditor General — don't build something unless you know the cost to operate it. What are the staffing and program costs associated with a facility of this size?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Isn't it interesting that the member opposite would have us place such a complex in our platform without having done a needs assessment — without having done any assessment whatsoever. I am not sure what the member opposite believes that we should be doing.

Mr. Speaker, in our election platform was a continuing care facility for the municipality of Dawson City. That will be proceeding in the coming year. In our platform were a number of other things that we are accomplishing as well. Obviously the member opposite is not aware that there was a number of continuing care beds added in the Thomson Centre. This is part of the expansion of continuing care. What we also did is improve home care so that we would keep elderly folks in their homes in a familiar setting for a longer period of time, so that they didn't have to make use of continuing care.

The member opposite did not make any comments last year, when the increased continuing care budget was

produced. I don't know what he expects. One time he is saying we have not done any planning; in the next he is saying we should make commitments without doing any planning whatsoever. He has to make up his mind what side of the fence he is on.

Question re: Renewable energy strategy

Ms. White: Two focuses of the Yukon energy strategy are conserving energy while using it more efficiently and increasing the supply and use of renewable energy. The Yukon Party government missed an opportunity in its last budget to act on those priorities.

Last week, when I asked a question about climate change, the minister indicated that he hadn't heard about climate change from the Opposition in the last two years. Anyone who ever listens to the Legislature knows that my colleagues and I regularly ask questions about renewable energy. Then again, maybe this minister doesn't see the link between climate change and renewable energy.

I will ask the minister an easy question. Does the minister see a link between climate change and renewable energy?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I think this side of the House has proven time and time again that we are committed to a clean power future in the Yukon. As I've mentioned previously in this House, 95 percent of our power is derived from renewable sources, which is well ahead of the national average.

Just today there was a contract awarded for the Yukon-Alaska economic corridor feasibility study. That's a study that came from an MOU that the Minister of Environment and I signed with the State of Alaska last October to explore opportunities for developing electrical and telecommunications connections between Yukon and southeast Alaska.

If that project does prove to be feasible, we'll be able to add additional renewable energy projects to the electrical grid and the Yukon system. We're looking through the microgeneration policy — and again, members opposite would have been briefed on changes to the *Public Utilities Act* this morning — with allowing microgeneration and IPP providers to enter the system.

There is obviously a tie between the renewable energy that we provide and our climate change action, so of course we agree that those two are linked.

Ms. White: Since the beginning of this legislative session in 2011, our concern for climate change has been evident in our solution-focused questions about energy efficiency, energy conservation, energy supply and demand and all renewable energy options. The three biggest energy draws in Yukon are electricity generation, space heating and transportation.

Transportation is by far Yukon's largest energy draw, at 55 percent of our total energy consumption. What is the government's plan to reduce consumption in this area and make transportation more energy efficient and environmentally friendly?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As mentioned, we are committed to providing clean energy for all Yukoners. I mentioned a

number of the projects in my previous response. Of course, the largest project that we're looking at is a legacy hydro project. We've invested \$2 million in this budget to have the Yukon Development Corporation lead the research and planning for such a project, but we realize that's a long-term vision.

Of course, we want to see more Yukoners convert their homes to electrical heat, but again, we need the generating source to ensure that can happen.

Mr. Speaker, one of the projects that will be undertaken by this government is re-skinning and making this building — the Legislative Assembly and the main administration building more energy efficient through re-skinning and increased insulation and better windows. We're working on a number of aspects to ensure that as a government we're more responsible.

When it comes to transportation, one of the events that I attended in the last year was with respect to having natural gas provide power for vehicles. Of course we know that the NDP are against any type of natural gas entering the system, but it's something that other jurisdictions look at.

Ms. White: The Kluane First Nation is investing in solar, geothermal and wind and is showing a clear commitment to diversifying their own renewable energy options and tackling the root causes of climate change. That is true leadership.

Other than its hydro study and its microgeneration policy and the retrofitting of the Legislative Assembly, what are their short-term renewable energy goals for the territory?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned in my initial response, there are a number of things that we're looking at in the short-term on renewables. As mentioned, the microgeneration policy — I believe one of the members opposite is actually in the queue for that program as far as applying for it and I applaud him for that. I think it's a great opportunity to increase the amount of renewables that individuals in this territory use.

With respect to potential renewable projects, I did mention the feasibility study into the Yukon-southeast Alaska electrical connection. We did award the contract today for the feasibility study to two Whitehorse-based firms and an Alaska-based firm. There are a number of things. That tie has the potential to add additional renewable capacity. The Yukon Energy Corporation is looking at wind-energy concepts on Mount Sumanik and Ferry Hill. I know that there are a number of renewable projects that we're looking at to meet that short-term energy supply in the territory so that we can continue to lead the country in providing clean power for Yukoners.

Question re: F.H. Collins Secondary School reconstruction

Mr. Tredger: Geothermal heating for F.H. Collins makes sense in so many ways: cost savings, renewable energy, reduced emissions — the list goes on. The government had several feasibility studies that made all these benefits clear. The government also has a report that said: if it

wanted F.H. Collins to have geothermal heating, it should be very clearly spelled out in the building requirement specifications to ensure that architects bidding on the project include the required feasibility, engineering and design work for geothermal in their bid. Last week the minister said the government still hadn't ruled out geothermal, but their lack of action speaks loud and clear.

Will the minister admit that the government does not intend to go ahead with the geothermal heating system for F.H. Collins?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I am happy to get up here to talk a little bit about the processes. The members opposite have been going on about project mismanagement, and I just want to clarify some things for the public.

When we go looking at projects — as the Minister of Health and Social Services spoke about — and when we go through a capital planning and initiation phase, we, of course, do a needs assessment. That stuff is implemented in a comprehensive business case and a development process for all of our capital projects. This provides our Deputy Ministers' Space Committee, and ultimately the government with the basis for: making sound investment and decisions, and this plays into the geothermal; ensuring that our buildings are sustainable over time and that the design to meet primary program needs and to optimize our building operation and maintenance; working with our clients to upgrade and replace these capital assets to ensure that our infrastructure quality and performance and our service capacity; reducing our operating costs based on a good business case and energy consumption and environmental impacts on our infrastructure.

Geothermal is important, as is some of the other stuff we've discussed in this House. We haven't eliminated it from the project. We're still doing a study and trying to see if it's feasible.

Mr. Tredger: A new F.H. Collins school heated with geothermal would have been paid off within a decade and it would have significantly cut fossil fuel emissions with renewable energy. It would also have been a source of pride for a new generation of Yukoners attending school — a concrete example of the potential for innovative green energy adapted to the Yukon. The minister refuses to admit it, but it looks like another missed opportunity for renewable energy in Yukon.

The Yukon Party government can't have it both ways — either they have given up on geothermal and the minister isn't telling Yukoners the whole story or the government is planning to change the F.H. Collins building requirements one more time. Which one is it?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I'm not sure where the member opposite is getting his numbers from, but we're just excited to be moving forward on this project. Replacing the old F.H. Collins — we're looking at moving forward with this. I've said this in this House before. We have a great contractor. The bids were close, Mr. Speaker. Everything looks great.

You listen to members opposite — yesterday, I heard the Leader of the Official Opposition say that if you don't have

the money, you don't have the money. Mr. Speaker, we have the money.

I don't know about a continuing care — is something I can speak to, or Saint Elias group home, Sarah Steele replacement. There are many projects. The great capital budget that we're putting forward — we do have the money. We also have a good surplus for putting these projects forward and I'm excited to be on this side of the House.

Mr. Tredger: The minister's refusing to answer the question. It's not complicated. Either F.H. Collins will have geothermal heating or it won't. This is another sad chapter in the F.H. Collins story — a missed opportunity for renewable energy, and another example of the Yukon Party government's inability to implement good ideas on behalf of Yukoners.

Will the minister admit that the government missed a perfect opportunity to combine cost-savings, renewable energy and environmental leadership with geothermal at F.H. Collins? The question is simple. Will geothermal heating be used in the new F.H. Collins building?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Energy efficiency and conservation are factored into all of our capital decision about the construction of buildings or the renovation of buildings. That's why, of course, F.H. Collins will be LEED certified and will be built to high standard. I know the NDP disagrees with that. They have previously characterized the F.H. Collins as an ice palace. We know that that certainly won't be the case.

Mr. Speaker, we intend to renovate this building and bring this particular building up to the standard that is expected in the 21st century for energy efficiency and conservation.

We are doing this across the territory with all of our buildings. When it comes to this specific case of geothermal in F.H. Collins, you have heard the minister clearly indicate that a decision has not been made about whether or not that will be in or out. I know that is difficult for the NDP to understand, but of course Mr. Speaker, we need to be cautious and careful with the decisions we make with Yukoners' tax dollars and that is what we intend to do, both with this project at F.H. Collins and with all capital projects throughout the territory.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 612

Clerk: Motion No. 612, standing in the name of Mr. Hassard.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2014-15 budget to allocate \$734,000 to develop a new campground near the historic Conrad townsite on Tagish Lake's Windy Arm.

Mr. Hassard: It is an honour to rise today to speak to Motion No. 612, which urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2014-15 budget to allocate \$734,000 to develop a new campground near the historic Conrad townsite on Tagish Lake's Windy Arm. I look forward to hearing from other members and discussing the great opportunities that Yukoners have to enjoy these things that we all cherish about our home and, in particular, our ability to enjoy our natural wilderness surroundings.

This motion addresses a government commitment to identify potential sites for new campgrounds. As I've noted before in this House, we share a special bond with our territory and love our quality of life and connection to the outdoors. That sentiment is something the Yukon Party has heard loud and clear from Yukoners and the government continues to show this, with developments like the campground or with the recreational lots I spoke of recently. Both of these projects enable Yukoners to do what they love to do and take advantage of the things that define who we are and why we call the Yukon home.

We love to get out on the land and explore our great territory. One of the activities that Yukoners enjoy is taking advantage of our great territorial campgrounds. I'd like to first begin by recognizing the dedication of the Department of Environment staff, who spend countless hours every summer ensuring that our campgrounds are safe. Park officers spend many hours during the summer months and many miles on the road on their evenings and weekends to keep these campgrounds safe.

The park officer program was introduced and implemented by the Yukon Party government in 2004. This has created a more family-friendly atmosphere, with regular presence and enforcement of campground regulations. To these staff, I would like to say thank you on behalf of all Yukoners. We all appreciate your continued hard work and commitment to ensuring the campgrounds are safe and enjoyable for all to visit.

The territorial campgrounds are a valuable resource to visitors and Yukoners alike. However, we are seeing that statistics are showing users are shifting from visitors toward a higher proportion of local residents staying in campgrounds, particularly those that are within a two-hour drive of Whitehorse. The increased campground visits by locals is a further example of our love of Yukon's ease of access to the outdoors. It is a key part of the quality of life that we value here in the Yukon.

There have been no new campgrounds in the Yukon since the Johnson Lake Campground, which happens to be in my riding. It was built just outside of Faro in 1987 — that was a long time ago. It is apparent to me that we are well past the

time where the government invests in the recreational pursuits for Yukoners. The Yukon Party, I'm happy to say, is making sure that this happens during this mandate.

I would like to highlight the history of the territorial campgrounds for a bit, just to provide some context to the great campground network the Yukon government manages. From the late 1940s to the late 1960s, the Yukon forest service established the first informal campgrounds in the territory. The forest service wanted to group travellers together along the major highway corridors to assist in fire prevention efforts.

The Tourism branch of the Yukon government assumed responsibility for these unofficial campgrounds in 1972. At that time, the network had grown to consist of approximately 40 randomly located, unserviced campgrounds that were designed for free overnight stays by highway travellers.

In 1976, the responsibility was transferred to the Department of Renewable Resources and that entity has evolved into the modern Department of Environment. The Parks branch in the department manages and maintains a network of about 50 campgrounds and recreation sites across the Yukon. These serve both overnight accommodation needs of travellers and the recreation pursuits of all Yukoners.

We've come a long way since those days and the Department of Environment has done a great job of modernizing our campground management regime. The Parks branch services the campground network out of three regional offices in Carcross, Dawson City and Haines Junction as well as the main office, which is located here in Whitehorse.

All campgrounds have established basic facilities and services which include: campsites that can accommodate recreational vehicles, have vaulted toilets, fire rings, picnic tables, firewood stations, roofed picnic shelters, bear-proof garbage bins and self-registration camping permits as well as boat launches. Environment Yukon deserves credit for the great job they've done over the years developing these facilities and we are now served by a high-quality network of territorial campgrounds.

They've managed to do all this and also respect the role that the private sector has to play in providing camping accommodations to travellers and Yukoners alike.

I believe it's also important to note that they have balanced and developed a campground network that compliments the private campgrounds in the territory and does not compete with those private campgrounds. This is important, as we provide opportunities for our tourism operators to provide a high-quality experience to visitors. They provide a valuable service in the Yukon, and it is important for government to avoid competing for revenue with the private sector.

That being said, we've seen a growing need for more campgrounds. I am pleased that this Yukon government has identified these monies in this year's budget to develop this new campground. I'd like to thank the Minister of Environment for making this a priority for government and working to advance this project. I'd also like to thank the Carcross-Tagish First Nation for the great work and partnership to move forward on this project.

The proposed Conrad campground is at an excellent location. Situated at Windy Arm on Tagish Lake, it is recognized as a proposed location in the Carcross-Tagish First Nation final agreement and provides for First Nation participation in the campground development.

Development of the campground also fills a void in the existing territorial campground network.

The Carcross and Tagish campgrounds were transferred to the First Nation as part of their settled land claim. This new development will provide a replacement in the Southern Lakes area and allows the south Klondike Highway corridor to meet the goal of having a campground facility on major corridors within 100 kilometres of each other. Also, it's a very attractive site and I believe that it will serve this popular highway well.

We've seen increased strain on the campgrounds around the Whitehorse area. By developing this campground, the Yukon government can reduce the reliance and competition for spots in other campgrounds such as Kusawa, Pine Lake, Wolf Creek, Fox Lake, Twin Lakes and Lake Laberge.

We will also see further enhancement and economic opportunity in the Carcross region. The Yukon government has supported economic development in the region through the "Destination: Carcross" initiative. This development, in addition to the recreational lots that I spoke to earlier, will further drive traffic to the region and provide additional economic opportunities for businesses and the community. This investment in Carcross continues to pay dividends as we see the revitalization of the waterfront and the downtown core. The Southern Lakes area will be a hub for recreational pursuits and opportunities for Yukoners.

Great things are afoot in the community, and I am excited to see the good work the Yukon government is accomplishing in cooperation with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation. Whether it is the memorandum of understanding signed in December of last year outlining details to develop a world-class resort and develop the recreational lots, "Destination: Carcross", the carving shed, or working to develop this campground, the partnership between the Carcross-Tagish First Nation and the Yukon government is yielding great results.

This partnership, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the larger commitment of this government to work with First Nation governments to ensure that they remain full partners in economic development in the territory and help to develop capacity.

Back to the Conrad campground — the campground will provide further recreational opportunities for Yukoners and travellers alike.

In closing, I'd just like to say that all Yukoners should be proud of the work that the government is undertaking on their behalf to develop this campground. It will provide much needed accommodation options along the south Klondike Highway. I look forward to hearing from other members of the House on this motion, and I encourage all members of the Assembly to support this motion and the great work that the Yukon government is undertaking on behalf of all Yukoners.

Mr. Barr: I'd like to thank the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin for bringing forward this motion. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work and the patience of Carcross-Tagish First Nation for this to come to fruition. I should indicate right at the start that we will be supporting this motion because it is a belated fulfillment of a commitment made in the *Carcross-Tagish First Nation Final Agreement* that was signed in on October 22, 2005. Despite the fact that it has taken this government almost nine years, we do support the implementation and the commitments made in First Nation final agreements.

It is my pleasure to rise to speak to this motion today because the government is doing exactly as I recommended in a question last fall. Mr. Speaker, I'm not saying this is my idea. It is not. But I am certainly proud to have advocated for this campground. The development of a Conrad campground is part of the final agreement of the Carcross-Tagish First Nation. Chapter 22 of the final agreement of the Carcross-Tagish First Nation pertains to economic development. Section 22.3.1 indicates that the economic development planning should start as soon as practicable — thus my initial introduction comments.

Last fall, instead of getting ahead with developing the economic opportunities mandated under the agreements, the Yukon Party was busy picking fights with other First Nations regarding other campgrounds. That is why I asked about the Conrad campground last November — because there wouldn't be any fights. It is already included in the *Carcross-Tagish First Nation Final Agreement* and I would like to say that it is disappointing that this government spends so much time and resources on unnecessary legal battles. We in the Yukon NDP know that Yukon will prosper more when we honour, rather than fight, the final agreements. We can get on with work that benefits us all.

It is refreshing today to be talking about a campground that we all agree to.

The economic development plan shall include the interests of First Nations and strategic investments, such as culture and tourism, among many others. Chapter 22 is about the big picture of economic development.

In the *Carcross-Tagish First Nation Final Agreement*, chapter 22 is accompanied by Schedule A — economic measures. Part 1 is about specific economic measures. The first item in Schedule A is the Conrad campground. That is the origin of the campground we are discussing today.

Under Schedule A, economic measures, 11.2 states — and I quote: "If the Yukon, in its sole discretion, decides to construct a Yukon government campground at the possible Conrad campground, the Yukon shall provide the Carcross/Tagish First Nation with the first opportunity to accept the contract for the construction of the Yukon government campground." It then goes on into detail about notice of the contract.

If you haven't been down to that site — I have travelled down there with my grandkids and been to this proposed campground. The reason why we feel others go there is that there are buildings from the original townsite, the tram comes

down there and there is an old bear den you are going to find. I have seen already, over the years, people from Skagway come there. There are beautiful sandy beaches, there are specific spots eked out by people who have been using this as a campground for as long as I can remember.

Also, local people go there to camp and people from Whitehorse go there too — now that we are finally getting to it, as the road is rough.

We will be able to work on those things and other structures such as outhouses and eating areas that will be constructed. I think that, as I listen to the member from Pelly-Nisutlin, the economic spinoffs to Carcross, as far as people wanting to stay in that area, is only going to benefit the efforts of Caribou Commons and other people who have invested in small businesses and the local B&Bs. Mountain bikers, for example, at this world-class trail, now come back and forth to Whitehorse. It is going to be a great opportunity to just go a few miles down the road and camp — they could maybe bike down the road.

At the end of the day I don't know — I see the member for Takhini-Kopper King saying no — maybe at the end of a day riding up a mountain and biking home is not conducive. But I do know there are opportunities for people that shuttle the bikers around. I see this as a logical step, not only to honour the final agreement but, as I stated before, this is also a way that we can work together. I am glad that Yukon Party has finally seen the light.

I would also like to say that, in the history of this campground, for some folks who don't know — it's closely linked to the Yukon's mining history. It began in the early 1900s, due in large part to the boldness and will of John Conrad. John Conrad began investing in the Montana Mountain silver deposits in March of 1905, as the cost of silver was rising worldwide. In June of the same year, John Conrad reported that there was over \$12 million worth of silver in the Montana Mountain deposits alone.

One of the challenges that Conrad and his employees had in extracting the silver was the hard-to-reach nature of the deposit. The Montana Mountain seam was located high on the mountain and required an ingenious process to reach it. Conrad purchased a tram system in Seattle that reached 18,000 feet from the top of the mountain to the lake below. You can still see the remnants of this tram coming down and, right at the site, it's intact where it hit the water, and then it would be loaded on to the barges to float down the waterways.

Once the ore was shipped to the lakeshore, it was loaded on to a boat and shipped to Carcross. From there, it was shipped to Skagway by White Pass trains. The Yukon government at the time worked with Conrad to provide road access to the base of the tram system from Carcross. As the mine grew, Conrad City grew at Windy Arm on the banks of Tagish Lake. At its peak, Conrad Consolidated Mines employed over 350 miners and 500 people lived in Conrad City.

That's what tourists will be able to explore; that's why it's such a logical site. Unfortunately, the cost of doing business in the Yukon was too great for John Conrad, and

getting equipment and supplies to the mine was too great and the cost of shipping the ore out on the White Pass trains dug into Conrad's profits. Conrad Consolidated Mines went bankrupt. In April 1912, just seven short years after Conrad had established his mine, he left the Yukon. In 1928, John Conrad died in Seattle though the area bears his name to this day.

I would like to once again say that we will be supporting this motion and we are glad it's happening. I look forward to going down there myself.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in support of this motion brought forward by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this motion put forward by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin as the riding is properly titled and to speak a little bit about this project and how we arrived at it and the reasons behind the choice for this particular site — an update for members and anyone listening on the project.

Of course, campgrounds are one of the many ways that Yukoners experience and interact with nature in our territory. They offer the ability for folks who want to get out into nature and want to experience the great outdoors here in the territory the opportunity to do so, but with a certain degree of convenience and amenities that are hosted by our campgrounds.

I really believe that our campground network is world-class, and that the services available within them are unique and worthy of commendation. I know that when we have reviewed comparatively our campground network against our neighbours and others in this part of the country and this part of the world, we stand out as being very generous with the opportunities, the services and the amenities that we provide within our campgrounds. For a very low fee, Yukoners and visitors alike can spend a night at our campgrounds and enjoy many significant services that aren't available in other jurisdictions. As well, our annual seasonal fee for a year-round camping permit is quite inexpensive. I know many Yukoners make the annual trip down to the store or to the Environment office to purchase their annual permit with the coming of spring so that they are all geared up and ready to go for their season of camping.

As the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin indicated in his remarks, it has been some time since Yukon saw the development of a new campground in our territory. The last time Yukoners saw construction of a new campground was in 1987 with the construction of Johnson Lake Campground up near Faro. As I have indicated in the House and publicly previously, I believe that we are long overdue for a new campground, and that's why I am very pleased to see this particular project advancing forward.

Before I move on from some general comments about the campground, I did want to take a moment to as well review and thank those officials in our camp officer program and all of those Yukoners who, through contract or through other means, provide services at campgrounds.

One of the examples I would like to point out is, of course, firewood. Unlike any other jurisdiction that I'm aware of, we provide free firewood to campers. This is a unique service that is very much cherished by many Yukoners, and although it can be challenging from time to time to deal with the provision of this service, I can assure the House that I have from time to time received phone calls on the weekend from friends who were at various campgrounds around the Yukon or had recently been at those campgrounds and indicated to me that there wasn't any firewood or there was an inadequate amount of firewood and I should remedy the situation as soon as possible. I appreciate Yukoners taking the opportunity to call me on my personal cellphone to tell me these things and welcome the suggestions and encourage department officials to act very quickly in dealing with them.

On the whole, Mr. Speaker, I do have to say that those calls are infrequent. For the most part, the availability of services, in particular firewood, in our campgrounds is fantastic, and all of those folks who provide those services through contract or other means do a great job and Yukoners are well-served by them.

As I indicated, Mr. Speaker, we are interested in the development of a new campground. Part of the reason for that is, of course, in our platform in the election of 2011 we had a particular item that we would identify areas for new campgrounds. That is exactly what we've done. Shortly after I became Minister of Environment, I spoke with the department about opportunities to fulfill this commitment. We came up with a number of options that included, among others, the Conrad campsite. This particular project has been quietly in the works since late 2011, but, as other members have indicated, it had been contemplated for many years before that.

Indeed, it was a key component of the Carcross-Tagish First Nation's final agreement and it was specifically mentioned in that agreement. That agreement spells out some very specific requirements for how this project is to advance, which I will discuss in a few moments.

As well as being a previously identified site through the land claims process, this particular site will fill a need that I believe exists — first of all, between the Whitehorse and Skagway corridor, which so many Yukoners travel, but also in a more general sense in the general range of opportunities for camping approximate to Whitehorse. We've noticed in our review of the statistics of camping visitors' overnight stays in the past years that there's a growing demand for campsites, generally in a two-hour radius of Whitehorse, and that if we were to move forward with a new campground, it should be within that two-hour radius to meet that growing demand. This site obviously checks that particular box off as well.

I would be remiss if I didn't point out how beautiful a location this is. In the Southern Lakes area, on Windy Arm, it is in my opinion one of the most beautiful places in the territory. It has historic significance, which I'll get to, but it also has just raw beauty, which is something many Yukoners appreciate when they drive down to Skagway or down the South Klondike Highway. The mountain viewscapes, the

massive bodies of water and the picturesque horizons in this area are, in my opinion, unparalleled.

I believe, for those reasons, that this would make a beautiful campsite. The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes indicated some of the history about this and so I won't elaborate too much more on John Conrad and his mining efforts in the early part of the 20th century. But one thing I did want to note was that I think anybody driving to Skagway often slows down or sometimes stops to look at the old Venus mine. It's an important site along that corridor that attracts a lot of attention. The only additional point that I wanted to make about that was a quote from the *Whitehorse Star* from 1908, which indicated that that Venus mill — and I quote: "... ran with the smoothness and nicety of a new sewing machine." I think that it has been appreciated by Yukoners for, apparently, well over 100 years — the Venus mill site, that is.

Moving forward with my explanation of why this site was chosen, I should also note that the most significant impetus for this has been the creation of the MOU between the Carcross-Tagish First Nation and the Yukon government late last year. That's an agreement that spans a number of topics, including the development of new recreational lots, the development of Bennett Beach, the tourism initiative at Millhaven Bay, and then, of course, the Conrad site itself. It was an excellent step forward for the Government of Yukon as well as the Carcross-Tagish First Nation government in collaborating and coming together to share common goals and achieve a common vision for the Southern Lakes area.

We've discussed previously some of the accomplishments that have been made under this MOU already in this session, including the new cottage or recreational lots that will soon be available to Yukoners for purchase later this year. This campsite or campground is yet another example of a successful initiative being undertaken under the aegis of this MOU.

As members have previously noted, it is specifically discussed in CTFN's final agreement. On page 219 of the final agreement, there is contemplation of the historic site which requires both parties, the Yukon government and the Carcross-Tagish First Nation, to development a management plan for the historic site at Conrad and to create a steering committee to guide that work. Further in the economic development measures of the agreement, page 397, there is an indication that should the Yukon government, and I'll quote from it: "... in its sole discretion, decides to construct a Yukon Government Campground at the Possible Conrad Campground ..." — the reserve area adjacent to the Conrad historical site — "...the Yukon shall provide the Carcross/Tagish First Nation with the first opportunity to accept the contract for the Construction of the Yukon Government Campground ...". Then it, of course, lays out the manner by which that will be undertaken. So, in recognition of the MOU and the final agreement, the Yukon government reached out to the CTFN to discuss the possible creation of this campground more than a year ago now. It ultimately was included in the MOU and here we are moving forward with it.

The plan at this stage is for the campground to be constructed in a two-phased approach. The first phase — this is, of course, all planning at this stage, and ultimately, decisions haven't been made, as we haven't gone to YESAB yet, but I'm pleased to give some indication of the general direction we're moving in the development of this campground.

As I was saying, the plan is to move forward in a two-phased approach, beginning with the campground reserve itself, where we would construct a number of sites on that campground reserve. The construction of those campground sites could begin quite soon. It is hoped right now that we could get into YESAA this summer and possibly begin construction in this construction season, with an eye to having a few campsites available for next camping season, which is actually fairly quick in the scheme of things.

Following that, a second phase would be identified to develop the plan for the historic site itself. As members and others have indicated, there are a number of artifacts and historic sites that are on that site. There are old cabins, there is the old tramway from the mine itself; folks have indicated to me that there are even a few artifacts — if you know where to look and know what you're looking for, you can find them. As folks have noticed, they have been degrading over the years as people visit the site. In some cases, cabins were chopped up for firewood, or pieces of artifacts are stripped away, taken off-site and dealt with in an unknown manner.

I think it is an important next step, not only for the Yukon government, but also for the Carcross-Tagish First Nation government to develop a management plan for the preservation and protection of that site. It is our hope that in that plan we can include the possibility of some campsites on that historic site.

It would have to be done in a manner consistent with the fact that this is a historic site. I am confident that if Yukoners are presented with the historical value of the site — and perhaps some information panels or historic monuments that they can learn from and read — they will be respectful of the historical significance of the site and leave the site undisturbed as, I'm sure, will be contemplated by the management plan.

Phase 2 would include that development — the development of a management plan and the development of the possible development of campsites within the historic site itself. Ultimately, once we have the plans ready to go, we can enter into the YESAA process and receive the scrutiny of YESAB as well as the possibility of public consultation and the opportunity for Yukoners far and wide to comment on this particular development.

While I have received a significant amount of support for the development, I am sure that there are a few who have various, legitimate reasons why they would prefer that this particular site not be developed. We have to give that due consideration, of course, and ultimately try to develop the campground in a way that respects traditional or previous users, respects people who have an attachment to the area and will be in the best interests of the historic site itself.

On a personal level, I am very excited about this development. I often head down to Skagway in the summers for recreational purposes, taking friends from out of the territory to visit and see this beautiful part of the territory. I have always noticed that there is an opportunity there that hasn't been met.

As others have noted, there are the Tagish and Carcross campgrounds that were transferred to the First Nation with the signing of the land claim. While those campgrounds do continue to exist, I think there is an unmet demand between Carcross and Skagway that will be well subscribed by Yukoners and visits alike.

I am particularly excited about the opportunity to celebrate and preserve the historic site of Conrad as well. I know that there is some concern that if we have campsites nearby the historic site, it that may result in additional traffic and therefore additional disturbance to the site, but I am confident that — as I said earlier — if Yukoners are presented with the historical significance — perhaps a plaque or an information display of why it's important and how it's important, and how they should behave on this site — that Yukoners will be respectful of our history and will be respectful of the historic attributes of the Conrad site.

As well, I think it will benefit Yukoners to further understand our important mining history — that the Conrad mine site is an important part of our history and was a significant part of Yukon's — the Southern Lakes' history, at least. I understand that Conrad was even considered for the capital of Yukon in the early 20th century. Of course, that didn't happen.

I see you indicating my time is short, Mr. Speaker, so the final component of my discussion today on this motion was the fact that a rarely acknowledged aspect of the Conrad site is its usage as a cold-water diving site. A lot of Yukoners who do cold-water diving in scuba gear, or whatever it is, enjoy the Conrad site because, when Conrad was a community and the mine was in operation, the method of disposal of garbage at the time was to leave the garbage on the ice and, magically, it would disappear in the spring. As inappropriate as that is from an environmental perspective, it does provide a lot of opportunity for divers to go and find very interesting and unique artifacts at the bottom of Windy Arm. I'm sure that with the campground there, there will be increased opportunity for that as well.

In closing, I would like to again thank the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin for bringing forward this motion. I look forward to working with the Department of Environment to advance this project forward and, more specifically, with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation and their management corporation to partner on this site. As I indicated previously, the final agreement suggests that the CTFN's management corporation would have the — for lack of a better term — right of first refusal on the construction contract. I'm sure if they are interested in that, they will get that contract and it will provide a number of employment opportunities for the citizens of Carcross and, more specifically, the citizens of the Carcross-Tagish First Nation.

I look forward to seeing this project move forward and I'd like to thank the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin for bringing the motion forward today and would commend it to the House.

Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I see you hitting the timer. You won't need it on this one.

I just wanted to stand and thank the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin for bringing forth this motion. I'm not sure whether or not a lot of debate is needed in this particular case. I hope we don't get regaled with too many fishing and camping stories here today.

I'd like to also commend the government for working with the First Nations on this project and I will be in support of it.

Mr. Elias: It's a pleasure to rise today in the House to also lend my support to this motion put forward by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. I also want to extend my congratulations to the foresight and vision of a partnership that was meant to be, from the negotiators and the people around the table who were negotiating the *Carcross-Tagish First Nation Final Agreement*. I know how it is to sit at the negotiating table and take direction from your elders and your community and put it into words that are protected under the Constitution of our country.

Something that seems as little as a campground being put into a final agreement is no little thing. I want to commend the partners. I want to commend the people of the Carcross-Tagish First Nation because this is not only a campground. It's going to recognize and share the Carcross-Tagish First Nation culture and surrounding area and communities with the thousands and thousands of visitors who potentially are going to come to this historic site and potential campground. To put it in the final agreement says something to me because I know it's no easy task to put these things in there.

In response to the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes about taking nine years to implement a section within the *Carcross-Tagish First Nation Final Agreement*, I am also well aware of the multitude of implementation responsibilities that exist in our territory's First Nation final agreements. Obviously they can't be done all at the same time. There is prioritization that needs to be done. Case in point — the John Tizya Visitor Reception Centre in Old Crow took our community 10 years to implement because all of the parties were not ready to implement those types of things. When the parties are ready to proceed with implementation of sections within our final agreements with our traditional territories, then, and only then, will it happen.

It's also important to recognize the leadership from Khâ Shâde Héni Danny Cresswell and our Premier for signing a memorandum of understanding between their two governments, which include the mutual commitment to develop a new campground at the Conrad site on the shores of Windy Arm. This is going to certainly make an exceptional campground that's going to be enjoyed by Yukoners and the

thousands and thousands of visitors who are going to travel the south Klondike Highway over the years.

With that, I want to continue by saying that there are some stages that need to be gone through before we actually open a campground. One of them includes going through the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. The work that still needs to be done includes things like: the Windy Arm fish and fish habitat fisheries report needs to be conducted; a heritage assessment and archeological report will be needed and will need to be completed; wildlife reports for ungulates and carnivores; a rare plants survey; additional heritage work by the Yukon Heritage branch and the Carcross-Tagish First Nation heritage branch will be required. These things still need to be gathered together and submitted to the Teslin designated office as one step in the process of this campground opening.

I have been to this site several times over the course of the years, sometimes with my children. I actually have pictures — speaking of carnivores and ungulates. In the vicinity we have seen goats, sheep, black bears, grizzly bears and marmots. The wildlife is plentiful around marmots — some people call them groundhogs. The wildlife is plentiful around the area, and so for such a place to develop there is a tremendous amount of work to do.

I'll give you an example of something that I'm very familiar with — and this is something that I can see that can be developed on the south Klondike Highway in terms of culture and recognizing charismatic mega-fauna, tourism sites, fishing and camping, and that's the Dempster Highway. Way back when, when this highway was being contemplated, to what I see it being now — it's a tremendous area that has been very well-interpreted, right from the Dempster Highway information centre.

I've heard stories about how right at the very beginning of the Dempster Highway, there was an information sign. One of my friends was travelling to Dawson and there was someone standing right on top of the interpretive sign at the beginning of the Dempster Highway. He swung around and turned around back toward the lodge and he looked, and there was actually a grizzly bear between the gentleman on top of the sign and his car, and so he had no place else to go. He didn't want to run, so he actually climbed up on top of the sign at the beginning of the Dempster Highway. My friend has a picture of it somewhere. That story just came to mind, sorry, Mr. Speaker.

As you go up the Dempster Highway, there is the Tombstone Territorial Park interpretive centre that was also developed by the Yukon territorial government and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. It's another success story.

I believe the former Minister of Environment, now the Minister of Education, was there, in her previous mandate, signing for that territorial park and campground together with the leadership of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. That is another good news story.

You know there is also — as you go up the highway — there is the North Fork Pass. There is the North Fork Pass summit, which is the highest point on the Dempster Highway.

There are the Blackstone Uplands that are just a birder's paradise. There is Two Moose Lake. Obviously, in the interpretive signage, there are areas for people to come and actually watch moose that are always feeding in the lake there. There is Chapman Lake; it is the largest lake along the Dempster Highway. There is Windy Pass. At kilometre 158, there is a gyrfalcon nest that has been used for generations. There are also places called Red Creek and Sulphur Springs. The late Charlie Linklater — when I used to travel up the Dempster with him — he used to call it “tomato soup creek” because it looked like flowing tomato soup.

As you go further up the highway, past the Arctic Circle there is the Rock River campground at kilometre 446, close to the Northwest Territories border. Obviously, this is one of the campgrounds that is in my traditional territory. You know, this is the type of interpretive signage and booklets and interpretation of culture that has the potential to be developed in and around this Conrad campground.

To celebrate the lands, the water, and the wildlife and the culture in and around the Conrad campground in southern Yukon is going to be interesting to watch develop and to watch grow and to watch the people in Southern Lakes be proud of. It's something to take advantage of.

It's also my hope that, one day, we can develop a partnership with the Yukon territorial government and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation to see a small campground be developed in the community of Old Crow, with padded tent sites, grey water disposal, outhouses, picnic tables, campfire places and things like that, so our tourists, canoeists and visitors who come to Old Crow during the spring, summer and fall months can also come and enjoy the great hospitality that is provided in our Yukon campgrounds.

There's lots of work to be done yet. There's still the concept design, the administration and planning and design. There are still a lot of communications and environment assessments to do. Permitting has to happen, engineering and final design of the campground, and then obviously then on to construction.

Again, it's my pleasure to stand in the House today to support such an initiative. I'm looking forward to seeing this partnership and relationship grow in the interpretation and building of this Conrad campsite.

Having the foresight and vision to actually put this type of partnership into a final agreement is quite important to me, because I know this is no easy task when negotiating your final and self-government agreements and to put something like this in — it's more than just the words that are depicted in the final agreement; it's also the intent of the partnership and to build on that partnership.

I think I'll just conclude by saying it's going to be a pleasure to see our network of campgrounds across our territory expand to address demonstrated local needs in terms of our population increasing and more pressure being put on our campgrounds in and around a two-hour radius around Whitehorse, as well as providing that opportunity for the thousands of visitors who travel to and from Alaska and our beautiful territory to actually stop on the south Klondike

Highway at a place that has had public investment and First Nation government investment and a partnership in telling our Yukon story.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for your time.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I'd like to also thank the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin for bringing this motion forward which “... urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2014-15 budget to allocate \$734,000 to develop a new campground near the historic Conrad townsite on Tagish Lake's Windy Arm.”

Mr. Speaker, I believe this motion is something that most Yukoners can support. As you will already know, most Yukoners, and perhaps most tourists to Yukon, love camping because perhaps they are tired of the busy city life or they are just ready for a new adventure. In fact, I would argue that Yukon draws people here because of opportunities such as biking, hunting, camping, boating as well as other activities. Camping offers you exclusive means to focus completely on the outdoors for days without external distractions, such as work and personal stresses. A camping trip can fit into the amount of time that you have to spare. It does not require much time for planning. Mr. Speaker, as you know, you can camp for one night, a weekend, a week or more. I expect that many of our visitors, whether they are from domestic North America or overseas markets, camp when they do come to Yukon. With our visitation increasing to a record high in 2013 with an eight percent increase, working with CTFN to build a campground makes perfect sense to me.

Often we talk about the \$250 million that contributes to our tourism economy. Camping certainly contributes to that economy as well, whether it's through equipment sales, purchasing food, renting RVs or through renting canoes or kayaks from companies like Kanoe People. Over one-quarter of all businesses generate some of their revenue from our tourism.

This motion makes me think of the first ever Canadian Premier-led tourism trade mission to Germany last year, where I joined the Premier and 16 tourism industry representatives on a trade mission to Germany and to England. We know that our German visitors are inclined to travel independently and often rent vehicles and camping gear from local entrepreneurs.

In fact, visitation from Europe has increased 86 percent during the Yukon Party's time governing our territory. We also know that the border crossing at Fraser, just a short drive from the proposed campground at Conrad, is the most used border crossing in Yukon.

I also suspect the accord that the Premier reached with Air North and Condor that would support seamless travel from Europe to Air North's entire flight network would be of great benefit to encouraging camping in our territory. I suspect that other agreements the Premier signed while in Europe with German and UK tour operators to create cooperative marketing initiatives, worth \$592,500, would also be of benefit when encouraging camping in our territory.

I might add that the members opposite vote against these funds that are being used to market our territory.

Although media coverage may not immediately make us think about camping, I suspect having Yukon designated by Lonely Planet in 2013 as a top-10 must-visit travel destination would encourage visitors to travel here and to camp during their stay. It's unfortunate that the Liberal leader wrote Lonely Planet in an attempt to discredit the incredible services offered by both the public and private sectors in the Yukon. In fact, I'm disappointed that he misinformed the Lonely Planet publication by stating that Dredge No. 4 would no longer be open for guided tours. We've been doing our best to bring campers here to Yukon. The member opposite seems to be doing his best to make this a very lonely planet.

Just as an aside, Mr. Speaker, in Monday's media was the announcement that Parks Canada will extend the season by an additional two weeks.

I would like to thank the private sector companies stepping up to the plate for these much-desired tours.

This is the contrast between our side of the Legislature and the members opposite. Faced with a challenge, the member opposite lit his hair on fire and banged out a letter discouraging tourists from travelling to our incredible territory. The team on this side of the Legislature went to work with our MP, the Government of Canada and key tourism stakeholders and found a solution.

What I found particularly interesting during my research is that it is believed that camping can help you live a longer and healthier life. My research supported the benefits of camping, and I realized that people who camp regularly enjoy dozens of significant health benefits. When you spend time in the great outdoors, surrounded by trees, you take in more oxygen. That feeling of happiness that you get when you take your first breath of air at the campground isn't all in your head — well, technically it is — but it is actually a release of serotonin from the extra oxygen. Our bodies tend to function with less pressure when there is plenty of oxygen.

That is not the only benefit of fresh air. Research shows that time spent outdoors can improve your blood pressure, it can improve digestion, and it can give your immune system an extra boost.

There is also a great social component to camping. Camping alone is sometimes enjoyable, but if you bring along a friend or a family member, you will enjoy a unique experience together that will help you enjoy healthy, happy relationships.

There is, in fact, research published in the *American Journal of Public Health* that supports the theory that socializing can extend your lifespan and delay memory problems. Apart from the medical benefits, a few close relationships certainly make life more fun.

Camping is one of the best ways to connect and bond with your family and friends. If a hectic work schedule is leaving you with little time for your family members, a weekend camping trip could be the perfect answer. With no television, no computers and no cellphones to serve as distractions, activities such as setting up camp, fishing,

cooking, games and bonfires will have everyone working and spending quality time together.

I should also note that many people who camp often speak about how, on the first few days back from a camping trip, they seem happier. This isn't without merit. Spending time outside in the sunlight can even out the levels of melatonin in your brain. Melatonin is that chemical that makes you feel tired and can induce feelings of depression, so by camping you can enjoy better overall moods during and after your camping trip.

Let's not forget about the most obvious benefit of camping: you are spending a lot of time performing physical activities. Even if you're taking a simple fishing expedition, you're burning more calories than you would burn by sitting at your desk. If you hike, bike, canoe or kayak, you are performing cardiovascular exercise that will assist in the general health of your heart and your lungs.

Other obvious benefits to camping are sunshine and sleep. Other than the fact that it feels great when the sun is beating down on your skin, when you are out in direct sunlight you're taking in a ton of vitamin D, which allows your body to absorb calcium and phosphorus. Assuming that you have decent camping gear, you can often fall asleep after a full day of outdoor activities. Sleep has an effect on all of your body processes and can reduce inflammation, improve your cardiovascular system and help you stay alert. In fact, many campers report better sleep cycles when they return from a trip.

Most of us who are experienced campers will already know that no two camping trips are exactly the same. This turns out to be a good thing. Studies from the University of Texas and the University of Michigan show that new experiences help to keep our brains healthy. New activities that are both physically and intellectually stimulating have the greatest effect on brain health, and camping fits into both of these criteria.

We know that since the Yukon Party has taken office and invested significantly in our tourism economy, the number of people travelling here specifically for wilderness travel has more than doubled, and the average length of stay, specifically within our domestic markets, has increased from eight to 10 days. We also see the willingness from the Carcross-Tagish First Nation to work on projects of mutual benefit with us. Last year, the Department of Tourism and Culture entered into a two-year lease agreement with the Carcross-Tagish Development Corporation for a location in Carcross to provide visitor information services. Located in the new Carcross Commons, the visitor information centre hosted approximately 74,000 visitors last year alone, making it the most visited visitor information centre in our territory.

Last fall, we made the decision to keep the Carcross Visitor Information Centre open a few extra days, until September 25, to welcome visitors on the Holland America's last few ships and visitors into Skagway.

I should also make note of some of the investments that we've made within Carcross, and specifically Montana Mountain.

I believe that it was through the Department of Economic Development with the single track to success program on Montana Mountain that about \$150,000 has been invested in that program. I would like to thank the Minister of Economic Development while I'm on my feet here for his work with that community.

This motion also makes me think about the proposed lodge at Stoney Mountain at Millhaven Bay near Carcross which would certainly be an exciting new development for the Yukon tourism industry. To determine whether this development should proceed, the government is following a process based on the process used in B.C. for making land available for wilderness tourism development. This process flows from the MOU the government signed with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation in December of last year. Mr. Speaker, we know that in February, the proponents held three public meetings about this project — two in Carcross and one in Whitehorse. As I understand it, the proponents will now submit a detailed resort master plan and move toward a YESAA submission.

There is no shortage of ways that our Yukon Party government is working collaboratively with First Nations. Specifically under my watch as Minister of Tourism and Culture, I know that historic sites provide staff and technical support to the Yukon College heritage and culture field school at Robinson Roadhouse. I also know that Kluane First Nation received an arts fund grant of over \$15,000 for the Burwash arts mural project.

We've worked with the Yukon First Nations Tourism Association in partnership with the Adäka Cultural Festival to restructure the organization in support of the development of both the First Nation culture and tourism sectors, following which, the Yukon First Nations Tourism Association was awarded an arts fund grant of \$40,000 to organize the 2014 Adäka Cultural Festival, and the Ross River Dena Council received an arts fund award to support the Kaska Dena Fiddle Group.

Mr. Speaker, the museums contribution program provides funding support for the annual management and operations of the Yukon First Nations Culture and Heritage Centre. The Department of Tourism and Culture also provides \$345,000 on an annual basis to the Northern Cultural Expressions Society for its carving program. Every time I visit NCES, I'm incredibly surprised by the exceptional work being done there.

The list of collaborative work certainly does go on and on and on. I would be remiss if I didn't mention some of the good work being done within the Department of Justice in collaboration with First Nations, from the good work at Whitehorse Correctional Centre to the administration of justice; the Yukon Police Council and the *Sharing Common Ground* report and implementation; amendments to legislation throughout government; working with victims of crime; and now we're well on our way with the FASD prevalence study.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a little bit about product development, especially after some questions were raised in Question Period today regarding product in general within the territory and perhaps more specifically to Beaver Creek.

Through the 2013 and 2016 product development strategy, the Tourism department continues to provide tourism industry and entrepreneurs with quality education and training programs.

The strategy supports industry development and consultation with non-governmental organizations and industry stakeholders, and it ensures tourism interests are represented and communicated.

During the 2013-14 fiscal year, the Industry Services unit hosted six workshops and presentations for tourism businesses and stakeholders. A total of 117 participants attended those workshops. We will continue on with that good work in meeting with several of the communities. Just last week, I was out in the Kluane region speaking to stakeholders from Beaver Creek right through to Haines Junction, working with the Department of Tourism and Culture, the Department of Economic Development and the Department of Community Services. The MLA for the area was also in attendance. There is some good work that can be done increasing the product in that area.

In conclusion, the motion before us speaks to this House urging the Government of Yukon to use the 2014-15 budget to allocate \$734,000 to develop a new campground near the historic Conrad townsite on Tagish Lake's Windy Arm. This will take collaboration with First Nations, and I am confident that both the Yukon Party government and the Carcross-Tagish First Nation want to move forward on this project together.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I am pleased to rise today to speak to this. Every time I think of campgrounds, I think of my youth growing up in the Yukon. I was so happy to see that this budget has allocated a new campground near the Conrad townsite on Tagish Lake.

When I first thought about what I am going to speak to on this motion — of course I wanted to speak to it — I thought I'd go to the government website and look at our campground facilities. I did learn a few things, but I also knew a lot of the things. On the site, it talks about some of the offerings of the roadside campgrounds: picnic tables, campfire pits, firewood and at least one picnic shelter in each campground. You will also rely on outhouses and hand-pump cold water. If you prefer other conveniences, try one of Yukon's privately-operated RV parks, which are a good thing to see on there, because we have a lot of RV parks in the Yukon. I know I have been working — and the Minister of Tourism has been working — and sent a letter to Holland America asking them to keep their RV park in Beaver Creek open this year. I'm working hard.

I heard a question from the Opposition today again and I am pleased that the Minister of Tourism is all over this issue too. It is good to see that the government also promotes private enterprise and some of the local businesses that offer more than the campgrounds do, things such as satellite television, electricity and dumping stations, among other things.

One thing that I did learn that I did not realize when I looked at the Yukon government's campground map is that it

actually shows the wheelchair-accessible outhouses. People with disabilities who are working their way north and looking to use our campgrounds can have a look there.

Now I am going to speak a little bit about some of the campground rules and then I am going to speak about my local campground and some of the activities that I see that are probably going to be happening in the Conrad campground. It says to please follow these rules to ensure that you and your camping neighbours have a safe and comfortable camping experience. So, of course, all the campers must register.

You know, many Yukoners get a yearly permit and it doesn't mean that you're guaranteed a spot, but it tells you that you have a permit for the season. You can camp, park and drive in designated areas only. The sites may not be reserved for campers who have not yet arrived.

Of course, we want to put all of our garbage in the bear-proof garbage containers. It also says that we must limit our stay in the campground to 14 nights in any 30-day period. That gives an opportunity for the tourists to have a spot and Yukoners do not occupy the campground throughout the summer.

The quiet hours are from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. and they ask that you kindly turn your generators off during these hours — it is usually light, so there is not much use for generators, I find. All pets must be kept on a leash and people must kindly pick up after them — I think that is really important to keep our campgrounds clean. Not everyone is a fan of dogs.

Use firewood responsibly — we have talked about firewood before. The Minister of Environment spoke a little bit about it. I find it funny that it says: "No hoarding and no bonfires please," I get that — forest fires are a reality in the Yukon. I understand that there is sometimes a no-burning policy in the campgrounds by the good work of our Forest Management branch and Wildland Fire to keep us safe.

Of course we leave our firearms packed away and it is unlawful to discharge one in or near a campground. It also says to use commercial dump stations for RV liquid waste, and those are the ones you get locally in town. Also, of course, we don't want to be feeding the wildlife.

When we had this discussion about more campgrounds in the Yukon, this was imperative to me. Some of the things about the campgrounds growing up were — we didn't have a Pine Lake Campground when I was growing up. We had a Pine Creek campground, which had about 12 stalls.

In the summertime, my parents had an old trailer they would haul out there. My dad worked for Highways, and we lived out there. It was our holiday because we didn't have a lot of money. We lived at the old Pine Creek campground for a week and a half. We bathed in a tub and the water was warm and we swam in the creek. When Dad came home from work, he came home to the campsite. A lot of locals did that over the years.

One of the other great things about some of our campgrounds — and I can see this with the Conrad campground — is the accessibility to the water. I'll speak a little bit to that because it's important for Yukoners to know — and for those people who might be reading the Blues or

listening here — that our campgrounds are more than just a place for Yukoners to camp or for tourists to stop and camp. They are also an access for Yukoners and landowners, First Nation and non-First Nation, who have cabins. I'm really proud that the Department of Environment — the guys who manage these campgrounds work with the landowners. A lot of times the campgrounds are closed down at a certain time, and they'll offer access to the boat ramp because there are still some locals out gathering for the season who need to get across the lake to their cabins.

Some of the other opportunities and activities you might see in some of our campgrounds — and I can say this. I've seen it all. Some of the stuff I've seen I'm not going to bring up in the House today, but a lot of the other stuff that you'll see is that it's an opportunity — having campgrounds close to lakes — for fishing opportunities. The opportunity to get out there and explore with your boat is incredible. Yukoners rely on these accesses and these well-maintained boat launches. Mr. Speaker, being a member of the boating community, you will appreciate this.

The other opportunities, unlike our campground and other campgrounds — we have the beautiful Pine Lake hiking trail that runs right through the campground and into the community. There are opportunities for hiking within the campgrounds.

Each campground comes with well-maintained playground equipment and, quite often, you'll see a lot of locals at the campgrounds that are close to a community like Pine Lake.

If you go there in the summertime when it's warm, the kids are on the sandy beach building sand castles, playing in the water and using that equipment. Quite often, management of this is a little bit tasking because a lot of boaters — and when I was growing up we spent a lot of time water-skiing right out in front of that campground. We were there just about every night. You also see canoers and kayakers getting out on the lakes. At times, in our local campground with the permission of the Department of Environment, we actually had a regatta and a liquor licence and live music out there. It was a great fundraiser for the community. It was well-attended for a few years.

Some of the other stuff that happens at some of these campgrounds, such as Conrad — there is an old historic site, so it is an opportunity for the tourists and the locals to explore a little bit.

We've seen weddings and family reunions at some of the campgrounds. We've seen company retreats. People go out for a week and work at a campground on their company stuff. In the wintertime, our campground is quite often used for snowmobile races or dog-mushing races. The Silver Sled runs right through that, and the Department of Environment is great to open the campground up and the cook shack. We have ice-fishing days that run. The Yukon Fish and Game Association would run them out of Pine Lake and out of Fox Lake — different lakes in the wintertime. The campground would be opened up and they'd be giving away free hotdogs and

hamburgers for the locals to get out there and enjoy. Our campgrounds are imperative.

Also, youth camps — sometimes it's the Junior Ranger program or the cadet program — or First Nation culture camps have quite often gone in. The school bison hunts have quite often used some of our campgrounds.

I know when they started developing campgrounds, I actually worked for a year for parks and recreation, building campgrounds. We built a bunch of new stalls at Snag. We built the Lake Creek one and Congdon Creek, and we were busy developing them and then, like the member opposite spoke to earlier, we sort of haven't had a campground in awhile, so I was excited to see this move forward.

We started off at the Pine Creek campground as a kid. The community wanted a bigger campground so we developed our own campground with equipment from local private enterprise — the first campground on Pine Lake. Then, after we pressured all the people who were coming out to enjoy the weekend water-skiing and maybe enjoying a cold beverage, they thought, "We should actually build a campground on this lake," so we got the Pine Lake campground, which has a beautiful sandy beach and it's not only an incredible place for our locals to go, but also our tourists.

One of the other things that we see in our campgrounds is not only an opportunity for Yukoners to get together but also to mingle among tourists. Sometimes the credit for the Yukon people is underappreciated because a lot of our Yukoners who go to the campgrounds — yourself and many others who occupy our campgrounds — quite often are speaking to a tourist, whether he is from Germany in a rental vehicle or from Texas, telling him, "Ten miles down the road, there's a cool thing you should go see and do this." We're sort of like unpaid tourism people who work out there. There are many of us out there. They look for the opportunities — for a Yukon licence plate — to come and ask questions: Is there any good fishing? Where should I fish out on the lake? I have a boat. Of course, we don't tell them the good sites. We just tell them to get out in a boat. We don't want to give away the trade secrets, Mr. Speaker.

One other thing is that it appeared to me as important about our campgrounds is the opportunity for Yukoners to get out on the long weekends. If you go to the Kusawa Lake campground, Fox Lake and those campgrounds on the long weekend in the summertime, they will be full of Yukoners enjoying themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on about campgrounds. If you're not picking up on this, Mr. Speaker, I like campgrounds.

In closing, I think it's important that we look at this and we have places for Yukoners to go with a few of the amenities that they need. It's important that we put a big thank you out to the Department of Environment, the Parks branch, which does such a great job. Many people comment on the campground signs as they're the best signs out there. How they build those is incredible.

Also, another thing is that I think the underappreciated people out there are the campground attendants, and they're the seasonal people. Some are the older retired people who don't mind cleaning the campground. They're the ones who get out there and have to get their hands dirty and sometimes it is not good — some of the stuff that they have to clean up — but they work hard keeping the peace, chatting with people, passing on information, making sure people have registered and they've put in for it.

The other thing that is important to remember is that some of our local community volunteers go out there and work with the youth in our communities and work with our tourism operators, work with our campground attendants, helping promote activities. Sometimes there are nature walks in these campgrounds. I know Parks Canada in their campground used to have someone who sat there and told stories at night, and the tourists and locals do love that.

Another thing that I'd really like to say is that this just shows something that this government is committed to on this side of the House — partnerships.

This government is working with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation — working hard — partnering on new and innovative things and new ideas and this campground is just another good example of partnerships working together for the betterment of the Yukon and the betterment of the rest of the world — the people who want to come and see the Yukon.

The Minister of Tourism spoke to Lonely Planet about that.

In closing, I would like to thank the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin for bringing Motion No. 612 forward and I look forward to going camping at the Conrad campground.

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

Mr. Hassard: It certainly is a pleasure to hear what other members have to say in regard to Motion No. 612.

I would just like to mention a couple of other things. The Conrad campground, I believe, will be an excellent complement to the work that has already been done by the Carcross-Tagish First Nation and the community of Carcross. When the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes mentioned mountain biking — one of the developments that was led by the Carcross-Tagish First Nation was the single track to success project. That project was constructing the mountain bike trails.

This initiative was a great step forward for Carcross and Yukon tourism in general. It furthers Yukon's status as a destination for mountain biking. We are proud of the Yukon government's support for the single track to success project. The Yukon government has provided more than \$150,000 to the Carcross-Tagish First Nation in support of this.

In 2012, the Minister of Economic Development announced that the community development fund would provide in excess of \$88,000 to the Carcross-Tagish First Nation in support of this project. This significant investment is

just one of the ways that we support improving Yukon's reputation as a destination for mountain biking.

With that, I spoke to the Minister of Environment about the Conrad campground and he informed me that, in the creation of the campground, they have determined that there should be large-group sites. These sites would probably be very beneficial in accommodating mountain biking groups. This is just one more reason why I hope to see unanimous support of the motion for the campground at Conrad.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

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

Motion No. 612 agreed to

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I would ask the indulgence of all members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly in joining me in welcoming Michael Peterson and Laurie Parris, who are here from Yukon Quest.

Applause

Motion No. 624

Clerk: Motion No. 624, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Watson Lake:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to implement its Rural Equity Action Plan that is

designed to improve learning outcomes for rural students and First Nations students by:

(1) enhancing distance learning opportunities;

(2) providing improved culturally relevant curriculum;

(3) sharing resources;

(4) supporting arts, trades and other specialty

programming;

(5) promoting teacher specialization; and

(6) providing opportunities for students from different communities to work together.

Ms. McLeod: I am honoured to rise today in support of Motion No. 624. That motion urges the Government of Yukon to continue to implement its rural equity action plan, which is designed to improve learning outcomes for rural students and First Nation students.

If I could just clarify one of the points that is mentioned in the motion itself, and that is "(5) promoting teacher specialization ..."

I hope that all members in this House will be supporting this motion. There has been great work undertaken over the past years to assist educators in meeting the needs of rural Yukon students. Rural Yukon has unique circumstances and challenges in each of our communities.

No two communities are identical, but we all share a common challenge to ensure that our distinctiveness and individual needs are met by government.

The Yukon Party understands these challenges faced by rural Yukon and actively addresses them by introducing flexibility in government policies and by working with communities and stakeholders. This can be seen in the educational outcomes across the territory as well. On average, rural Yukon students have lower attendance and academic achievement rates. In addition, First Nation students have significantly lower attendance and achievement rates, on average.

There are many stakeholders in education, including parents, students, the government, teachers — to name a few. I'm sure we can all agree that all the partners have a role to play to find solutions to best serve the educational needs of our Yukon students. We're here today to discuss some of the programs in place at the Department of Education that are aimed at improving these results in rural areas. The rural equity action plan is one of the initiatives that have been introduced by the government to help address the underlying issues resulting in these lower outcomes.

I would like to recognize the teachers and staff who are in our schools day after day. We entrust the care and teaching of our children to our teachers and they extend great efforts to meet that challenge. A great teacher can have huge positive impacts on a child's formative years and be a mentor, role model and even a lifelong friend. Thank you to all the teachers who are helping our children grow and develop to be their best.

Rural teachers in particular have a greater role to play. Sometimes they are new to communities and new to the territory, having moved here from Outside. These teachers are

often newly arrived only weeks before they assume their new teaching roles.

The Department of Education has developed the teachers academy before the school year starts, to make sure that all teachers are adapted and oriented to the needs of Yukon students, whether that be with the challenges of isolation, the cultural differences of students or the needs of the communities. Teachers are also needed to take on a leadership role in communities. There are limited resources and people to contribute to all the different programs and initiatives that are developed locally. Teachers have the abilities and leadership skills to make a difference in a small community.

So, Yukon teachers, thank you for your continued work on behalf of our students and communities. I am very proud of the commitment and efforts of teachers in my home community of Watson Lake.

In speaking to the motion, I'd like to go through the different points that are outlined for the plan. The first point is to enhance distance learning opportunities for rural students. The Yukon government has used the Aurora Virtual School for home-schooled students and distance learning students across the territory and supports a variety of different options throughout Yukon. I'd like to highlight that the budget this year is \$418,000 and I'd like to thank the government for their continued commitment to providing flexible options for students and parents.

Flexible schooling options for parents and students allow them to take the courses they need to meet their graduation requirements, or simply be successful in an alternative learning environment from the traditional school setting. In addition, in 2013-14, it was determined that rural schools needed improved Internet infrastructure, and the government is working to improve bandwidth in schools.

Now Carmacks, Watson Lake and Dawson City all have upgraded connections. The government is currently working to improve the bandwidth to rural schools throughout the territory and this includes Old Crow, which has unique challenges because of its isolation.

In my own community, this improved bandwidth has allowed the introduction of the blended learning program. The program provides individual learning programs and students to learn at different paces. This promotes personal responsibility in the student and enables teachers to teach multiple levels of a subject in the same class.

The dynamic in the school has changed and you have heard me speak to this before. Behavioural problems have become uncommon and attendance concerns have been reduced. The school and students credit the introduction of this program with the cultural shift within the school. It is a proud moment for our community, knowing that we are the pilot for this new education model and that we are leading the way in Yukon.

Blended learning has been a huge success as an in-school variation on distance learning. Students access modules on-line, using the improved bandwidth, and also have access to a teacher in the classroom to assist them. Just to speak a moment to the success of this program, in recent years past,

we have seen the graduation of one, two or three students in a year. I am told that this year we can be looking forward to up to 20 graduating students. Huge kudos to the teachers who are involved, to the parents, to the students, and of course, to the Minister of Education, who has been a champion of this program and to the Department of Education itself.

The second point of the plan is to improve culturally relevant programming in order to engage all students in our schools. To this end, the Yukon government has been working with First Nations to identify areas that can be improved and made more relevant to students.

An example of this cooperation is a partnership outreach program with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. The program provides an alternative programming model to support vulnerable learners and the culture camps, and locally developed learning opportunities that take place in Haines Junction and Old Crow.

Further to this is the recently announced agreement between the Yukon government and Yukon First Nations on a First Nation joint education action plan. The government will work with First Nations on methods to improve the cultural content in our school curriculum. The third point is a commitment to share resources and this government is doing just that. The action plan demonstrates that the government is sharing resources with First Nations and benefiting from their expertise to improve culturally relevant curriculum.

In addition, we see this flexibility in the new mobile instructional trailer that has been acquired by Yukon College. This trailer can be moved around the territory and assist in teaching at college campuses. I know from having this trailer in Watson Lake that it is very heavily subscribed to and really quite a unique learning opportunity.

The fourth point speaks to supporting the arts, trades and other speciality programming. The trailer is targeted toward trades training and provides the flexibility to offer this training in the communities. The department has also tasked an applied skills consultant to do an inventory of all Yukon trades training rooms and they will be brought up to operational standards. The consultant also has been training staff in rural communities and delivering workshops to prepare rural staff to teach trades programming in rural schools.

This also speaks to the fifth point of encouraging further teacher specialization. These teachers are acquiring skills that can be passed along to their students.

The sixth point speaks to the needs of students. Rural schools are often small and each student population deals with different issues due to this fact. By providing the opportunities for rural students from different communities to work together, the Yukon government is broadening their horizons and improving their relationship with the school.

I would like to congratulate the department for introducing the rural experiential model, or REM, as we all like to call it. The department has a dedicated staff member working with superintendents to develop and implement distributed learning in Watson Lake Secondary, Robert Service School and St. Elias School. Out of this they also created the northern rural experiential model that took place

for all grades 10 to 12 students in Dawson City from Ross River, Faro, Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Mayo and Dawson City. This took place in late September of 2013 and students collectively gathered for a week to all take courses in trades, arts and culture that they wouldn't normally have access to. This included workshops on the land, in the wood shop, guitar and songwriting, food service training, First Nation art and digital art and film. The success of this project has resulted in planning for a second gathering for grades 7 to 9 students from May 2014 in Carmacks. All communities have been invited to participate and I expect the students will enjoy the opportunity to collaborate, make new friends and broaden their education.

As I near the end, I would like to just say that this type of learning and sharing of resources extends thoroughly to Yukon College, which uses technology to provide specialized training for all communities that wish to participate in it. I personally know of an instructor who teaches classes from Watson Lake to students in Teslin.

I want to thank the Minister of Education, the Department of Education staff and all of our teachers who work hard to improve the educational outcomes in our territory. I look forward to the rest of the speakers this afternoon, and I trust that all members in this House will support the excellent work being undertaken by this government.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the NDP Official Opposition to speak to Motion No. 624, brought forward by the MLA for Watson Lake.

This motion is an example of the government's inability to plan their political approach to decision-making. After this motion was presented on Monday, I began to look for the so-called rural equity action plan. I searched high and low over the evening and into the morning. This morning I learned that such an action plan was being worked on but I would receive a copy before this afternoon's debate. I received an e-mail from the minister at 12:03 p.m.

The copy I received was a work-in-progress. Mr. Speaker, what kind of planning is this? What kind of disrespect does this show to the hard-working public servants who had to rush to get this action plan finished on time for the debate?

Those public servants have undoubtedly been putting a lot of thought, time and energy into preparing an action plan, and suddenly, because of the government's political needs, they had to rush completion of the document. It reminds one of the famous photo op that the Premier took part in shortly before the last election, when he got his shovel out and began construction on the F.H. Collins building. Public servants have been scrambling to meet those commitments ever since, and we still await the construction.

From what the motion reads, it's a plan that sounds great. It is a shame and a bit of disrespect to our hard-working public servants to see the kind of approach and work they put into it being debated when we haven't had time to fully examine it. It prevents thoughtful and productive contributions to the public debate and hinders us as legislators in fulfilling our obligations as legislators.

We've had many plans, reports, and stops and starts to work with our rural students, their parents, their families and their communities. It is not through lack of effort and not through lack of trying. Very good people — some of the best I have ever met — have worked hard on this. It is a challenging and complex situation but it can be done. There is no need to have this inequity continue.

I'll begin by referring to the Auditor General's report in 2009, which lays out the purpose of strategic planning — and I will quote: “(63) Strategic planning is a management tool that focuses on the future. It helps a department set priorities and goals and develop a plan to meet those goals. It also helps a department to assess how resources are to be allocated and gives it the scope to adjust its direction in response to a changing environment.

“(64) We expected the Yukon Department of Education to have a comprehensive strategic plan in place, with clearly defined directions and specific measurable goals and objectives. As part of the strategic planning process, we also expected the Department to have identified, measured, mitigated, and reported significant risks to achieving its goals and objectives.

“(65) Furthermore, we expected that the Department would have focused plans for managing its key resources, such as human and physical resources, as well as plans for individual schools. These plans would be linked to and consistent with the Department's overall strategic plan.”

What have we learned from the Auditor General's report? How can we ensure the sustainability of our plans and our actions?

We continue with ad hoc planning, spur-of-the-moment decision-making and political grandstanding. When we do this, we risk mismanagement of our resources. We spend our resources — not only the fiscal resources, but the resources of our very capable teachers, department personnel, school council members, parent volunteers — when we don't have clear priorities, when we don't have goals that can be assessed, and when we don't base our actions on relevant performance indicators and data. We need thoughtful, collaborative approaches. We don't need flavours of the day.

When I look at this motion, I look for action items, measurable outcomes. A rural equity action plan sounds good but what does it mean? How will we know when we achieve rural equity? What are the indicators?

As the Member for Watson Lake mentioned, graduation rates are one indicator, but we have many indicators.

How are we measuring them? This motion talks to enhancing distance learning opportunities, providing a culturally relevant curriculum, sharing resources, supporting arts, trades and other specialty programs, promoting teacher specialization, and providing opportunities for students from different communities to work together. All of these sound good and are very worthwhile goals, but I'm sure — in fact, I know — there are many people in our system who are working toward them and achieving them.

How do we go about ensuring that it becomes a systemic goal? How do we go about achieving them and putting our

plans into action is the crux of the matter. Will they be community driven? How do we ensure that? Will they include school councils and First Nations? How will our partners be engaged? The success of this plan — and I encourage the members opposite to hear what I'm saying — the success of the rural equity action plan depends upon the extent to which we can involve local communities in their own children's education.

It depends on access to teachers who understand and embrace First Nation world views and cultures and understand First Nation approaches to education. Our teachers must be made familiar with teaching practices that have proven to be successful. Schools, school communities and teachers must be engaged and given opportunities for community-based curriculum professional development. It needs to be a community project. We've learned from Old Crow, Watson Lake, Dawson City and Haines Junction that in order to ensure the success of the programs, it needs to be community driven.

So I ask: What are the anticipated costs associated with this implementation? Will there be sufficient funds to support staff and community to ensure the projects are fully implemented and that their ideas are taken and brought to fruition? We know rural and First Nation students perform well below their peers. This is a crisis by any metric — attendance, graduation rates, literacy skills and job readiness. We have many reports, many studies and many agreements. All have been very clear: we need to move on this.

I commend the Minister of Education, the Department of Education and all those who are working with the teachers and the communities to implement this and bring it to fruition. That is not my concern. My concern is that we need to do it in a sustainable manner. In order for it to be sustainable, we need to have clear goals, clear criteria, and methods of evaluating it.

I am pleased to see that First Nations continue to support new initiatives. It is a testament to their patience and their belief in the future for their children. However, I have talked to many First Nation and rural citizens who continue to be frustrated with the slow pace of change. As I said, I'm pleased to see that they're continuing to support new initiatives. It has been a long time coming and people are becoming frustrated with the slow pace of change.

After a first glance at the rural action plan, I would like to thank the public servants and staff of the Department of Education for what looks to be the beginnings of a more comprehensive plan. I know many in the communities are excited and look forward to opportunities to participate. I would encourage full participation of school staff, the Yukon Teachers Association, school councils and community members. I would encourage them to work with the Department of Education officials. It is evident from research that real change can happen with community involvement.

One of the challenges educators face in rural Yukon is that of rethinking systems that keep students and teachers locked into traditional grade levels. It's difficult to meet the diverse student needs in classes with large discrepancies in

student academic ability, often spanning three or more grade levels in a classroom. Hopefully, through the rural equity action plan, this will be looked at. We'll look at some of the solutions that already exist, such as the Individual Learning Centre or the Teen Parent Centre. There are a number of good initiatives underway. The minister mentioned many of them yesterday — the rural experiential model, the Old Crow Flats venture on the land, projects in blended learning in Watson Lake, and the partnership in Dawson City with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and in Haines Junction with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. All involved are to be commended.

These projects show much promise. Let's ensure they are given the acknowledgement they deserve by properly evaluating them. What are the priorities? What are the outcomes and goals that are being met? How do we ensure the resources necessary are identified and provided? How do we ensure that local involvement is supported and successes and challenges are articulated? Such questions and examination will ensure that success is sustainable and, with proper engagement, repeatable in other schools.

How and when will we assess the success of these initiatives? Proper evaluation must be ongoing and responsive to the changing needs. What criteria are we going to be using for evaluating? Is it attendance? Is it graduation rates? Is it engagement of the students in the classroom? Will we do a survey to see how these initiatives have affected engagement? Has the rural experiential model in Dawson's success transferred for students in other courses and in other areas of their development?

I would remind also that schools cannot do it alone. It is a community process. Too often we have not involved the community. We must pay attention to the community. Statistics show that socio-economic position has a major influence on success. Poverty, isolation and access to resources all affect student success, but it doesn't have to be this way. Early identification and intervention can change the outcomes, especially when we engage the community, involve them and get their commitment.

I would encourage making a part of our rural equity action plan an extensive wraparound system that coordinates with other public sector supports for people, children and their families, and supports from other agencies — social services, health care, the RCMP and First Nations — helping students transition from one part of their life to the next. It is important that we engage the whole community, and these can be contributors to any successful action plan.

A few years ago, the Department of Education did a rural high school exit survey. The students identified a couple of areas of need and priority. One-on-one counselling and support with direction and courses was identified, the need for additional training or help when they are doing courses, and tutoring. Hopefully these will be implemented as part of the rural equity action plan.

I do support these initiatives, and I do support the rural equity action plan. It is no doubt a good beginning, but let us make it more than a beginning. Let us move from here to a real difference-maker. Too long children in our communities

have been at a disadvantage. Too long have teachers in our communities struggled to deliver quality education. Too long have our First Nations waited for the education system to produce more qualified people.

This is a beginning. I again thank the officials at the Department of Education. I thank the minister for her efforts to make it happen. I thank the teachers in our schools. I remind each and every one that it can be done. It takes resolve, it takes political leadership and it takes all of us together. Thank you for your time.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I want to thank my colleague, the MLA for Watson Lake, for bringing forth this very important and timely motion.

It speaks to a very important matter that is near and dear to my heart and that is improving educational outcomes for all of our students. For far too long, as has already been articulated on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, we have been experiencing inequities among students within rural Yukon and the rest of Yukon.

Likewise, there have also been achievement gaps identified year after year among First Nation students and non-First Nation students. And yes, there has been significant work done over many years and it goes back over successive governments — not just Yukon Party governments, but many governments before then, and here we are today.

Mr. Speaker, the rural equity action plan has been a work in progress and will continue to be a work in progress. It will continue to engage and involve communities on many different levels and it will continue to be driven by our communities. Some of those initiatives were just identified as being supported by the Opposition member.

It is a comprehensive approach to improving learning outcomes for rural First Nation students in our territory. It is the outcome of a number of different initiatives over the years, starting with the education reform project and then, of course, leading into *One Vision, Multiple Pathways: Secondary School Programming Process*, also the review of the Auditor General of Canada back in 2009, and the recommendations put forth, and of course, more recently when we refer to the long-term strategic plan from 2013 to 2018 — all of these reviews and assessments have really pointed us to where we are today.

This is a very integrated approach, and it is one that I have certainly been very proud to be able to support our department on. I want to thank our department officials. I want to thank the communities, like Watson Lake, Old Crow, Haines Junction, and so many communities around this territory.

I've had the privilege of travelling to many schools in this territory throughout the Yukon, and I've had the opportunity to see first-hand some of the initiatives that are outlined in the motion addressing some of these inequities that we have been experiencing here. I can say with great pride that there is a lot to be proud of in this territory. I want to thank the leadership of those communities for initiating that dialogue and for our department for being open and willing and showing that, by

working together and working for the same cause and coming up with a strategic approach, we're able to really move mountains. We have been able to show just that.

I want to talk to a number of different elements in the motion here, but we do know that, overall and on average, rural students in our territory have lower attendance and lower academic achievement rates due to a variety of many different factors — complex factors.

We also know that First Nation students have lower attendance and achievement rates as compared to non-First Nation students, again for a variety of reasons and a number of complex factors as well.

This particular initiative that we are speaking to today is about helping our students stay in school and achieve better results overall. That is something that I believe all of us as legislators in the Assembly have as a common interest. Of course, the plan that is actually spoken to in the motion features a number of initiatives, ranging from enhanced distance learning opportunities; sharing resources; supports for programming, such as the trades and the arts and many other specialty areas; specialization of teachers; and opportunities for students from different communities to work together.

There have been a lot of steps that have taken place over the last year, in particular, but to be sure, it started even before then. I just want to talk to a number of these different initiatives that have been showcased. One of them — and I'll just go back to the experience in Watson Lake, and I'll refer to that, not only in our territory, but in the rest of the country — we are seeing some changes in how education is being delivered. Student engagement through self-directed experiential learning programs is one of the successes that we have been seeing as part of this rural education action plan.

Education is becoming more varied; it's becoming more flexible, less rigid than it has been in previous years. One example of that is a new teaching approach, referred to as the blended learning model, which is being implemented currently at the Watson Lake Secondary School. It is a model that blends technology and teacher expertise to support students who are progressing through on-line curricula at their own pace. Face-to-face instruction is combined with on-line courses to give students more flexibility in their learning journey.

It is really gaining momentum. I had the opportunity to see this first-hand, along with my colleague from Watson Lake. For example, Watson Lake students now have access to 58 different course options compared to 33 of last year. The students are becoming more involved in their own learning path, and they are developing their own personal graduation plans, with the help of their families and their school communities.

Teachers are also benefiting. On-line blended learning means that they too can deliver several subjects to multiple students in the same space. Students are able to work independently and are able to work in smaller groups with teachers serving as both coaches and mentors. It enables teachers to be more creative about how they teach, in addition

to what they teach, based on their own individual students' interests and based on their observations as a school in general as well.

The tremendous upside of that approach is that students who haven't completed their first semester courses don't have to start over when the classes resume. Even though the first semester of the school year would have just ended, students can continue on from where they left off, and they are able to complete their courses at their own pace with continued teacher support.

What we are seeing is that students are a lot more engaged as a result. They are more empowered to really direct their own learning path.

We're seeing improvement in attendance at the secondary school and, again, it can be as a result of the leadership shown by the Watson Lake Secondary School. I am very impressed with the leadership at that school — leadership from the school administration, the principal, the school council, the families who have engaged, and the students themselves. The students know that they are the first of their kind to be able to try out this model and they are taking to it. It is tremendous.

As a result, we're seeing that students are a lot more empowered. They want to stay with it. They may have had to miss, in years past, a week or two weeks to tend to family-initiated events, on-the-land experiences — many different reasons. Now they are able to come back and they are able to push that reset button to go where they stopped. They are not holding back the class when they come back into the classroom and they are able to carry on, knowing what the eventual deadline is. We are seeing tremendous, positive results at this time.

Another example is that of the northern rural experiential model. It is another example that has been really driven by communities. Robert Service School took on a leadership role in terms of demonstrating the first rollout of the REM this past September in Dawson. We saw over 86 grade 10 to 12 students from seven northern Yukon communities. They gathered at Robert Service School, and they were able to complete one of eight experiential courses offered.

Students from some of the Yukon's smallest communities had the opportunity to take new courses that were not available in their schools, and at the same time they were able to earn credits toward their high school diploma. It gave them an opportunity to meet students from other, similar communities — to be able to share their experiences and expand their peer groups. That continues on today.

It is a unique approach to expanding options and opportunities for rural students. It's engaging students in cutting-edge experiential learning during the day. At the REM session, they also had the opportunity to come together and engage in additional activities in the evenings. I had the opportunity to observe those sessions first-hand last fall and to see the pride among those students who participated in each of those sessions, and also the pride of the instructors. In fact, I know that one of those instructors was Steve Slade. I know he had written into ARTSnet Yukon back after he had finished facilitating one of the sessions on music. He really referred to

this northern REM — this experiential model. He talked about how high school students had come to Dawson and about how education is working to increase success for our rural students.

He talked about the process and he talked about more options equals more opportunities equals more graduates. We all hope for that. He talked about how students came to Robert Service School in Dawson. They were offered many different streams, ranging from on the land, digital film and recording, First Nation fine art, food services, hair, esthetics, textiles, woodshop, music. He said — and I'll just quote: "This was, I think, a historic first for the school system and everyone delivered. Students, teachers, staff and bureaucrats all met their targets and delivered what they had to do. Kudos to all."

He goes on, saying that in his opinion it was well worth the investment. He talked about how he was very proud of all of them and all the accomplishments. It wasn't just about that one week or earning credits as a result of participation in the REM, but it was about the after results.

As I mentioned, just having an expanded peer network of students across the territory in rural Yukon — and I might add that not one student from Whitehorse was engaged in this REM — and it was a very powerful opportunity for them.

That REM session is going to be taken now to the community of Carmacks and it will be held in May. It will be for younger grades. I believe it is for grades 7 to 9, if I'm not mistaken. It too will engage in a number of different selections of sessions available to many different students around the territory as well.

The thinking is, based on the input and the evaluation of the REM session in Dawson and the evaluation to be conducted on the session in Carmacks, to carry on and to have that in a sustained way up to twice a year. I think it's a fantastic way. You know what? I want to reference also just a couple of comments that were also reflected by a couple of our public servants in the department. It was indeed a team effort on many different levels — principals from a variety of schools, the Robert Service staff, the Dawson community and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. It was all about trying something different. If we don't try things — if we don't try to change things — we're never going to get where we need to go. This is what it's all about. It's about continuing to try to engage students in very different ways.

Mr. Speaker, I have so much to talk about when it comes to rural equity. But I do want to say that tomorrow, the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin and I will be travelling to the community of Old Crow for another experiential learning initiative that has been initiated by Vuntut Gwitchin Government. We will actually be out on the land tomorrow afternoon and we will be participating in the third final spring culture camp. It will be an opportunity for us to take part in this alongside students and staff and even share in staying the evening on the land under the stars. Even though it was minus-35 degrees with the wind chill this morning, we are looking forward to that experience.

There are a number of different initiatives going on. There are baseline data evaluations to be undertaken. I also wanted to mention that there is also — having been convened

— an advisory committee that has been established with representatives from Yukon First Nations, teachers, Yukon Teachers Association, administrators, school councils, Health and Social Services, Yukon College and staff from our own Department of Education as well. The committee will continue to meet on an ongoing basis to look at data, work on the further development of goals and solutions to barriers as identified when it comes to rural education and explore ways to really engage with all communities in terms of improving educational outcomes.

In terms of resources, I know the MLA for Watson Lake had outlined some of them. We do have new resources in this year's budget, and it builds upon the existing resources that we have built into our budget in the past year and a half as well in terms of supporting the Aurora Virtual School, IT support, supporting the trades, supporting Student Support Services and supporting the learning together program — another initiative.

We continue to work with our communities and First Nations in building upon experiential learning programs, such as the culture camps in Old Crow, for example, and, out of Haines Junction and along the north Alaska Highway, other school-based initiatives that offer opportunities to meet the learning objectives of students through on-the-land activities.

We're developing programming in the trades and applied skills such as the dual-credit welding course through the mobile trades trailer in Dawson City underway right now.

We are seeing good success and we recognize that we cannot do this alone. We need the support of all of our communities. We need the support and the leadership of our teaching professionals and all of our partners in education.

I want to thank everyone — all of our partners in that regard — for their commitment and their continued work in support of our children in their overall learning success. I want to thank the members opposite for their support of this motion as well.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand and to speak on Motion No. 624, the rural equity action plan.

I want to start out just by giving my congratulations to the Department of Education and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. I have never seen the department so fine-tuned. Every single piston is firing in that department from the CELCs to the director of education to all of the educating community and the parallels and the relationships that are being made intergovernmentally and also within the community. I think that they're doing an amazing job and they are an amazing wealth of resources for the minister — their passion and dedication to education and their ability to initiate grassroots educational initiatives, which is key. If it doesn't come from the community, it won't work — it absolutely won't work.

With that being said, I could go on for a long time about Heidi Warren and the work that she's doing with the Individual Learning Centre. That job should be full-time permanent. I can speak for hours about initiatives that start and then end — a good person builds up a rapport with

students and then that rapport gets ripped apart and the damage that it does to the community when trust is built like that and then we don't see a continuation of these types of things. We've seen it with programming through social assistance, through the education program. It has happened before. I don't want to focus on any of that — I just wanted to say that I encourage the Minister of Education to make that job a full-time permanent position, because Heidi is doing an amazing job, and she is basically taking a whole group of students who don't spend a lot of time in the school system, that's for sure. These kids are extremely gifted and motivated through this program, and it's great to see. They're showing up to community events. They're really participating. They're really buying into this program. As the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in draw down on section 17.7 of their self-government agreement, I implore the minister — please, make this a full-time position.

Mr. Speaker, I do have some concerns regarding the way that the motion was handled today. I called some schools in the rural communities and none of them were aware of the title — the rural equity action plan. I contacted First Nation governments. They also didn't hear about it. I didn't hear about it. And then the minister did send out a copy, a working copy, at noon today, and then — only then — did I realize this is the rural education plan and it is evolving from the rural advisory committee.

It seems like a very small thing — the title differential — it is just really one word. That "equity" word really kind of messed everybody up here today and yesterday. You would think that, for myself and for others in the educational fraternity, we should have been able to make the connection between the two — but the number of changes and plans from the department over the years — without allowing these plans to go forward and to bear fruit, sometimes without even letting the plan begin, before the department changes its mind — the minister is going to have to understand the confusion that we have had when, for the first time, we see this title of the rural equity action plan. The first time we did see it was in the Premier's budget speech. In addition to that, nowhere on the government's website can you find this rural equity action plan, with the exception of Hansard searches on the Premier's budget speech. Also, the minister did mention it during Committee of the Whole yesterday.

With that history in mind, you have to give us a grain of salt as far as why we were in such a panic to find this report and to speak to it today in the Legislature.

I even put together an amendment to the motion. I won't be presenting the amendment, but — this was before noon today — I wanted to change the words "continue to" and replace them with "begin to," because "continue" is not only misleading, but it runs the risk of offending educational stakeholders, who might have thought that they were not invited to the table to develop the ideas and the foundation of such a fundamental policy.

Then at noon I did receive the copy to read, and so I read it. At first glance, I must admit, it does look light. I guess, because this is a work in progress, there is going to be more

added to it, and I hope so. I look forward to continuing to analyze this new rural equity plan. I will also be meeting with rural educators to make sure that the plan meets their needs and actually reflects their contributions as well, because that is very important.

As I have mentioned before, this government has not necessarily had a great track record for the implementation of plans for education, as it goes through a process of asking folks what they want and then implementing a plan with no connection to these issues, and also — this is very important — no assessment of how well they are hitting the mark between the plan, consultation and the results for our students on these very expensive plans and very expensive processes.

That is something I wanted to focus on today — the past reports and assessments. I think my first experience with past plans — I forget the names and titles of them now. You get to a point where you are pretty frustrated with the whole process. I think the first one was the five-year plan, and then that was replaced with the audit, and then after that I think it was the review. I'm not really sure, but within five years, there were three distinct — “this is the direction we are going to go in.”

The first one that came through, I had the absolute thrill of being picked to discuss — I think it was the audit — where we are in education in Dawson City at Robert Service School. I worked a long time on this plan with my colleagues, then to find out that part of the team that was going to come up from the department had Rosemary Burns — a long-time educator. She was principal at Vanier for years and then superintendent and just a true mentor to lots and lots of teachers. To know that she was going to be part of this whole process — what a great opportunity and what an academic pursuit for educators to get together and to speak about the needs of the communities, because really, when you draw down, if the system works — I mean, the students are great. If we could actually just identify how that system could actually work for the kids and for the students, it's a success story. So to have the opportunity to sit among your peers and your mentors like that and to really get down to brass tacks was a great experience.

Afterward, Rosemary came over, gave me a big hug and said, “You guys did a great job” — thrilled to death. You know, that was the last we heard of it. It was six months later, we hear rumblings from the department — “We changed directions. We're going to scrap that and we have a new plan.”

So like I said, it didn't just happen once; it happened twice. The second time, the principal at the time, Dr. Cull — he was great. He really had a knack of motivating teachers to work past the edges of their classroom and to do more and to challenge you to work inside your community. So I was pretty jaded after the first experience but he motivated me once again to go forward and to be part of the committee and to do the work, and it was the same thing — it was the exact same thing. We didn't get to bear fruit.

There's a reason why I bring this up right now. We have a new Minister of Education. I really want to emphasize to the new minister how important it is to get past the planning stage

and to get into the assessment stage. As a former educator, I do see the merits of the goals that are outlined in this rural equity action plan. I really do — however, over the last 12 years, there have been lots of reports.

I ask the question: If we are going to go forward on another plan, what is the policy toward the assessment, the statistical analysis, and how are we going to draw down on this to make sure that the end result is that our students have the best education that they possibly can?

We know that they have the biggest per capita budget that they possibly can, so let's let these dollars go toward a complete cycle of the plan, a complete, thoughtful process, where we can actually take a look at our successes and our failures, because the most important part of the assessment process is the failures. I encourage my students to fail all the time — because you can't change and you can't develop and you can't move forward unless you identify your failures, own up to your failures, know what they are from, and then move forward.

Once again, I really don't want to sound too negative here. I think this is a new day. We can look at this as being a new day. So, like I said, we have a new minister. We have a new opportunity to get it right. I feel obligated, as well, to tell the minister of the concerns that I've lived through as a teacher in rural Yukon for many years.

With the assessment, I want the minister to know what the perception is out there when it comes to the action plans. I think it's important — and I hope and pray that this minister will be able to get over what seems to be an insurmountable mountain in educational plans. I want the minister to get through the planning section and on to implementation and — most importantly — the assessment plan.

I want to draw a little bit of a parallel, because that's what educators do — they show examples in the initial stages along the taxonomy of knowledge about learning through example. In my tenure as an educator in Yukon, I attended many PD days. Some were very, very excellent. I was actually spoiled as a math teacher. We had Paula Thompson as the math consultant in the department, and her professional development sessions were always so very thoughtful because she knew her audience. She spent a lot of time understanding who her math teachers were, what their strengths were, and what their weaknesses were. She also knew what our needs were. She developed her sessions based upon this assessment. She challenged teachers to set up and develop our own personal and planned professional development days, calling on the importance for team teaching. I had the opportunity to pilot a new curriculum one year — she gave me that opportunity.

Compared to the old program, it was heavily supplemented with technology: internet courses, programming, student on-line groups, and password-protected sign-up galleries. You can just imagine a grade 9 math teacher who doesn't necessarily have the background in math, going in and teaching math, and then on top of it having all of this new technology added to the curriculum.

I personally love this type of programming — other teachers do not — and Paula knew this. She knew that it was one of my fortes and, knowing her department and knowing her teachers, she set me up with the pilot program so that I could help roll out the program with my peers in the other schools. It was brilliant. It is a brilliant approach.

I have been to other PD days that were not necessarily organized by the math division and were less than official because their agenda was top down and not relevant to our needs or what we wanted to do. I will not dwell on these, but the point is that there is a lesson to implementing plans from the department. Know your audience and let them participate.

The most beneficial PD day that I have ever gone to was one on assessment, and this is where the minister should really be putting some thought. How do we assess our plans? The seminar that I went to that really changed the way that I did education — the way that I interacted with not only the students, but with the parents and other teachers — was called “the assessment as, of and for learning”.

The concept is very simple, but the results — I can't think of any other PD conference in my experience that bore more fruit. I even tried to encourage most of Robert Service School to start thinking in these terms. We, at one point, were going to go K to 12. Imagine if the students from kindergarten all the way to grade 12 knew the assessment rubric. They knew exactly how they were going to be assessed. It wouldn't change — I mean you could change your methodologies whether or not you were going to do a test, or whether or not you were going to do verbal communication, but the process was always the same: assessment as, of and for your learning.

For example, if we were doing division of fractions, you start off by asking the student: “Division of fractions — go ahead, tell me everything you know about fractions. Tell me your fears. Tell me where you would apply these things. What do you know? And where are you? Do you think you know 100 percent about fractions? Do you think you know 10 percent?”

Then you also determine that, if you are university bound, you need to get 80 percent. So that is where you are, and that is where you need to be.

If you just want to learn about it, well then you don't need to be as high. That's how it starts. You kind of identify with where you are and where you need to go. That would be the assessment for learning. Then after that, you go into the assessment as learning. As you learn, you don't stop with this assessment process. You're always like, hey, how is it going? How are you doing? Are you learning more? You can keep that dialogue going. The great thing for holistic learners — you can stop and start at any place, which is a great thing for people who don't necessarily come to school every day for whatever reasons. The biggest deterrent in math is it keeps on going and you miss a day and you are so far behind. You don't have to be in this one. It knows where you are and knows where you want to be and it just always guides you forward.

Of course, the last part is the assessment of the learning and that's the test. This works for all types of learners. I think

that this approach also works for all types of action plans. The assessment — what is this plan speaking about as far as needs and as far as suggestions from the communities? Where are we today? The assessment as we learn — now I do see that there are indicators of progress in this plan, but no strategies as to how it is going to be analyzed or how it will be performed. I hope that, because this is a working document, it will be established in this.

Also needed is the support — the support from the teachers. Newly presented initiatives — how do I say this? Even if they are the best choice; even if what we decide from the action plan are the best possible things that we could possibly do, you need to support the teachers in these endeavours. Without the support from the department, they're going to fall short. So, that's the assessment as we move forward. How well are we actually implementing these things?

Of course, at the end, there is an assessment. This is the test; this is the analysis and this is fundamental. The most important part of this is the identification of where we failed, like I said when I began this.

Without the failure and analysis of the reasons, we will never see the progression. We need the bravery of the department to say, “This is where we're failing and this is how we're going to move forward.”

The gift that we get from the department as teachers is our personal development days. Let's learn from that. Let's learn from the fruit of our labours; let's assess this properly and let's make sure that if we do pick a plan — I love it; I think it's great; I will 100-percent support this motion, absolutely — but please, learn from your students. They're our greatest resource. Learn from our teachers, our administrators and our parents. Stick to one plan and make sure that this plan is implemented, statistically analyzed, processed and assessed. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Kent: It's my pleasure to speak to this motion brought forward by the Member for Watson Lake today and really speak with a couple of different hats on — one, of course, is as the former Minister of Education up until August of last year and then in my current role as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, knowing the type of human resources that industry will need going forward and about some of the opportunities that we have right now to ensure that our students today are prepared for jobs that are going to exist in the resource industry going forward.

I think that really with the talk of the rural action plan — or what has been retitled the “rural equity action plan” — I think that word “equity” is extremely important. Without getting into the specific numbers, there is that significant gap between the graduation rates and really the student success that exists in rural Yukon versus the success that we see in Whitehorse — as well as the success I know others have spoken about, which is the gap that exists between First Nation students and non-First Nation students.

When I was the Minister of Education, I was with the Deputy Premier — the Minister of Community Services at the

time — at the general assembly in Old Crow. I had the opportunity to address the assembly. One of the things that I said at that time is that I wouldn't consider my time as Education minister a success unless we are able to put into place the foundation to shrink that gap that exists between First Nation and non-First Nation students and rural students and Whitehorse-area students — not only the education gap, but the labour gap that is there. I think that the short time that I was Minister of Education — and the work that the current Minister of Education has continued — has been really focused on shrinking that gap.

You know, I believe that the Yukon is positioned to be the leading jurisdiction in the country to eventually eliminate that gap that exists between our rural learners and those who live in Whitehorse, particularly the First Nation and non-First Nation learners. I think we have the resources to do it here. We're the right size to do it, and we have the buy-in of the entire educational community, whether the government through the Department of Education, our educators, the parents, the First Nation governments — everyone that's involved in ensuring that our students have the best possible opportunity to succeed no matter what they choose to do with their lives and their careers.

We want to make sure that they can reach the potential that they have. I think the rural equity action plan that is before us — the working document that we have — is really one of those foundations that we can build on. Of course, the Member for Klondike spoke very passionately about education and I expect nothing less from him or the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. I think this Legislative Assembly is fortunate to have two former educators as members of the Assembly and to have a real willingness by the government to ensure that we try things that will improve those educational outcomes for all of our students.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of the foundational pieces that I think we were able to put in place as a government during the first couple of years of the mandate were through the collective bargaining agreement that we negotiated with the Yukon Teachers Association. One of the aspects of that I think we can be very proud of is the addition of 15 extra hours of additional instructional time as well as 15 extra hours of additional non-instructional time. I know last year there were teacher institutes that took place in August on a couple of occasions, I believe. There were two separate teacher institutes to provide professional development opportunities for our teachers. I know now there is a set minimum number of days that each and every school in the territory is in instruction. I believe it's set at 180 days for instructional days and six for non-instructional days. I think that's another important aspect that we've introduced. There's a lot more consistency.

Prior to us implementing that, I believe one school in the Yukon went as few as 173 days for instructional time and the disparity went up to 183 or something like that. Quite a change for students — especially when we're in small jurisdiction like ours, trying to maximize the opportunities for distance education and shared experiences like the rural

experiential model that the Minister of Education spoke about, which is one of the key aspects of this action plan.

Mr. Speaker, I should also congratulate the Minister of Education for implementing a three-year calendar. I know that's something that during the first couple of years I heard quite a lot about. It was under her leadership and commitment that the department carried through on that and gave some consistency for our school communities to get a sense for when they're going to start. I think closing that gap that existed in Whitehorse — that two-week gap between the start of elementary school and high school — was something that's been very well-received by the individuals I've spoken to, especially parents who have students in both elementary school and high school. Congratulations to her — and for also allowing that flexibility for communities to take a one-week or two-week spring break. I know, obviously, it was very important to the Dawson City community that they were out prior to the end of May and I still believe that opportunity exists for them with the new calendar. It is the first of June, I believe, that is the date that many placer miners and tourism operators up there wanted to ensure their children had an opportunity to participate in family-run businesses or that type of thing. Again, I think that's another one of the foundational things that the Minister of Education has brought in that will be important in providing the building blocks, so that we can move forward and see some real success when it comes to closing that gap.

As you go through the working plan that the department has provided, there are a number of things that jump out. When it comes to some of the action initiatives that are underway — or contemplated — of course, the learning together program was expanded to three more schools. Hidden Valley, Johnson Elementary in Watson Lake and Eliza Van Bibber School in Pelly Crossing have that program for the 2013-14 school year. They are looking to expand it in subsequent years as needs are identified at the school community level.

Developing plans to implement learning together programs in three rural and one urban school for 2013-14, as mentioned, and continuing work with Champagne and Aishihik to support the bicultural language program in Haines Junction are important opportunities for those early years and those primary years. The learning together program is something that's important because it's not just a drop-off centre for parents or caregivers. It's about the family going into that facility and learning all of the things that are important to ensure that a child is successful in his or her education, whether it's helping with homework or reading or all of the great things that it takes for parents or caregivers to become true partners in their children's education. I think they can learn that type of skillset through the learning together program.

Some of the other things — exploring alternative literacy, interventions to enhance literacy skills, assessing the needs and effectiveness for rural students of current interventions, and addressing issues of attendance — the Victoria Gold Student Encouragement Society projects that were put

forward last year. Some of them were as simple as buying alarm clocks for students. I know that's what the Old Crow school did, and I believe the Takhini Elementary School did a similar project. It is something that seems simple enough, or perhaps you would overlook it, but I think those are important opportunities and they are community-driven. They were identified by the school council, the school community or the local First Nation as opportunities to improve student attendance.

I believe the society again will be funding more programs in the coming months on an application-driven basis. It is something that I think is an extremely exciting opportunity. To see a company like Victoria Gold get behind that is also, I think, very telling in that they recognize where their workforce is going to come from and they recognize the importance of those students staying in school and perhaps moving on to a post-secondary education.

Many of the jobs in the mining industry that perhaps used to go to students who didn't even have their grade 12 — now grade 12 is the starting point. I think that is something the Deputy Minister of Education once said when I was the minister — that grade 12 has to be the minimum. That is where students need to start from.

Companies like Victoria Gold and all the other companies that support that initiative are recognizing that grade 12 is the minimum that they need, and most of them will need post-secondary education to ensure that they are able to participate and move through the industry into higher and higher paying jobs, and jobs with more and more responsibility.

For the intermediate years, grades 4 to 7 in this plan — the self-regulation projects that are underway. It's an initiative in which staff, students and communities work with students to develop approaches that provide them with the skills to manage their own stressors and behaviours in order to concentrate on learning.

A number of colleagues and I — I believe even you, Mr. Speaker — attended a dinner with Stuart Shanker, who is one of the foremost leaders in self-regulation. He is an individual who I know is active in the Yukon. Again, they are looking to the Yukon to be a leader in the country as far as developing this and seeing the success that comes along with the self-regulation.

One of the other aspects, of course, is to align school-based professional development efforts and resources with school growth goals. All of these initiatives, of course, also have the performance indicators or indicators of progress assigned to them, so we can hopefully accomplish what the Member for Klondike was speaking about when he talked about assessing and making sure that what we are doing is working and how we can learn from mistakes and build on the positive aspects.

When it comes to the secondary schools, the learning opportunities and approaches need to be expanded — encouraging students to be engaged and return to the education system, encouraging students to be engaged and

self-directed learners, and increasing those optional credit courses.

The blended or flipped learning model that the principal in Watson Lake and Nicole Morgan in the Department of Education here have really been pushing for has really turned that school around and given some great opportunities for the learners. I think I spoke in my reply to the budget that I went to Watson Lake and met with the Chamber of Commerce. One of the chamber members there told me that one of her children was about a month behind in one of their courses, and rather than losing that entire semester, they were able to extend their learning for a month and get that credit rather than having to go back to the start. Hearing from parents and hearing the successes of these kinds of programs is something that, for me, makes it real and lets us know that we're certainly on the right track to closing that gap that exists.

The rural experiential model — I think the Minister of Education spoke about it and the tremendous success that the initial northern hub was in Dawson City at the Robert Service School for grades 10 to 12. She spoke about grades 7 to 9 at the Tantalus School in Carmacks this spring. I think these are tremendous opportunities for cohorts of students to get together across that northern hub where there are smaller learning communities or cohorts in towns like Faro or Ross River or Pelly Crossing, to bring everyone together and to give them that confidence and allow them to connect and to stay connected through on-line learning opportunities. It is something that I think will be tremendous for them as they move through their high school careers.

I know there are a number of other aspects that are a part of this plan, but I think the one that I would kind of like to talk about a little bit more is enhancing the trades and the dual credit possibilities in the trades. There have been a number of initiatives undertaken — upgrading our shops to meet safety standards, designing trade courses for learning, the dual credit for welding that is underway right now in Dawson City. I believe the graduation of those students is coming up at the end of this month. I thank department and college officials for inviting me, as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, to attend that graduation and I'm hoping that I'm able to make it, although I have to juggle a few things around to do so. I think those are some of the excellent examples of the investments that we've made and the foundation that we have built to ensure that there is the opportunity for success for our rural learners.

Many members of the Legislature were at Yukon College in the trades wing when we unveiled the mobile trades trailer just before it was dispatched to Dawson for this welding course. What an incredible investment that we made as a government in purchasing that trailer. I think it's going to be a fantastic learning centre. Even in speaking to the Mayor of Dawson City last week on a different matter — but happened to bring up the trades trailer and how impressed the people of Dawson are with that facility and what it is able to provide. I should thank the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining as well as Cabinet and caucus colleagues for allowing us to invest in such an important piece of infrastructure that will be

used in communities and potentially at mine sites and really enhancing the trades training opportunities across the territory.

The Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining has been spoken about a number of times in this House. The Yukon government has approved almost \$6 million in O&M funding as well as matching capital to the Government of Canada's contribution that was announced last year. We're anxious to see it continue. There are so many courses that are offered, such as an introduction to underground mining and an introduction to surface mining. For both of those courses, graduation took place at the Delta Mine Training facility in Delta Junction, Alaska. What a tremendous opportunity we have in the north to partner with our neighbours as part of the intergovernmental accord and the education MOU that was signed between our two jurisdictions. Again, there are great partnerships with our American friends in Alaska and we continue to see those being fostered.

I mentioned the dual credit pre-employment welding, and then there is a heavy equipment operator program that is going to be offered. All of these programs are good for the Yukon. They are good for our economy and they will provide locals with the opportunity to access the jobs that exist now and will exist in the future as some of our larger mining projects come on stream.

With that, I know my time is running short, and I think there are a few others who want to speak to this. I congratulate the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward. I'm hoping that it does get unanimous support from members of the House.

Really working to close that gap I think is the key here. Whether it's home education or people who are learning in rural Yukon or First Nations versus non-First Nations — that's the key. Something we can focus on and be remembered for, not only as a government but as a Legislative Assembly, is that we set in process the opportunities for that gap to be closed and eventually eliminated here in our territory.

Mr. Elias: It's also a pleasure to rise today to speak to the motion from the Member for Watson Lake. There are so many things that I can say about this but I'd like to touch on some of the elements within the motion. Hopefully, I'll touch on them all during my time here speaking.

Looking at the rural equity action plan, just in the preamble, the very first words suggest the gaps between rural students versus the capital city students, and the First Nation and non-First Nation students. This has been an issue for quite some time. It's good to see that our ministers of Education are working toward closing that gap. It's not only going to bode well for individual students but it's also going to bode well for our communities and our territory as a whole, building good, solid citizens.

It's important to mention that what I'm going to focus on here are some of the success stories that come out of a project in Old Crow that began, I believe, in 2008. That was the Old Crow land-based experiential education project which has been incredibly successful. Our community is actually looking to expand on it now.

There was one thing I just wanted to get out of the way on the public record. It's with regard to enhancing distance learning opportunities. It came to my attention a couple of days ago that, under the federal program, Digital Canada 150, there's an opportunity for my community of Old Crow to upgrade their high-speed Internet to five megabits per second through a program that's offered by the federal government of Canada to rural communities to increase their capacity for high-resolution video, employment opportunities, education and e-commerce, et cetera. I'm going to be writing a letter to federal Minister Moore of Industry Canada, as well as working with our Economic Development minister here, to work toward accessing the opportunity for my community of Old Crow to ensure we can achieve that five-megabit-per-second bandwidth in the community of Old Crow.

Moving on to experiential education, I'll speak about that for a minute. Experiential education is the process of actively engaging students in an experience that will help them discover and learn. Students make discoveries and experiment with knowledge themselves, instead of hearing or reading about the experiences of others. Students also reflect on their experiences, thus developing new skills, new attitudes and new theories or ways of doing things and ways of thinking. Whether teachers employ experiential education in the cultural setting, in environmental education or in traditional school subjects, its key idea involves engaging students.

Students participate in a real activity with real consequences for the purpose of meeting learning objectives. It starts to make teachers experienced providers and facilitators and not just transmitters of knowledge. Students become knowledge creators for themselves, as well as knowledge gatherers. Besides changing student roles, experiential education requires a change in the role of teachers. When students are active learners, their endeavours often take them outside of the classroom walls because action precedes attempts to synthesize knowledge. Teachers generally cannot plan a curriculum unit as a neat, predictable package. Teachers become active learners too, experimenting together with their students, reflecting upon the learning activities they have designed and responding to their students' reactions to their activities.

Experiential education can change schools, because it requires new roles of students, teachers and administrators. It can provide a different, more engaging way of treating academic content through the combination of action and reflection. Experiential education empowers students to take responsibility for their own learning. Experiential education also provides a process for helping all those involved in schooling become more comfortable with unfamiliar roles commonly proposed for restructured schools. Many Yukon communities, including Whitehorse, have rich experiences in experiential education, but there have been the exceptions. Many students and their parents recognize the value of this type of education.

First Nation communities, including my community of Old Crow, asked and received partnerships for this type of programming and have done so for some years now.

Experiential education works for many students; however, it requires both human and financial investments, and that is exactly what the ministers of Education and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government have done in recent years.

I believe, as do many Yukoners, that this type of learning has merit and deserves to be given the opportunity to succeed. For many years there has been concern over the low achievement rates of First Nation students and students in rural Yukon. It is time to change our program delivery — some students do well in a traditional classroom environment, but many do not.

I have experienced first-hand the development of the evolving Old Crow land-based experiential learning program in the spring and in the fall. It is great to see the local agencies in Old Crow participating in the program over the years, whether it be Parks Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Environment Yukon, Yukon College, our elders, our community leaders, who are elected or non-elected, or the Department of Education. It is really interesting to see, over the years, how our students retain that knowledge.

I will give some specific examples of some of the tangible assets, so to speak, that have come out of the Old Crow land-based experiential learning program. We did a celebration a couple of years ago with the release of the materials, teaching manuals and student learning manuals which are now used in a lot of provinces and certain jurisdictions of First Nations in northern Canada, British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. I will get into those specifics later.

With regard to the integration of the Gwich'in culture and heritage into the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School, I want to share some of the goals and aspirations that the community has expressed over the years. Gwich'in input and participation needs to be a part of the school plans, programs and curriculum delivery — has been said — and this needs to be a community-driven process to ensure that the projects that integrate Gwich'in culture and heritage within the school curriculum are more effectively linked through a shared planning process. Experiential education, such as culture camps, focuses on the integration of academic curriculum with the Vuntut Gwitchin culture and heritage in ways that embrace a wider variety of students. Again, I'll set out some examples later with regard to that, Mr. Speaker.

Gwich'in cultural activities should receive high school credits through IDS and department-authorized courses. The development, instruction and evaluation should involve the community, the school, the school council and the Department of Education. Assistance is needed in the community use of curriculum checklists and recognizing academic credits for field studies. The community also recognized that high school graduation has changed over time and that credits may be earned for a variety of courses, some of which may be offered in Old Crow during the summer. Summer jobs that identify what students have learned and the skills they have developed could be counted as a high school credit.

Many of these goals have been achieved over the years, I'm proud to say, in our community of Old Crow. And again,

Mr. Speaker, on October 25, 2012, a lunch and presentation was hosted at the Beringia Centre to celebrate the Old Crow experiential program and to launch the program resources. The Chief Zzeh Gittlit School cultural camp student booklets — by three-year program themes and grade groupings — were launched. There were traditions and science; traditions, history and geography; traditions, arts and trades; and they all accompanied a teacher's guide.

A field trip inventory and a poster were also issued and three issues of what was called the *Push-Up Press*. They called it the *PushUp Press* because part of the program of the spring culture camp out of the land — which myself and the Minister of Education are going to be attending tomorrow with the students and the educators — is that, in the wintertime, muskrats build what we call “push-ups” in the fall, which are their little houses out on the lake that they use to eat and breathe air while they're searching for food at the bottom of the lake.

So the children came up with the idea, “If we're going to report back about our successes of this program to the community and to the world at large, let's call it the *Push-Up Press*”, because they were so interested in the history of our trapping culture, the biology of the muskrat itself, the economics of trapping — and the list goes on and on. I'll expand on that in a bit here, Mr. Speaker.

The focus of the event was the learning journey taken by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation with the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School and the community of Old Crow in partnership with the Department of Education and with funding provided by the northern strategy. That's an important note, because our community of Old Crow recognized that sending our high school students away from our community year after year and looking at the success rates, so to speak, and the level of retention — for lack of a better word — of some of the public schools' goals and educational outcomes, there was a gap there. So when the northern strategy funding came about, they grasped that northern strategy opportunity and helped create this program, which still exists today through northern strategy funding. That's important to represent on the floor of the House today.

Representatives from the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, the Yukon Department of Education, northern strategy members from the Department of Education curriculum working group and members from the Alberta school district were there as observers. Many of the Old Crow students who are in attendance at the Whitehorse high schools here were involved in the celebration.

The Vuntut Gwitchin Government shared the use of their student booklets for other communities and is providing them in template form so that local language and cultural information can be included and added in various schools that want to use this type of template, not only in our territory but with our neighbours. The booklets were designed for multi-year grades. The addition of our local language — the use of community resource people — can be taught with co-teachers, like elders and traditional teachers, as well as school teachers, all combined.

The Chief Zzeh Gittlit School continues their cultural camps, using their cultural inclusion and experiential funds and partnership discussions for a grade 10 camp accreditation, and support for other locally developed resources will continue.

I will be attending the spring cultural camp, as I said, tomorrow and will be listening to those students with their goals and aspirations.

A little bit of history — the Old Crow experiential project received northern strategy funding approval in October 2009. The northern strategy funding for the three years was \$150,000. In year one, 2009-2010, the funding was \$20,000; in 2010-11, the funding was \$100,000; and in 2011-12, the funding was \$30,000. The YTG transfer payment was agreed to and signed in partnership with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

Going to the example here, it's really interesting when I look at these booklets that were developed by the schools. Really quickly, this is for grades 4 to 6, and it's entitled, *The Spring Culture Camp: Learning for Life*. I'll just use one species, and that's the muskrat.

They asked the students to tell a story, first of all, about how they feel about trapping. They go into traditional teachings about stewardship and about looking after the species. They go into economics, into fur handling, where the fur goes and what it's used for around the world. Then they go into the historical importance of trapping and calculating the actual income. They also go into the science of dissecting the muskrat and talking about the circulatory system, respiratory system, skeletal system and muscular system. All of that is taught out on the land, out at these cultural camps.

Chief Linklater has one of the best quotes about this camp. He said, "When the kids come to school in the fall, they can't wait to go to these cultural camps, because they're so engaging and fun and they learn in a much different way."

There is also a teachers' manual that came out of the land-based experiential project. This is relevant to providing improved, culturally relevant curriculum. One of a multitude of learning objectives is governance, and so when the kids go out to the camp, students will learn the government structure of the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the roles and responsibilities and leadership skills of an elected chief and council. Students will practise what they have learned through role-playing and problem-solving, as chief and council, daily at the camp. That is one of the objectives.

In the student manual, right underneath, they have what the Yukon Education department learning outcomes are for social studies 7 and social studies 8 and 9. Through this partnership of land-based learning, they learn so much more than what is depicted in the learning outcomes for the Department of Education. They are able to amalgamate those two. That is just one example.

I was speaking at an educational conference about land-based experiential learning. I grew up out on the land, too, Mr. Speaker. I went to Old Crow Flats from zero years old until I was about 13, I think — until grade 7. I would go out from March until June.

You know, when you measure success, when you create motivated, confident, healthy, productive, educated and downright gifted, young, wonderful citizens through these kinds of endeavours, you bet we have to support it. I can see it and I've lived it, and so, do I support this motion? Absolutely I do.

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

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank my colleagues for joining me in supporting this great initiative. I must say that I was a little bit, I guess, shocked at the response by the Opposition. However, I'm interested to see how this votes out.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

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

Motion No. 624 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 14, *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*. We will recess for 10 minutes while we await officials.

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Chair: Order please.

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Chair: The minister requires only about two minutes, so we'll just wait until the minister is ready. Thank you.

Bill No. 14: *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 14, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*.

Public Service Commission

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this budget and specifically to the budget for the Public Service Commission.

The Public Service Commission acts as the employer on behalf of the Yukon government under the *Public Service Act*. The department provides human resource direction, advice and support services to Yukon government's departments and employees. The Public Service Commission works with departments to uphold the key staffing principles of merit and employment equity, while maintaining agreements that delegate hiring decisions to departmental deputy ministers.

In this role, the Public Service Commission delivers strategic human resource services, including the processes governing recruitment, classification and employee compensation, human resource management systems, training and development programs, labour relations, initiatives to achieve a representative public service, corporate human resource planning and policies, corporate health and safety, and disability management services.

I'll now provide an overview of both the capital and O&M budgets for the Public Service Commission and then provide a bit more detail for each of the areas.

For this year, the presentation of the O&M budgets and the capital budgets are combined, so I will speak to the significant changes in each program area, rather than the budget itself. I will also note that the budget books provide comparisons to the previous years for both the main estimates and the forecast.

The Public Service Commission's estimated budget for 2014-15 is \$42,257,000. This reflects a total increase of over \$3 million, or 7.76 percent, from the 2013-14 main estimates.

Cost increases between the two sets of main estimates reflect the salary increases for 2013, which were provided in July 2013 after conclusion of the new collective agreement with the YEU, and for 2014, which were provided in January 2014.

As one turns the pages and looks at the various program areas, most changes are small and reflect only the planned costs for the current staff complement. Corporate Human Resource Staffing shows an increase of \$164,000. This

reflects changes to the forecast salary costs for incumbents. This branch provides recruitment and staffing services to all Yukon government departments. It is also responsible for many of our public service diversity programs, including disability employment services and aboriginal workforce services. They support the implementation of the final agreement representative public service plan across all departments, which is our government's plan to meet commitments to increase the representation of aboriginal employees in the public service. In the past several years, the branch's mandate and role has expanded to include a renewed effort toward a representative public service. The position of the director was underfunded and additional funds have been allocated to correct this shortfall.

As well, the Workers' Compensation Fund shows an increase of \$225,000. This increase is due to wage increases across government, following the successful conclusion of the YEU and YTA collective agreements and management staff increases. This increase is offset slightly by a rate reduction effective January 1, 2014. Our new premium rate is \$1.46 per \$100 of insurable earnings, down from \$1.48. The Yukon government strives to provide safe and healthy workplaces and the reduced rates reflect reductions in the number of incidents and duration of injuries. This is the fourth year we have seen WCB rates reduced.

Before I conclude, I want to mention as well that the Employee Future Benefits budget is the largest line item in PSC's budget. It is determined by an actuarial review of the estimated future obligations due to employees when they leave the government or retire. The amount reflected in each year's budget is the increase required to fund the liability. The estimate reflects a variety of actual factors, such as life expectancy and age of the workforce. This item totals over \$21 million and represents 52 percent of PSC's budget.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak about the Public Service Commission's enhanced programs and the department's financial responsibilities.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister opposite for his opening remarks. It would have been useful and helpful to have had a briefing prior to the budget debate. As a former public servant of long standing, I know as a public servant when I'm respected and I know as a public servant when I'm not respected.

It is unfortunate that we have a government that speaks and uses the language of respect for public servants, but when it comes to talking about one of the most integral central agencies of this government — the Public Service Commission — they have thwarted every attempt to have a real and meaningful dialogue — a debate, a discussion — about some of the real and challenging issues facing the Public Service Commission as it fulfills its obligations and responsibilities to the Yukon Legislative Assembly and to all Yukoners.

Some real challenges and opportunities have been identified in a variety of areas, inclusive of the audit bureau's audit last year. You may recall that in Committee of the Whole I attempted to engage the minister, as I am attempting

to engage him now, with respect to some of the findings of that audit. At that time he sort of blew off my comments — that, yes, he was aware that there was an audit but really hadn't paid much attention to it.

I am hopeful in the intervening year and some months that he will in fact have read that, because there are a number of substantive issues that I think we need to address, both in the questions that I raised on November 21 and in Committee of the Whole on November 26 last year. There was no response from the minister on the substance of the matters raised in that audit.

Again, as a former public servant who took seriously my role and responsibilities as a public servant, I would hope that the minister responsible for the public service of the Yukon will demonstrate his commitment. I have witnessed ministers who actually do take it seriously and who do believe in the importance of a meritocracy in a public service, who do believe in supporting public servants' independence and their professionalism.

The minister made some references with respect to some of the costing aspects of this and I wanted to go back to those. I anticipate that we will have further opportunity. I'm hoping that this 15-minute allocation of time for the Public Service Commission is not reflective of this government's sense of priority and that he intends to make a commitment to bring back for debate, after a briefing from the officials, the Public Service Commission.

I noted in the Public Accounts for 2012-13 that, in fact, the highest percentage of Yukon government's expenditures is for wages and benefits — 45 percent of the total budget of this territory. The Public Accounts raise a few points, and I just wanted to confirm with the minister how these things fit together in terms of his role and responsibility. One of the things that I was interested in, when I looked at the Public Accounts for this past year, was that prior to the last fiscal year, 2012-13, the Government of Yukon departments didn't recognize the liability associated with compensated absences that are used by employees during employment since it was not considered material.

But as of this last fiscal year, which, with respect to the Public Accounts, is the year that I'm referring to, 2012-13, the Government of Yukon departments recognize expenses and a liability for this based on an actuarial valuation. When I look at that in conjunction with the area that goes into more details within the Auditor General's portion of the Public Accounts, when it talks about post-employment benefits and compensated absences — the matter that I was just raising with the minister — compensated absences are benefits for employees to be absent while being paid. The post-employment benefits and compensated absence liabilities as of March 31, 2013, were \$97 million. That was up from \$92 million in March of 2012, which was up from \$80 million in March 2011. My question for the minister is: Is this increase due to an increase in the number of full-time equivalent employees or is there another reason — another basis — for that increase?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It's interesting to hear some of the rhetoric coming from the Leader of the Official Opposition in her preamble to this question. I thought it particularly interesting when she says that, as a former public servant, she respects, of course, the employees of our Yukon government, but we know from her comments throughout this sitting in the Legislature and previous ones that that's not true of all public servants. For instance, one only needs to look at her comments about the staff in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources Oil and Gas branch, who she obviously has no time of day for, or the work done by the economists in the Department of Economic Development, who she has criticized a number of times before in this House.

I believe she went as far in the media as indicating that the economists who work in the Department of Economic Development have poor math skills, which, I assure members, is rather insulting to the economists, perhaps more so than any other profession or professionals.

It rings hollow for the Leader of the Official Opposition to claim that she has anything resembling respect for the public service and the civil servants who serve the public of Yukon, especially those in the Government of Yukon.

Now with regard to her other questions about the department and some of her criticisms of the department and the employees therein, I must note, she also made a number of claims about respecting those employees and, as I've noted, her record for speaking in this House doesn't line up with those claims.

I think it is important, Madam Chair. I think it's important to recognize what exactly the Public Service Commission is doing. The Yukon government employs a diverse workforce to deliver vital programs and services for Yukon people in communities. The Public Service Commission's role is to provide strategic corporate leadership, as well as central services, for human resource management of the public service. Direct human resource management services within Yukon government departments are provided by those departments' human resource management staff.

The Commission's key goals for the next five years include building and strengthening our partnerships with our clients in providing human resource services, promoting a diverse workforce that is representative of the Yukon public that we serve, implementing a corporate approach to wellness and attracting, developing and engaging talented people to provide high-quality public service now and in the future.

The work of the Public Service Commission is carried out by nearly 90 employees in nine branches. Approximately the same number of employees work in individual departmental human resource units.

Under the Finance and Administration branch, the provision of central financial management is available and administrative services to the Public Service Commission. This includes financial analysis and reporting, budget and variance monitoring and asset management, acquisition, space and information systems planning and records management, including access to information and protection of personal privacy requests directed to the Commission itself.

It also administers two corporate programs on behalf of all Yukon government departments, employee future benefits — which is the employer's projected liability for future benefit payouts to employees on employment termination and extended health benefits for retirees as determined by actuarial evaluation — and insurance premiums and payments to the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. Funding for the Yukon government corporate programs is non-discretionary in nature.

As well, the Corporate Human Resource Staffing branch is an important aspect of the Public Service Commission's work. This branch provides human resource services for the department and establishes the organizational framework to guide staffing decisions and processes across government. This includes temporary assignments and special recruitment programs, such as the GradCorps internship program for youth who are recent Yukon graduates.

The CHRS also manages First Nation programs and services, including implementation of final agreement representative public service planning commitments and the First Nation Training Corps programs and initiatives.

The branch also handles employee relocations and removals, and it coordinates recruitment advertising and the e-recruitment system.

Finally, the branch also assists to develop a public service more representative of the population through the Workplace Diversity Employment Office. This branch coordinates the Aboriginal Employees Forum, the AEF, which includes membership of over 130 aboriginal employees. The annual Aboriginal Employees Forum Award of Honour ceremony recognizes the significant accomplishments of aboriginal public servants who have provided outstanding service and contributions to Yukon government, their co-workers and the Yukon public. Since 2009 there have been 13 recipients, one special recognition award and 65 nominations from across government. I would also note that the Premier and I had the chance to attend this particular event last year, and it was a pleasure to partake in it. It was something that was a learning experience for both the Premier and me, I am sure.

Under the Compensation and Classification part of the Public Service Commission, there is the provision of the corporate leadership to deliver job classification services and comprehensive compensation packages for employees. The Compensation and Classification branch also provides training and advice to department Human Resource staff on the administration of pay and benefits and participates in decision-making processes affecting employee compensation. The branch also manages classification appeals.

The Staff Relations branch represents the government as employer in collective bargaining with the Public Service Alliance of Canada and its local component, the Yukon Employees Union, and with the Yukon Teachers Association. The branch represents the interests of the employer in labour relation matters, including advising departments regarding interpretation of collective agreements and other terms of employment, and advising departments and acting for the employer in grievances and other employment-related

disputes. Staff Relations also coordinates the annual long service awards on behalf of all departments.

Under the workers' compensation fund, of course — this is done in accordance with the *Workers' Compensation Act*. The Public Service Commission pays the WCB assessed premiums for all Yukon government employees.

I should also note that the Human Resource Management Systems branch is an important aspect of the Public Service Commission. This branch provides software solutions and information. This includes developing and delivering information reports, ensuring the quality and protection of corporate data and providing business analysis services to support human resource planning.

The budget for this particular branch of the department is \$919,000 and it shows an increase of \$46,000, or five percent, which reflects current wage levels for the staff complement.

Under the Policy, Planning and Communication branch of the Public Service Commission, the amount allocated is estimated at \$818,000, an increase of \$36,000, or five percent, from previous estimates.

This change reflects the current wage levels of the staff complement. This particular branch develops and maintains human resource policies. The branch also facilitates strategic planning with the commission and offers strategic communication services. In addition, the branch coordinates the Yukon government employee engagement survey on behalf of all departments.

Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 14, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.