



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Wednesday, April 16, 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

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Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Education; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
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Speaker: I will now call the House to order. We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Cancer Awareness Month

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise today to ask my colleagues in the House to recognize Cancer Awareness Month.

Fifteen years ago, Yukon started to experience a wave of change. This wave of change was initiated by people who were affected by cancer and who wanted their efforts to make a direct difference to Yukon citizens. This seems to have happened when it became apparent that most fundraising dollars for national societies were not really staying and helping people in the territory.

Starting in 1999, the Run for Mom event started the challenge of raising funds, awareness and support for breast health, and programs and services for women in the Yukon. Run for Mom is now an annual Mother's Day run and walk event that brings our community closer together and encourages us to talk openly and more often about breast health and breast cancer.

Run for Mom funds have purchased diagnostic equipment, including two mammogram machines. They have helped develop public awareness and educational resources as well as supported community services, programs and projects related to breast health.

As most of us are aware, sometimes breast cancer can affect the entire community as was the case in 2000 when — and I apologize if I don't pronounce the name properly — the Karen J. Wiederkehr Memorial Fund was created in memory of a 37-year-old Yukoner who died of breast cancer after many months of medical appointments, hospitalizations, surgeries, radiation and chemotherapy outside of the territory.

Near the end of her life, Karen had two wishes: one was for patients to have access to a quiet, comfortable place dedicated to chemotherapy treatments and the second was to provide financial assistance to women while undergoing treatment for breast cancer. Thanks to Karen's Fund, now patients who are diagnosed with breast cancer and reside in Yukon, Atlin or Lower Post, B.C., may access a one-time donation of \$1,000.

Karen was also the inspiration behind Karen's Room, the chemotherapy suite at Whitehorse General Hospital. As most of you are aware, the local wave of support did not stop at this point. Ten years later, in 2010, the Yukon government and the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees announced

their partnership to continue the cancer care navigator program.

The cancer care navigator is based out of Whitehorse General Hospital and works alongside medical teams to help guide cancer patients and their families through their cancer journey. They do this by helping to deal with any social, physical, emotional, financial and spiritual cancer-related challenges.

This wave of change gained further momentum when the national Canadian Cancer Society announced the decision to close its Yukon office doors, yet still host its daffodil drive and Relay for Life fundraiser events here in the territory. This announcement in December 2012 promoted several Yukon citizens to cut ties with the national organization and create the new Yukoners cancer care fund.

This fund is administered through the Yukon Hospital Foundation, and it also brings the community together — especially through fun events such as the rent-a-Santa program — and it enables the Hospital Foundation to buy wigs or prosthetics, cover travel expenses, or even provide counselling for Yukon cancer patients.

This all being said, April is daffodil month — a time for Canadians to unite and fight back against all cancers and a time to buy daffodil pins from various retail outlets like Earls, The Chocolate Claim, Sequels, Hello Gorgeous, Java Connection, Baked Café, Epic Pizza — among others.

The Canadian Cancer Society is fortunate to have approximately 40 Yukon volunteers who assist with its Daffodil Days campaign, its Relay For Life and the society's continued efforts to support Yukoners through its toll-free cancer information service, its cancer connection peer support program, the operation of the Smokers' Helpline through funding provided by the Yukon government, and providing access to services and programs for Yukon patients who are undergoing outpatient treatment in British Columbia.

In closing, cancer is systemic, and together we can all make a difference by fundraising to fight all 200-odd types of cancer or to make a difference for Yukoners facing cancer here at home or having to travel outside of the territory for further treatment.

Ms. Stick: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to pay tribute to Cancer Awareness Month. I want to thank the minister across the way for pointing out the services and what is being done in the Yukon.

I have a bit of a different take. It is Cancer Awareness Month, or daffodil month, once more. Our reminder is the yellow daffodil we wear or the tables that are set up around town with volunteers selling daffodils. It's spring. It's time for new beginnings. I don't need to remind people of how we are all touched by cancer, because we are. Every single one of us here can put at least one face to cancer: families, friends, and co-workers — sometimes all of the above. Research and treatment options continue to grow. Individuals with cancer today, depending on the type, are much more likely to survive. This is not true of all types of cancer, but the research and the work continues.

As a community there is much we can do. Later today, we begin debating a motion on food sustainability and supporting local food producers. Let's look at supporting organics and healthy, affordable, local foods that don't use pesticides, chemicals, and genetically modified seeds. Let's support our organic growers. Let's support the production of healthy, affordable foods that have been shown to reduce cancer. Let's support our community gardens. As a community, let's not forget about some of the root causes of illness and cancer, including big issues like poverty and exclusion.

As individuals, there is more that we can do. Let's inform ourselves and know our family histories and the risks in our lives, whether hereditary, lifestyle or environment. Talk to your doctor; have your mammogram; have your prostate checked. Be aware of what you can do to reduce your cancer risks. Don't give up on the obvious lifestyle issues, for example, smoking.

Keep trying to reduce and quit smoking and start healthy exercise and activities. As individuals, we can do this and we can encourage and support families and friends to do the same.

Daffodil month is about cancer awareness, but to me it is about new beginnings and what we each can do to make that personal lifestyle change that can help prevent cancer — daffodils, spring and new beginnings are our reminders that there is more that we can do.

Speaker: I would like to add that the second annual Speaker's Reception fundraiser in support of the Yukoners cancer care fund is following the close of business for us on Thursday April 24, which is a week from tomorrow. I hope to see everyone there. It is open to everybody in the Yukon. Hopefully we will get a nice turnout and raise some money for this very worthy fund.

In recognition of World Heritage Day

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise today on behalf of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to World Heritage Day. Friday, April 18 is a day for all jurisdictions across the globe, both large and small, to commemorate the importance of cultural heritage and its influence on our everyday lives.

In 1982, it was suggested that a day be established to celebrate the diversity of heritage throughout the world. This project was approved by the International Council on Monuments and Sites at their symposium in Tunisia. In 1983, the UNESCO general conference passed a resolution declaring April 18 international monuments and sites day, which we now know as World Heritage Day.

For many of us, our heritage is commemorated at our historic sites, our museums and cultural centres, our family history's oral traditions, visual and performing arts and the literary arts. We commemorate our heritage through sharing what is important to us with colleagues, families and friends.

We find our heritage in many places. Each community has its own distinct history and our historic places tell the story of Yukon. Yukon government has recognized eight Yukon historic sites that are considered to have heritage

significance at a territorial level. The most recent historic site designation is the Watson Lake Sign Post Forest, which will receive its commemorative plaque during a special unveiling ceremony planned for this summer.

Information on the historic sites in Yukon can be found on the Yukon register of historic places, which includes the Dawson City telegraph office, the Caribou Hotel, Fort Selkirk, the Mayo Legion Hall and the T.C. Richards Building, just to name a few.

We also applaud the City of Whitehorse for their commitment to safeguard Yukon history through its city heritage program. To date, 15 buildings have been designated municipal historic sites, and two of those include the Taylor House and the log skyscrapers — visual landmarks that are two favourites among Yukoners and visitors to the city.

Globally, UNESCO's world heritage sites include places like the Egyptian pyramids and the Great Wall of China. There are 17 world heritage sites in Canada. One of these is our very own Kluane National Park, home to some of the tallest peaks in North America, as well as abundant wildlife. Managed in cooperation with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kluane is a pristine and natural jewel in Canada's park landscapes.

Looking forward, Canada has a tentative list of seven potential World Heritage sites, and two of these seven are here in Yukon. One of these is Herschel Island, known to the Inuvialuit as Qikiqtaruk. Herschel Island is Yukon's first territorial park. In 1903, the North-West Mounted Police arrived at Herschel to enforce Canadian laws among the mostly American whalers. This national moment was officially recognized in 1972 as a national historic event. The other, of course, is the Klondike.

This Friday, April 18, World Heritage Day, we will have the ability to bring heritage to the forefront and to recognize the contributions of many individuals and organizations that work very hard to preserve, protect and make available to the public Yukon's rich heritage and history.

On Thursday evening this week, I will attend the 2013 Yukon heritage awards ceremony, hosted by the Yukon Historical and Museums Association. The awards ceremony takes place at the Yukon Archives. It is fitting that those recognized for their outstanding efforts to protect, conserve and interpret Yukon's history will, in fact, come together at an institution that does its part to safeguard Yukon's records — that speaks to the diversity of our rich, collective heritage.

As we pay tribute to World Heritage Day, we join with many other cultural and scientific communities across the globe in recognition of April 18 as a day of awareness; a day to bring to the forefront the importance of our collective, cultural heritage.

As acknowledged last week during National Volunteer Week, I would like to take a moment to thank the many, many volunteers who make a tremendous contribution to Yukon's cultural and heritage by committing their expertise and knowledge in support of these very important sectors.

We thank them and we thank the many local institutions that work hard on behalf of Yukon to keep the collective

vision alive so that culture awareness and heritage appreciation continues today and continues for the future.

Mr. Speaker, if I could have the indulgence of my colleagues in the Legislature to welcome a few guests to the gallery — we have: Anne Leckie from the Yukon Heritage Resources Board; from the Department of Tourism and Culture, Rebecca Jansen, who is with Cultural Services historic sites; also Bruce Barrett and David Schlosser, who is a digital archivist; Nancy Oakley, who is the executive director from the Yukon Historical and Museums Association; last but not least, Marc Johnston, who is the president of the Yukon Historical and Museums Association.

Welcome to the Yukon Legislature.

Applause

In recognition of National Advance Care Planning Day

Hon. Mr. Graham: I also would like to take the opportunity to rise today on behalf of all members in the House to recognize National Advance Care Planning Day, a day for you and others to reflect on decisions made at the end of life.

This year, *Maclean's* is marking National Advance Care Planning Day by hosting its third End-of-Life Care: A National Dialogue town hall meeting series that will be held this evening at the Yukon Arts Centre in Whitehorse in conjunction with the Canadian Medical Association.

Interestingly enough, in the *MacLean's* article I read, the Yukon was quoted and there is a picture there of one of the simple steps we have taken here in the territory to advance the cause of care planning.

Here in North America it comes as no surprise that people find it difficult to talk about death. Health care workers often say talking about death and considering end-of-life care options now is very much a part of life today. However, most Canadians are not making their end-of-life wishes clear, nor have they completed a plan. In fact, in talking with many other folks of my vintage, I've found that many of us have taken my way of planning for end-of-life, and that was simply a discussion with the kids — "Dear kids, I hope that you will take it upon yourselves to look after me when I am no longer able to because, if you don't, you won't get an inheritance." Having said that, I then mentioned the fact that, "By the way, the inheritance is already spent." But it just goes to show how little we are planning for our advanced care.

Advance Care Planning in Canada is an organization doing its best to raise awareness and to develop tools to make the end-of-life planning process much easier. As an organization, it's encouraging Canadians to start talking with a loved one about end-of-life care wishes and hopes. National Advance Care Planning Day is a great reminder to start developing a plan and talking about it today or to simply review your own end-of-life care plan.

Essentially, advanced care planning is thinking about what is right for you when it comes to end-of-life care, which can happen at any age, at any time or in any location. Dying brings out both the best and worst in families, so it is very

important to prepare advanced care directives and to complete a living will and set powers of attorney, with the help of a lawyer if you find that necessary.

Mr. Speaker, once you record your wishes, send copies to your substitute decision-makers, as well as to your medical file. Setting your end-of-life plan also entails revisiting your wishes and your documentation from time to time.

However, the conversation about end-of-life care is of the utmost importance — not just creating the documents. By talking through your plan, you will help clarify your wishes and minimize stress, anxiety and depression for everyone — for you, for your loved ones and any substitute decision-makers, as well as health care providers who must make decisions for you if you are incapable of doing so.

Within the past 10 years, the Yukon government has done much work concerning advanced care and consent. We encourage citizens to fill out an advanced directive, make several copies and go so far as to stick a note on the refrigerator or front door that tells family where they can find the directive. This has proven especially useful when paramedics arrive in an emergency.

Planning for future health care choices is not an easy task, Mr. Speaker, but citizens can find forms and documents on our website that will assist in this process.

In closing, death is a natural part of life and it's unavoidable for all of us, so this National Advance Care Planning Day, let's get planning and talking about it.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Hanson: I'd ask the House to join me in welcoming Sonny Gray, owner of Gray Management Services and Sirius Security, to the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Graham: It's with great pleasure that I table *On the path together — Wellness Plan for Yukon's Children and Families*.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: It is with great pleasure that I rise today to present to this House the *Queen's Printer Agency 2014/2015 Business Plan*, Yukon Highways and Public Works.

Speaker: Are there any further 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?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to maintain the most affordable stream of home ownership in Yukon by protecting mobile home owners from unlimited annual pad rental increases.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Town of Watson Lake to purchase Greenway's Greens, the community golf course.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon government administration building renovations

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the old library building has been sitting empty for nearly three years. The fact that it has not been repurposed by this government is a missed opportunity. The Yukon government owns this building outright; this means that the government and the Yukon taxpayers do not have to pay rent for it. Meanwhile, the government is renting space throughout Whitehorse to house various services Yukoners rely upon. The old library location is quite large and could easily provide the space for several government services to operate out of.

Does the minister think that it is fiscally responsible to have prime accessible real estate, like the old library, sitting empty for over three years while paying rent for other locations throughout Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I thank the member opposite for the question. Of course the government is responsible for the management and condition of hundreds of public buildings and we take pride in keeping our buildings in good repair, and we want Yukoners likewise to be proud of their public buildings. The old library space is going to have a use. I have spoken to this in the House before. We are going to be re-skinning this building and looking for some greener energy. That space is going to be utilized in the next little while. We will move some people out of the offices in this building so they can relocate while we get to some of the renovations we have to do internally.

Ms. Hanson: It has been over a year since I last raised the question in the House about the plans for the old library space and Yukon administration building renovations. At that time, the minister did as he did today — provide some encouraging answers about re-skinning the building. What is not clear is the end purpose for the old library. The old library space is very attractive for a number of reasons. It is conveniently located downtown, on bus routes and is accessible to people with mobility challenges. However, we are here a year later and the old library is still unoccupied and little progress has been made on the administration building

renovations. The government budgeted \$10 million over two years for upgrades to this building.

What is the status of the project and when will Yukoners see the old library space being put to use for Yukon citizens?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I spoke to this before, but you know the result of the building condition assessment — which is the reason we are moving forward with the renovations and upgrades to this building — indicates that some of our facilities are nearing the end of their functional life, and we have to put money back into them. With the old library space, once we are finished the renovations on this building, we've asked the department to work with the other departments to look at what this could be used for. There will be some things we have to think about. We have to think about parking, we have to think about City of Whitehorse bylaws, and we have work with the city on some of this stuff. We are moving forward with it and are looking forward to getting this building a little bit more energy efficient and moving forward.

Ms. Hanson: It's not news that the building is old. We're three years and counting since we started talking about this building being renovated. The library is in a unique location. It is a great opportunity to provide services to Yukoners that are convenient and accessible. It did have parking and is on bus routes. I've heard from many of my constituents in Whitehorse Centre about their ideas on what sort of services might set up shop in the old library space. They would like to see front-line government services — such as insured health or the residential tenancy office — make use of the space because of the accessibility of the building and the convenient location. Many services that the government provides are in hard-to-reach or out-of-the-way locations, and they could be moved to the old library space.

Will the government commit to provide front-line services in this accessible and central location?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: What I will commit to is undergoing upgrades to the exterior and interior of this building. It is going to involve re-skinning — essentially removing the iconic aluminum siding — and installing new windows, vapour barrier, re-insulating and putting on some new siding. Interior work will include upgrades to our fire suppression and alarm systems, heating, ventilation, cooling upgrades, electrical upgrades, washroom improvements and upgrades to entrances.

At the same time, the main administration building will undergo a new space configuration that will improve the working layout of all three levels and improve space utilization in the departments. They are currently being consulted in planning and it is underway. The reconfiguration will conform to our employee participation and with the goal of making these environments better. We estimate, of course, that the bulk of this work will occur during the 2014-15 fiscal year. While a major building retrofit can be a disruptive process, we are confident that the end result will provide a greatly enhanced work environment and a better, energy-efficient building.

Question re: Medical travel allowance

Ms. Stick: Rural Yukoners are used to getting a referral from their physician to travel to Whitehorse for medically necessary appointments. A copy of that referral gets submitted when it becomes time to be compensated for medical travel costs. Expectant mothers across the Yukon come to Whitehorse to deliver their babies because services are not available in the communities.

Recently, expectant parents came to Whitehorse to have their baby. Once they returned home and settled in with their newborn, they submitted their travel claim as usual. Only this time, they were denied. They were told that because they used a midwife, they do not qualify for coverage for medical travel.

Does the minister believe that families who plan hospital births deserve more coverage than families who hire midwives to assist their births?

Hon. Mr. Graham: In the first instance, I won't discuss things that are currently in the department being adjudicated. I will say that the policy or the legislation is enabling in only so many instances. In this one case, the adjudication was that the family was not eligible for transportation or for services provided by the government. We are since looking at that policy and we hope to have an answer for the family in the very near future.

Ms. Stick: I am pleased to hear that they are at least thinking about it. I think we can all agree that giving birth is medically necessary for the well-being of both mother and child. What I don't understand is how it makes any sense to cover costs of travel for one parent and not for another.

Whether this family chose to use a midwife or not — or any parents choosing a midwife or not — they're going to have to travel to Whitehorse to deliver their baby. It seems midwifery does not have the support of this government. This family is being punished for a health care decision they made with the support of their primary health care providers. Can the minister at least acknowledge it's unfair to support expectant parents travel for hospital birth, but deny the same support for others?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As I have already indicated, the case in point is under review. For the member opposite to make the allegations she is making is ridiculous. It is currently under review. We're taking a look at it. It may require a change in regulation or it may require a change in policy, but for the member opposite to make the ridiculous statement she is making is not worth responding to.

Ms. Stick: Ridiculous or not, they are the facts. That is what has happened. It is a true case of a couple in a community who have come to us and said, "This happened to us."

They were shocked by the decision that this department made. It's obvious that it does need a policy review because a certain set of parents are receiving one kind of compensation for the birth of their child here in Whitehorse that they travelled for. Another couple needed to come to Whitehorse — needed to travel and deliver their baby in Whitehorse. The service is not available in the communities.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister not just agree, but change this policy that prevents families from being reimbursed for coming to Whitehorse to have their babies, regardless of whether it's in the hospital or whether it's by a midwife.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the case is currently under review. We don't change policy or regulation in Question Period as the member opposite would have us do. We need to take a look at the reasoning behind the refusal to compensate in this one specific case. We will do that. As I said, it is currently under review. Once that review is completed and we know what has to be changed or corrected in the system, we will do that.

Question re: Whitehorse General Hospital renovations

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Last spring, officials of the Yukon Hospital Corporation appeared as witnesses in this Chamber to address questions about a variety of topics including the proposed emergency expansion at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Before that, it had been two full years since representatives of the corporation appeared in the Legislative Assembly. The government has been very reluctant again this spring to allow these witnesses to appear, despite my request to have this happen.

When officials were here last May, we discussed the hospital expansion and they estimated that the new emergency department would be in service in 2017. This week the minister said, "The plans for the expansion of the emergency department are evolving."

Will the 2017 deadline be met for the new emergency department to be in service?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As I said, plans for the emergency department are evolving and that has come about as a result of the fact that the hospital is continuing to investigate best practices. They're investigating alternate methods of service in the emergency department. They're working together with the physician community, as well as other interested parties, to make sure that what they get here is the absolute best possible emergency department for Yukoners.

If the planning and reviews take a little longer, I think that's perfectly acceptable in order to receive the best possible alternative with the construction of the new emergency centre.

Mr. Silver: The Hospital Corporation last appeared in this House a year ago and since that time we've been told that there have been significant developments. We have found out, for example, that the expansion of the Whitehorse General Hospital went from "to be in service in 2017" to "evolving," as the minister put it the other day and again today.

Is this why the government has to come up with a costly plan to build a temporary home for a new MRI machine?

One of the reasons for the delay seems to be that the minister and the chair have different opinions on the future of the ambulance station that sits on the hospital grounds. The chair wanted to demolish it, and the minister said to save it. The minister admitted this week that this has caused the

hospital back to the drawing board to redesign their expansion project.

What is the minister's new date for when this expansion will be in service, or is the date evolving as well?

Hon. Mr. Graham: It's interesting that this government was the first government to even bring the Yukon Hospital Corporation forward to the Legislature as a witness, and I've made a commitment that we will do so again in the fall session. The Hospital Corporation will be attending.

As I said in my previous answer, the plan for the Hospital Corporation is evolving. Yes, one of the stumbling blocks was the proposal to demolish the ambulance station on the grounds. That was determined not be the appropriate step, and so it required some changes. That's why I said that the changes will come. They will come in due time and we won't proceed with the project — or the Hospital Corporation won't proceed with the project — until such time as they are certain that they have the absolute best system in the emergency department for citizens in the Yukon.

Mr. Silver: It's good to hear that the minister is committing to having the witnesses from the Hospital Corporation appear. As of last week, we were told that he had no interest in doing so. The chair of the hospital board has been talking about this project since 2010. At the time, the cost of the project was \$50 million. Last fall the price jumped to \$65 million.

The price has been evolving as well, I guess, and it will change again — as the minister has now confirmed that the project has gone back to the drawing board for redesign.

Can the minister tell Yukoners what has been spent on this project to date?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is very obvious to anyone who has constructed, built or renovated anything that, until we actually have a set plan — we will then be able to have a better estimate as to what it will actually cost.

As we know with planning, sometimes even with the best plans, as we have described in this House with the budget mains — in spite of best planning, sometimes things happen inevitably. Many times, not within the control of the government, those plans have to change. Here we have again the Liberal leader trying to walk on both sides of the fence. He wants to criticize us for lack of planning and then also criticize us when we are going to plan too much.

The good news is that, because of the financial shape of this government — the territory's finances, the shape that they are in — we will have the flexibility to ensure that we can build this hospital, and either choose to pay for it or do what a lot of people would say financially — and that would be to perhaps look at financing it and mortgaging it because there will be generations of people who will be able to benefit from this.

I know another thing is that we are moving forward with the expansion of McDonald Lodge. We just completed the opening of the new hospital in Dawson City, which the member for that riding voted against.

Question re: Highway crosswalks

Mr. Barr: Several Yukon rural communities have requested highway crosswalks. Carcross, Pelly Crossing and Haines Junction are a few examples.

A year ago in this House the Minister for Highways and Public Works committed to working on providing the communities with the highway crosswalks they were asking for. We are receiving calls and the people are still waiting for the installation of these crosswalks in the communities.

Can the minister offer us an update about the establishment of highway crosswalks in the communities?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I will commit to the fact that I did ask the department to look at this exact issue, and the good news is that we are going to be putting in some crosswalks this summer.

Mr. Barr: I thank the minister for his answer. Can he let us know which communities they would be in?

I understand that Carcross had been previously committed to their crosswalk by the previous Yukon government. So can the minister expand on when and where? That would be great.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I know I did receive a letter from the member opposite that referenced Carcross, and I've also received a letter from the school council in Haines Junction and residents of Pelly Crossing, and those are the ones that we've highlighted this year. We're also looking at some of the other crossings. We're just looking at some of the new technology that is out there to make sure that we put something in that is going to be safe and work right.

Question re: Highway improvements

Mr. Tredger: Good news indeed. For folks living along the north Klondike Highway and the historic Silver Trail, the highway is their main street. While many vehicles hurry by, local residents are using the road to come and go from work, school, visiting or picking up supplies. Every sitting, I ask the minister responsible to address the safety concerns of Yukoners who live along this highway. This sitting we hope the government will make a real commitment to improve the safety of Yukoners who live along the Silver Trail and the north Klondike Highway.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible for highways let the residents of Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Stewart Crossing and Mayo know when they will see improved warning signage and street lighting along the main streets of their communities?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Of course, by investing in road infrastructure, our government is advancing the safety and maintaining our vital transportation links for residents and ensuring the long-term prosperity in the Yukon communities by supporting economic development and by making our streets safe.

You don't have to look any further than our budget this year. We have \$600,000 to do some functional planning on the Freegold Road, the Nahanni Road and the north Klondike Highway. With some of the new resource development coming on board, we were ready to make the necessary adjustments to the road to enable traffic to move easily and to

increase the safety for the travelling public. This is something that I'm committed to, working with my department, the Department of Highways and Public Works — making our roads safe. Not that our roads aren't safe now. They meet every portion of the TAC standards — but we always need to be looking into the future for increased development in this territory.

Mr. Tredger: Driving north of Carmacks toward Pelly, Yukoners who regularly drive the route are noticing permafrost heaves and depressions that are making the highway more hazardous. Where there is heavy industrial traffic and permafrost, there are likely to be impacts on the road. On a recent trip, I counted over 10 cars in the ditch along this stretch. Leaving multiple cars in the ditch is a definite warning to slow down, but a better solution would be proper signage.

When will the minister commit to ensuring that warning signs and repairs are done along the north Klondike roads when conditions have changed due to climate factors or heavy industrial use?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Permafrost is near and dear to my heart, as I have a small portion of a road north of Destruction Bay that might have just a little bit of permafrost.

Let's get the facts straight. The Department of Highways and Public Works' employees, from our deputy minister down to the labourer, make sure that the signage is out there. They make sure that it's readable and make sure that any sort of an issue that we would have on our roads has been marked and clearly identified for the travelling public.

Last fall, we had a big section of permafrost in my neck of the woods that we've had to contract out right now to tender on that. I sent our billboard signs up there stating "next X amount of kilometres, permafrost — drive with caution and care."

We do the same thing in every other riding, whether it's a dip from permafrost or whether it's a washout that needs flaggers. We're on the job, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Accessibility at the Whitehorse International Airport

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, constituents have raised a number of concerns about accessibility at the Whitehorse International Airport. An unresolved issue is that parking spots for people with disabilities are not at grade, which makes it difficult for them to reach the air terminal building with their baggage. Another issue is that parking spots for people with disabilities can't be used overnight, even if they are travelling for medical reasons.

The Whitehorse International Airport is bound to comply with the federal code of practice for passenger terminal accessibility. The Minister of Highways and Public Works is responsible for policy and budget decisions for the airport. I wonder if he is aware of this code of practice.

Has the minister given direction to his department to ensure the airport parking lot is fully accessible for people with disabilities?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: The Yukon government is committed to improving the access to government buildings for its clients, employees and for the general public. This commitment means taking steps to ensure that persons with physical disabilities can safely enter, exit and function within any government building where they work — or access public services — for example, the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport.

In the past five years, the Department of Highways and Public Works has worked collaboratively with the Yukon Council on Disability to perform accessibility assessments on a number of our Yukon government's larger facilities. More than a dozen assessments have been completed, and the findings are taken into account during the capital space planning. This year, we are looking at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. We are looking at parking and looking at maybe an adjustment in fees. There will be more to follow on that once the department and I have had a chance to sit down and look at our findings.

Ms. Moorcroft: The Canadian Transportation Agency has an accessibility advisory committee made up of representatives from the community of persons with disabilities, the transportation industry and other interested parties it consults with for advice on accessibility issues. I understand that staff at the Whitehorse International Airport is working with local disability advocates to set up an accessibility advisory committee for the airport, and they should be commended for their efforts.

What is the minister doing to support the progress of these efforts by airport staff and disability advocates?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: The member opposite just listed how we're working with them. The Yukon government has invested millions in Yukon airports this year. We have \$11.1 million in improvements to the Whitehorse International Airport. Upgrading and working on our infrastructure is very important to us. We have an enviable safety record at the Whitehorse International Airport. I am always encouraged at any given time when a constituent of mine or a resident of Yukon or traveller from abroad sends a note to us that there is an issue at the airport. I treat it with the utmost concern and I work with my department on that.

Ms. Moorcroft: Last November, the federal Minister of Transport did announce funding of safety improvement projects at the Whitehorse International Airport. The federal government is providing funds through the airports capital assistance program while the Yukon government is providing some additional project funds. We're glad to see these investments by the federal and Yukon governments, particularly in light of the recent safety audit done by Transport Canada.

In the interest of public transparency, will the minister release the latest Whitehorse airport safety audit completed by Transport Canada?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: These audits for the Whitehorse, Dawson City, Old Crow and Watson Lake airports — some are being audited by Transport and some have been done already. Transport Canada identified some

findings at the airport and some of these — most of the findings — are administrative in nature and largely related to some deficiencies since the documentation, but we're working with them on that. We've committed \$11.1 million in improvements, again more money into Whitehorse International Airport, which — I am going to say again in this House — the members opposite are not going to be supporting or voting for our budget.

Question re: Tourism statistics

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. Earlier this year, the minister told CBC Radio that higher tourism numbers were due to marketing the government has done with Germany and Japan. Information I have seen from the minister's own department shows that visitation from Germany is actually down from where it was in 2010, and down substantially from where it was 15 years ago.

I wrote the minister, asking him to provide any statistics to back up his claim that the number of German tourists is on the rise. He did respond to my letter, but refused to answer the question. I asked again during the Tourism debate and the minister refused to answer this direct question there as well.

What proof can the minister provide the public that increased marketing to Germany has in fact resulted in more German visitors to the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I really do have to commend the Department of Tourism and Culture for working with the private sector and TIAY. They've done tremendous work over the last number of years, and we've seen the fruits of their labour. In 2013, Yukon saw record-breaking numbers in visitation, with an overall eight-percent increase. Of that eight percent, there were increases especially within the domestic market here in Canada. We saw a 17-percent increase.

Last year, we were talking about tourism providing upwards of \$200 million into the Yukon economy, both direct and indirect, and now statistics are coming in showing those numbers are now \$250 million that tourism generates to Yukon's economy. Of that, we know that over one-quarter of Yukon businesses generate revenue from tourism, either directly or indirectly.

The member opposite speaks about Germany. We do know that the German market continues to be Yukon's largest overseas market, representing about 26 percent of overseas visitations. I need to commend the Department of Tourism and Culture and stakeholders within the territory for doing such a great job at marketing the Yukon brand.

Mr. Silver: The minister would not answer my question when I wrote him, and it appears that he won't answer it now, either. The minister has claimed that we are seeing more German visitors because of increased marketing efforts in Germany. I am looking for some facts to back up that statement. According to the minister's own stats, the number of German visitors is down from 2010, and nowhere near the levels that we have seen in the late 1990s.

If things are so rosy, why mislead the public in telling them that it is up? Here is a question: How many German

visitors were there in 2013? Is that number higher or is it lower than in 2010 or in 2000?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I can direct the member opposite to take a look at the *Yukon Tourism Indicators* that was published in December 2013. That document talks about border-crossing statistics. It gives a breakdown on U.S.-Canada. It gives a breakdown on overseas visitation from the borders. That is the simple answer to the member opposite. That document is available and those numbers are clearly indicated in there.

What I need to get back to is the success story that Yukon has built on a global scale, but especially here in Canada where we see increases in tourism that no other jurisdiction in Canada has seen over the last number of years.

We know — and I've mentioned this on the floor before — that we saw an eight-percent increase just last year alone and we hope to continue with that momentum. That may be an anomaly. I could only hope that we would see increases like that this year, but it is doubtful.

The member opposite can see in his own riding the work that the tourism industry is doing — both government and non-government — with tours of Dredge No. 4 within Dawson. We see it with tours of the *SS Klondike*, the northern lights viewing, and people coming here to rent canoes and kayaks to take treks down the river.

Mr. Silver: Going from information provided by the minister's own department, it's pretty obvious that our numbers from Germany are not up in recent years, despite what the minister says. It is quite telling that the minister couldn't answer my letter and he couldn't answer my questions here today. The government would like Yukoners to believe that increased marketing efforts in Germany have resulted in more German visitors. That may happen someday, but it hasn't happened yet and the minister's own stats have confirmed that.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister speaking of tourism numbers from Germany being up when in fact they are not?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we continue to market in the overseas market. We know that we've had the assistance of CanNor over the last number of years with approximately \$2 million. That campaign through the federal government has been extended for an additional two years, so we will look for opportunities working with our federal counterparts to continue marketing, not just overseas, but around the globe.

This government has proven that it stands behind the tourism industry when the \$590,000 from CanNor expired last year. We stepped up to the plate — all of my colleagues on this side of floor — to implement an additional \$590,000 into the Tourism budget to compensate for that loss from CanNor. But we already know from the Leader of the Liberal Party — because he's indicated on the floor of this Legislature — that he's going to vote against that.

I don't understand the member opposite's question. He just needs to look at the investments that this government's made and the lack of understanding of the tourism economy that he has.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Clerk: Motion No. 616, standing in the name of Mr. Silver.

Speaker: It is moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to investigate the introduction of a local food act, modelled on legislation passed in Ontario in 2013, in order to:

- (1) promote farmers donating excess food production to food banks by way of tax credits;
- (2) promote local food awareness;
- (3) make more local food available in markets, restaurants, schools and institutions; and
- (4) allow for the creation of a local food week.

Mr. Silver: It does give me great pleasure to rise on this motion. Mr. Speaker, when people think of the Yukon they might not immediately think of a vibrant agricultural industry, but the Yukon Agricultural Association touts that there are approximately 160 active farms.

One needs to only visit the Fireweed market on a Thursday night or the Dawson farmers market on a Saturday in the summer to see the bounty that our territory can produce.

A mobile abattoir has provided new opportunities for those looking to farm cattle and elk, but there is always more that we can do to grow our agricultural industry. A good place to start looking for ideas is the *Local Food Act* that was passed in Ontario in 2013.

One of the centrepieces of the new legislation is a tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural produce to local food banks. In November 2013, Ontario became the first province in Canada to provide such a tax credit for farmers. Farmers in Ontario will receive a non-refundable, 25-percent tax credit based on the fair market value of the product that they donate to local food banks and community meat programs.

This new tax credit is significant for two different reasons. The first is that it creates a means for which farmers can be compensated for unsold produce and product. Northern farming is by no means easy or inexpensive, and providing this tax break helps with lost revenues to these small businesses. Secondly, it encourages donations to the food banks to provide the necessary, important role that they play in providing nutrition and food security for thousands of people in this province every month.

The logistics and final details of this credit are still being worked out by Ontario's ministers of Finance and Agriculture and Food, but they are optimistic that the details will be

finalized by the spring of 2014. There is no reason why we could not include a similar provision here in the Yukon.

The Whitehorse Food Bank opened in 2009 to provide emergency food to the hungry, while supporting the greater effort to alleviate poverty, and it operates on the generosity of volunteers who donate money and their time.

According to the website, since opening in 2009, the Whitehorse Food Bank has registered 1,984 individuals and families, representing 3,956 people, or about 14 percent of the population of Whitehorse. In 2012, they were feeding an average of 1,176 people every month — substantially more people than they had food for.

A tax initiative like this provides security for our farmers against lost cuts and helps out our food banks. With Ontario being the only jurisdiction to offer such a progressive taxation credit program, this is a rare opportunity for Yukon to take a lead role on policy in Canada, rather than playing catch-up years later.

Supporting local food presents a huge opportunity for the Yukon's tourism industry. Last fall, the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon released a gap analysis, exploring the potential of culinary tourism — and the appetite is there. The analysis states in its next steps that — and I quote: “We now know that Yukon producers and entrepreneurs have an appetite for developing or continuing to nurture Culinary Tourism experiences. From Best Practices in other tourism regions, we know the resources required to support a Culinary Tourism Program. In examining the current Yukon tourism organizations and their scope and services, we have some insight into the abilities or limitations from existing agencies.

“When seeking to understand areas of culinary tourism development with greatest potential, market demand or appetite is just one of multiple factors in seeding ‘potential’. Although the Yukon has experienced some great success in Culinary Tourism and even though there producer interest, and future forums and events scheduled into 2014, the conversation still requires more collaboration and ‘community’ building.

“The conversation about Culinary Tourism by Yukoners is diverse in its appetite and inclination to develop new experiences or enhance production and distribution. They all share support in continuing to network, get educated, explore training or related workshops and possibly build some collaborative marketing pieces to continue exploring Yukon's Culinary Tourism potential.”

Mr. Speaker, the report also shows that in recent years there has been an increased interest in other Canadian jurisdictions in locally grown vegetables and game for consumption by tourists, and Yukon is definitely following suit. We have seen businesses take the lead on work with farmers to get products and produce to the plates. The Wheelhouse, for example, here in Whitehorse, is a great example of how local chefs are working to incorporate local ingredients. Klondike Kate's, in my riding in Dawson, has been doing this for years and it is an extremely popular destination for locals and for visitors alike.

We have seen the role food has played in festivals. Adäka Cultural Festival has made a community feast the cornerstone of their event. Last summer, we have seen for the first time the Yukon Culinary Festival. Yukon is known for its vast wilderness and beautiful scenery and tourists would like to taste it. But there is still much work that needs to be done and a local food act could be a keystone in connecting these pieces.

Mr. Speaker, the government has a role to play in making local produce more available. It is the government that regulates what can be sold in stores and restaurants and can enact policy that keeps food in or out of the market. The Yukon government has an enormous influence with its purchasing power. Local food may not be produced in the same abundance as in Ontario or be available year-round, but the government can enact a purchasing policy, even at a very small percentage, that encourages its departments to source caterers and businesses that use local ingredients.

Another aspect of the Ontario bill is the creation of a local food week. This would create a potential buzz for the tourism sector as well as an excellent awareness piece for locals who may not know about Yukon's vibrant agricultural community. The proposed week in Ontario is June, but with our later growing season, a week in August would be preferable and better suited for the Yukon.

In concluding my remarks here today, farmers are businesses; businesses that provide food for our tables. Yukon farmers are most often sole proprietors working in an unpredictable environment. Supporting local farmers by creating a safety net that compensates and encourages production — and produce to go to the food banks — creates twofold benefits in the Yukon.

It should be noted that the Ontario bill was passed with amendments and supported by all three major parties. The success of the farmers is a non-partisan issue and I urge this House to consider what we can do to help our local farmers, our local food banks and our tourism industry.

Let's resolve to start building a more compassionate and self-sustaining Yukon. I look forward to the pending comments from my peers and members of the House, and I look forward to a unanimous vote in support of a local food act.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It is a pleasure to rise here today and speak to this motion. It is a pleasure to hear members of the Opposition, and particularly in this case the Liberal Party, starting to talk about agriculture. I remember not that long ago when I first entered this Assembly, we never heard from the NDP or the Liberals any comments in support of agriculture. It is a pleasure to see them now starting to recognize the potential of this industry, which during our time has seen unprecedented support by government and attention to the issues, impediments and barriers to developing agriculture.

The Yukon, if we look back historically — back around the time of the gold rush and after that — when transportation was not as easy to the south, a much greater percentage of the Yukon's diet was the result of either locally grown or

harvested food. At one time, the Dawson area and the McQuesten area all had active farms — and the Stewart Valley as well.

Today, roughly 70 percent of Yukon's farms are in the Takhini River valley area and within my riding of Lake Laberge. We have continued to work in cooperation with Yukon farmers and organizations representing them, including the Yukon Agricultural Association and the Growers of Organic Food Yukon.

Agriculture was one of the key areas that we highlighted in our 2011 election platform, "Moving Forward Together", and it was one of our specific campaign announcements to take a number of steps related to continuing to support this important segment of the Yukon economy. Really, I would note that in my view, and I think it's fair to say the view of my colleagues as well, we see the potential, not only economically, for this sector with the increasing interest by Yukoners in purchasing locally grown products, but there's the opportunity for Yukon to have food that is grown here. This way, people know how it is raised and have a better sense of what quality controls are in place, know that it is grown in a manner that addresses the growing concerns that a number of people have about potential additives — inputs and antibiotics and preservatives — put into products found in supermarkets. And it ensures that those dollars remain here in Yukon and gets us a step closer to having locally grown food, having the investments in those areas stay in the territory and also being more self-sufficient in the event of any potential disruptions in the future to transportation chains, supply chains and so on.

Moving toward greater self-sufficiency in various areas of the Yukon economy — including within the agriculture sector — is something that is very much in line with the goal of the Yukon government.

The commitments that we made in the 2011 election platform "Moving Forward Together"— I'm pleased to say that significant progress has been made in those areas. In fact, most of those commitments within the first two years of this mandate were already completed or — in the case of some that were commitments to ongoing support — have been met, and we're continuing going forward.

Those elements within our 2011 election platform include the commitment to work with farms and industry associations — including the Yukon Agricultural Association and the Growers of Organic Food Yukon — to implement the agriculture multi-year development plan. That commitment has been met and that work continues to fulfill that implementation, as we committed to doing. We also committed to developing a Yukon-grown food policy aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products. We also committed to supporting the development of agriculture infrastructure that improves food security, facilitates access to markets and encourages local production of food. We committed to supporting the development of local markets for Yukon agriculture products through measures including supporting the operation of the Fireweed Community Market,

and we committed to working with Yukon farmers to conduct agricultural research.

In those areas — in those specific commitments to agricultural research — the Yukon government has paid significant attention to those areas and has supported agricultural research through programs including the Growing Forward program and Growing Forward 2 and continues to work in cooperation with Yukon farmers to conduct northern research, both on the farm and at the Yukon government's agricultural test plots, located at the forest research site.

In the area of supporting development for Yukon agriculture products through measures, including supporting the operation of the Fireweed Community Market, we have met our commitment to supporting this Fireweed Community Market through increased funding, through a funding agreement we approved last summer — which was the subject of the last press release that I issued as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, prior to the Cabinet shuffle in early August — wherein we provided a five-year funding agreement to the Fireweed Community Market worth a total of \$250,000 over that lifespan. Again, another commitment made; another commitment completed.

In the area of supporting the development of agriculture infrastructure that improves food security, facilitates access to market and encourages local production — the specific reference the Member for Klondike made to the mobile abattoir — as the member should recall, it was an initiative we took at the request of Yukon farmers and the Yukon Agricultural Association.

Additional specific actions include the step that has been taken to fulfill our commitment to provide an area for the future development of central agriculture infrastructure, which has resulted in the Yukon Agricultural Association having a lease for a 65-hectare parcel on the Mayo Road. That 65-hectare parcel has also seen investment in developing that, which has included fencing work that has been undertaken as well as planning work for the plan for development of infrastructure at that site, which government has resourced through funding under Growing Forward and Growing Forward 2.

With funding from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Yukon Agricultural Association is currently conducting strategic planning for industry and infrastructure development on this 65-hectare Mayo Road parcel. This then leaves the commitments that have not been completed and which are set to be done in the remaining portion of our term in office — the commitment that we made to developing a Yukon-grown food policy. Again, that specific commitment is to develop a Yukon-grown food policy and significantly increase the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products.

I should note that this is something that responds directly to feedback that we've heard from Yukon farmers — the idea that I first heard from constituents of mine. I am pleased that we were able to include it as a commitment in our 2011 election platform. The objective of that policy is to complement the Yukon agricultural policy, which was

developed following public consultation in 2006 and was implemented at that time. The objective of this responds to what we've heard from farmers that would allow us to build on the work that has already been done and develop a policy that is not aimed at the agriculture sector as a whole, but is an addition to that policy and is aimed at specifically targeting the potential of increasing locally grown vegetables, meat and food products through a policy tailored to those needs — and to unlocking the potential of that area.

There are a few other things I would like to highlight in this area. I would like to thank the member for bringing forward this suggestion. I think it merits consideration. There are number of possible ways to develop and support the Yukon agriculture sector and we welcome ideas wherever they come from.

Speaking to a few other areas where we have supported agriculture activities in partnership with other governments — they include working with First Nation governments — for example, in the riding of the Kluane, the community greenhouse of Haines Junction was supported by Yukon government in partnership with Champagne and Aishihik First Nation.

Another area that I would like to note is the *Multi-Year Development Plan* itself that I spoke to earlier which is the result of consultation with Yukon farmers and public. We have continued and will continue to support the development of Yukon's farming sector through these investments, both within Yukon government resources and the specific investments under the Growing Forward 2 program suite. That agreement was signed, as I noted, last year and provides Yukon with a significant increase in the annual funding available from the federal government under the under the Growing Forward 2 program compared to what we previously received under Growing Forward.

In fact the Yukon, along with the other two territories, saw the greatest increase in agriculture funding from the federal government under Growing Forward 2.

That program primarily continued the annual federal supports to agriculture across the country and made program changes that in certain areas — or provinces — actually resulted in reductions of specific programs and increases in others. But we were the net beneficiaries of a significant increase to our budget and we currently receive under the new agreement roughly \$880,000 annually in federal funding, which is, under the structure of that agreement — a 60:40 agreement — the federal government pays 60 percent of costs and Yukon government pays 40 percent of costs.

It's also important to note that the original agreement did not provide as much flexibility as this agreement has and the Yukon was successful in achieving and negotiating our key objectives in negotiating the Growing Forward 2 agreement, which included increased flexibility for spending the budget of this program and increased flexibility to use both federal and territorial funds to support the develop of infrastructure.

Agricultural infrastructure development is not as much of an issue in southern Canada because of the significantly

advanced states of those agriculture sectors compared to the Yukon sector.

But it's one of the things we heard from Yukon farmers and have responded to through specific targeted investments, including, for example, the mobile abattoir and no-till drill, and is an area that is dealing with both fixed infrastructure and mobile infrastructure — something that we recognize is necessary to support continued development of the Yukon agriculture sector because the size of our farms and the size of the markets leads to, in some cases, communal agriculture equipment or centralized infrastructure being a model that farmers are encouraging us to look toward and that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, another thing I should note with regard to the mobile abattoir and the no-till drill is that those are available on a rental or fee-for-service basis. That also was a key condition in signing the 30-year renewable lease with the Yukon Agricultural Association for the 65-hectare parcel on the Mayo Road, so one of the conditions is that services, made available once infrastructure is developed on that site, be available on an equitable basis to Yukon farmers on a fee-for-service basis.

The Yukon government, I would also note, recognized the potential that, with climate change, there will be some effects predicted in the Yukon, as with other areas of the country. While it is predicting in southern Canada to have some negative effects on growing, this also leads to some potential benefits for the Yukon as it's predicted that some of our growing conditions may improve. It also speaks to the importance of increasing our self-sufficiency in this area and increasing the local production of food because, as climate change has an effect within Canada and within the world economy, the effects of that are not completely clear. Having the increased self-sufficiency has strategic value as well as economic value.

Under the Growing Forward 2 program, we have already approved 78 projects to date, which total some \$914,260 in approved contributions. That includes the \$250,000 funding agreement for the Fireweed Community Market, which I referred earlier.

Another area that was funded under Growing Forward 1 and is continued under Growing Forward 2 has allowed for the reclamation of over 320 acres of farmland, prevention of wildlife damage through funding for fencing and guard dogs, development of environmental best practices that improve water access, quality and irrigation efficiency on farms, as well as cooperative equipment and the ability to sell meat into the local market through the purchase of the mobile abattoir and the associated funding for inspection of meat, which is a key factor in actually allowing meat to be sold into Yukon restaurants to have that inspection of the quality of that product.

The agriculture land program sale from 1982 to January 2012 saw 325 titles conveyed for a total of 12,984 hectares, or 32,069 acres. Current agreements for sale — as of my most recent information — that do not have title issued cover an area of 2,040 hectares, or 5,039 acres.

That important factor under the 2006 agriculture policy was changing the policy to fix something that had been put into place by the NDP when in power, which had made it a real impediment to developing Yukon's agriculture industry under the agriculture policy that they had put in place. It was the so-called two-for-one policy, which required farmers to spend twice the value of the land. Investments in developing that property had to equal double the value of what that land would be valued at in a market sale. That, of course, was a significant impediment to making it the most expensive type of land to acquire, so we were very happy to fix that NDP mistake and put in place, following public consultation, the current one-for-one policy that is under the 2006 agriculture policy.

That allows those who are successful in going through the application process and entering the agreement of sale stage to put in investments equal to the value of that land and achieve title to it. The intention of that approach, of course, is to ensure that development occurs, that the farmland is brought into production and that it meets the minimum standards required for a title to be issued. While it does allow them to discount some of the value of their primary residence if they're building a house on that land, only 10 percent of the cost of the house can be factored into that and the remainder must be in investments in developing the land, bringing it into production and bringing a crop into production.

The most recent numbers I have are: the total crop per seeded pasture of 8,327 acres with 10,447 acres reported as natural farmland for pasture, woodlands and wetlands, and it is according to census numbers. That included 4,755 acres of hay and 1,372 acres of oats, with the rest of the land being used for things including pasture, potatoes, vegetables, berries and nursery products.

Another thing that I should note in terms of the development of Yukon agriculture is that, while most of the available agriculture land that is open for application within the Whitehorse area — and by that I mean areas that are not under zoning plans put into either a protected open space designation or not open for development under the current restrictions in the hinterland zoning areas. Most of the available agricultural land within easy commuting distance has been developed at this time in point, but there remain a number of other areas within the Yukon that have good quality soil conditions that have potential for developing future Yukon agriculture areas.

As I noted, we have put unprecedented focus in recent years in responding to the potential within Yukon agriculture and supporting the development of this industry. As I mentioned, the industry had been, for quite some time, held back by the 1991 agriculture policy that had been put in place during the NDP era, and that two-for-one policy had a very negative effect on developing new property. It also was patently unfair in its treatment of new farmers compared to those who were already in the agriculture business, because it did allow farmers who already had a piece of land to develop subsequent pieces on a one-for-one basis, but it penalized new farmers for the fact that they did not already own a piece of

land and made it harder for young families to enter into the farming business through sweat equity and development of a piece of property.

The change to the one-for-one policy has been successful. I'm pleased we were able to respond to the interest of Yukoners and Yukon farmers and those interested in becoming Yukon farmers.

In light of that, I would note that we do appreciate the input coming from the Member for Klondike and his suggestion that we look at the 2013 legislation put in place in the Province of Ontario. That is something I know my colleagues and I are certainly happy to consider.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Mr. Cathers: However, in the interest of strengthening this motion and tying it in with our commitment made to develop a Yukon-grown food policy which, as I noted, remains the only outstanding commitment made to Yukon farmers that has not yet been fully implemented, I move

THAT Motion No. 616 be amended by:

(1) deleting the words "investigate the introduction of" and replacing them with: "; as part of implementing its commitment to develop a 'Yukon-grown food policy' aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products, investigate the merits of introducing"; and

(2) by deleting all words after the word "2013".

Speaker: The amendment is in order. Before reading it into the record, I just want to remind members that when they are speaking to the amendment, they are speaking about how the amendment strengthens or weakens the original motion and that you will have an opportunity to speak to the original motion or the motion as amended following the vote on the amendment.

It is has been moved by the Minister of Community Services:

THAT Motion No. 616 be amended by:

(1) deleting the words "investigate the introduction of" and replacing them with: "; as part of implementing its commitment to develop a 'Yukon-grown food policy' aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products, investigate the merits of introducing"; and

(2) by deleting all words after the word "2013".

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I should note that this is a friendly amendment.

The motion, as amended, would read:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to, as part of implementing its commitment to develop a "Yukon-grown food policy" aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat, and food products, investigate the merits of introducing a local food act modelled on legislation passed in Ontario in 2013.

I would specifically note that the latter parts of the member's motion are things that certainly are not intended to be seen as not open for consideration, but until we have had an opportunity to thoroughly look at Ontario's legislation and understand what it does, it would be premature, in our opinion, to start determining what the best way would be to enhance food production, enable it to be donated to food banks or other organizations. I would suggest personally that whether it is by means of a tax credit or some other incentive or mechanism, it should not simply be limited to food banks that consideration is given, but the value should also be recognized of other programs, such as the Breakfast for Learning program.

It should also be noted that there have been examples to date — such as the example last year of the Yukon Grain Farm partnered with a number of local schools through — my memory is failing me on the proper name of the program — but in working with students, they provided an opportunity where they would donate one box of food and sell the other at a very nominal cost. The proceeds from the students selling those products went to support the charity of choice in that case.

Other examples could potentially include other community groups. The Golden Age Society, for example, the Yukon Order of Pioneers or a number of our other NGOs — something that should be considered if there is attention being paid to encouraging farmers to donate excess food production and finding some way to create an incentive.

The other thing that I would point out to the Member for Klondike is that the Ontario situation is quite different in terms of what is available for excess food production. The Yukon's agriculture sector is quite small, and as a result there are not that many farmers who tend to have a lot of excess food production. In fact, I think that the market itself would certainly support further purchasing of Yukon-grown products. So the models that work in Ontario would not necessarily be the best ones here and in fact the impediments to those types of actions by farmers, if there is excess food, may not require the same solutions as in Ontario.

Promoting local food awareness is again something that has been done through initiatives, including funding the Fireweed Community Market, but whether the specific steps that should be taken — while we appreciate the Member for Klondike's suggestion and are certainly open to considering the provision in this Ontario legislation that he referenced in his motion, we're not at this point in time sure that the specific approach taken in Ontario would be the right one.

I know from my time as minister responsible for agriculture — during my period of time in that role — that there were a number of very innovative approaches being taken across the country by different governments. The discussion has in fact been going on at the federal, provincial, and territorial agriculture table of potential ways to encourage awareness of local products and local opportunities. When I hosted the federal, provincial and territorial agriculture ministers — pardon me, co-hosted it back in 2012 — here in Whitehorse as well at Caribou Crossing in Carcross, one of

the topics that had been put on the agenda by provincial agriculture ministers was to talk about some of the specific actions that different jurisdictions had been taking at a provincial level to promote local food awareness.

Again, what I want to note in this is that while we certainly are happy to look at the recent steps taken by Ontario last year, I personally know of a number of other provincial examples that I think we should look very carefully to and that some, such as ones done in some of the Atlantic provinces, might be a better model for the Yukon market than the Ontario approach.

It should be noted that the Ontario agriculture sector is one of the largest sectors of the Ontario economy. In fact, as members may recall, some people have said — slightly facetiously but not entirely so — that if it wasn't for the auto sector, Ontario would largely be an economy with agriculture being the biggest sector. Again, the realities in the Ontario context are very different.

It also should be noted that in specific sectors of the economy, one thing Yukon farmers do not have to deal with that farmers in a number of sectors of the agriculture economy have to deal with in provincial areas is the requirement to purchase quota, because of supply management in certain sectors of the economy. That is a significant cost, as well, to farmers in those jurisdictions.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the objective the member referred to of making more local food available in markets, restaurants, schools and institutions — while we would agree with those objectives, the Ontario model may not be the best way to do so. We looked at whether to add a number of additional items to that section in the member's overly specific reference to food banks, but felt that it was better to simplify the motion and commit to looking at the legislation passed in Ontario in 2013, but not limit the motion to looking at just the Ontario model. There are a number of other jurisdictions that I think have solutions and have recent initiatives taken that might be a better fit for the Yukon, in my personal opinion.

For member's reference, again stating the motion as it would read should this amendment pass, it would read:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, as part of implementing its commitment to the "Yukon-grown food policy" aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products, investigate the merits of introducing a local food act, modelled on legislation passed in Ontario in 2013.

The intention of that is so that we do take a good look at that piece of legislation suggested by the Member of Klondike, but not limit the focus of it to that.

As I noted in my earlier remarks, I am very pleased by the fact that in less than two years of this mandate, government has fulfilled almost all of its commitments that it made in our 2011 election platform and they can be checked off as completed. The one remaining area that requires action during the remaining portion of the mandate is our specific commitment made in our September 30, 2011 press release announcing our agricultural commitments to Yukoners, wherein we committed to develop the Yukon-grown food

policy aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products.

As part of the work that we committed to do, adding on looking at this specific suggestion raised by the Member for Klondike is certainly something that my colleagues and I can support doing. I hope the member will regard this amendment as friendly, and with that I will conclude my remarks.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I won't take very much time on the amendment, as I do have some remarks that I would like to make on the main motion, as amended, making the assumption that the amendment will indeed pass.

I think that what this amendment accomplishes is — it's not as restrictive as the original motion. It opens up other opportunities through the Yukon-grown food policy. As the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources mentioned, under his watch we were able to complete many of the mandate letter directions with respect to the agriculture industry that we promised in our 2011 election platform. The one outstanding mandate letter commitment is to develop a Yukon-grown food policy aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products.

I think that the motion as amended will allow us to accomplish that. When I get the opportunity to rise to speak to the motion as amended, I'll be able to highlight many of the things that have taken place over the past year with the Growing Forward 2 agreement and land development, as well as many of the Yukon Agriculture branch programs that support the industry that accomplish much of what Ontario's food act accomplishes.

With that, I will conclude my remarks on the amendment, but look forward to getting into more detail when we speak to the motion as amended.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I have a few short comments on the amendment as presented.

I just want to read it out again, Mr. Speaker: "as part of implementing its commitment to develop a Yukon-grown food policy aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meats and food products..."

I am in agreement with both members who have spoken to this amendment here — the fact that this does make it a little broader. But not having any idea of looking at the legislation that was passed in Ontario, I think it's pretty important that we take care and not limit anything and get a better look at this.

I'm looking forward to also speaking a little bit more on this in detail — on some of the great activities that happen in my riding when it comes to farming and agriculture. I'm looking forward to talking a little bit — when we talk about a Yukon-grown food policy, I also talk about the traditional foods that First Nations and non-First Nations use.

On that, Mr. Speaker, I will keep my comments short on it as amended, and I look forward to, hopefully, all of us supporting this amendment.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I would like to just start off by saying this is absolutely not a friendly amendment. It is a completely different motion based on a supposed policy of the Yukon Party government.

Again, this was supposed to be an opportunity for a non-partisan motion — an important one that was important to the local sector of the local economy, the food banks and farmers.

But, as we see, time and time again from this Yukon Party government, more important than the motion, and having a good debate on the motion, is to have their hands on it and create something else that clearly is not what was originally intended and basically negates anything in the way of tax credits, promoting local food awareness — all of the issues that were basically the guts, the bones, of the original amendment to basically reinstate one of their campaign promises.

But as the amendment states, as part of implementing its commitment to develop a Yukon-grown food policy — listeners to this debate today or readers in Hansard, please go and check the YTG website and do a search of Yukon-grown food policy. You might get a couple of Hansard references but there is no policy. So, what commitment? When they say “a commitment”, what commitment are they speaking of? If this was so important to this government, then they would have debated their own motion on this policy as opposed to trying to hijack mine.

This motion, unamended, was a great opportunity to work together and it was foiled by partisanship. A friendly amendment would not gut the intention of the original motion, and that is what the Yukon Party has done today and with that, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment as it is not a friendly amendment.

Mr. Tredger: Just a quick comment on the amendment — I too won't be supporting this. The Minister of Community Services talked about commitment.

He talked about accepting good ideas wherever they come from. He may have committed — the Yukon Party government likes to talk, but when it comes time to walk the talk, they make amendments. There is no commitment there. I won't be supporting this.

Ms. White: Just going through Hansard records — on Wednesday, May 2, 2012, the member from Teslin brought forward a motion, Motion No. 198. The government has just spoken about how important it is for them to develop this. This is what this motion read in 2012. It's a while ago, May 2, 2012 — almost two years.

Motion No. 198 reads:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Government to support development of the agriculture sector with actions including:

(1) working with farmers and industry associations including the Yukon Agricultural Association and the Growers of Organic Food Yukon to implement the Agriculture Multi-Year Development Plan;

(2) developing a “Yukon-Grown Food Policy” aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products;

(3) supporting the development of agriculture infrastructure that improves food security, facilitates access to market, and encourages local production of food;

(4) supporting the development of local markets for Yukon agriculture products through measures including supporting the operation of the Fireweed Community Market; and

(5) working with Yukon farmers to conduct agricultural research.

It's interesting that, once the Member for Klondike brought forward a strong motion to mirror legislation in another jurisdiction — the government has said this is of critical importance, yet this motion that was put on the paper two years ago was never brought to the floor.

We have debated other things that were budget items that were in the budget — we're debating now previous budgets — but this motion here that was so critically important, when they put it on the paper in 2012, they didn't bring it forward now until the Member for Klondike brought forward a motion encouraging agriculture in the Yukon.

If this was so important, I am surprised that we didn't debate Motion No. 198. With that — I am also disappointed by the amendment that was made.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to stand and speak in support of the amendment, but I should correct the Member for Takhini-Kopper King — correct the record for her. We did, in fact, debate that motion and we did, in fact, pass it unanimously. She voted in favour of it, actually. So for her to assert that we didn't debate it is a mistake and I'm sure she regrets making that mistake.

Nonetheless, it does speak to the need to develop a Yukon-grown food policy, which is what the amendment adds to this motion. The Yukon-grown food policy is an outstanding commitment. It has not been completed yet and that is something that Yukon government has acknowledged. It is something that we have heard the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, who is of course responsible for agriculture and the former minister acknowledge as well. It is our hope, of course, that with this motion and with some of the ideas put forward by all members in the House in debate today, we can move forward with the completion of a Yukon-grown food policy, following the possible passage of this motion.

I am happy to see the amendment come forward. I think it does strengthen the motion and I think it brings the motion to a form in which it can be supported by government and thus acted on. It will allow us to move forward and fulfill the commitment that we made to Yukoners in the 2011 election.

I would like to thank the Member for Lake Laberge for bringing forward the amendment. I do think it strengthens the motion and I'll be supporting the amendment.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

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: Disagree.

Ms. Stick: Disagree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Mr. Tredger: Disagree.

Mr. Barr: Disagree.

Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yeas, seven nays.

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

Amendment to Motion No. 616 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the motion, as amended?

Hon. Mr. Kent: It's my pleasure to rise to speak on the motion as amended here today. As minister responsible for agriculture, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for all of his work in meeting many of the commitments that our party made in the 2011 election to promote agriculture.

I'll just take a brief moment to read those commitments into the record here today. In our "Moving Forward Together" platform that we put to Yukon voters in 2011, under promoting agriculture, there were five specific bullets.

One was to work with farmers and industry associations, including the Yukon Agricultural Association and the Growers of Organic Food Yukon, to implement the Yukon agriculture multi-year development plan with the goal being to increase and sustain production, sales, and profitability in the Yukon agricultural and agri-food industry.

The second bullet in that platform commitment was the one that we've inserted into this motion with the amendment, which was to develop a Yukon-grown food policy aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products.

The third commitment was to support the development of agricultural infrastructure that improves food security, facilitates access to market and encourages local production of food.

The fourth was to support the development of local markets for Yukon agricultural products through measures including increasing the annual funding for the Fireweed Community Market.

The fifth was to work with Yukon farmers to conduct agricultural research.

Mr. Speaker, of those five commitments, as mentioned by previous speakers, all but one — the Yukon-grown food policy in the second bullet that I read — has been completed. I'm pleased to let members of the House know that all of these commitments are in the mandate letters that we as ministers have. Also, as part of the 2014-15 business plan, the final piece, which is to develop the Yukon-grown food policy aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products, will be part of that business plan for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. That allows us to meet our platform commitments to the agriculture industry and then move forward with other innovative opportunities to support agriculture.

Of course, when all parties put forward platforms to the Yukon electorate during election years, much of what is in those platforms guides us through our mandates, but we're also looking for new approaches and new aspects. There have been many examples by our government of adapting new opportunities and new aspects throughout our time in the first half of our five-year mandate.

I think back to my time as minister responsible for housing — the down payment assistance program, the *Housing Action Plan*, and the rural equity aspects through education that the current Minister of Education is moving on. Of course we look to other innovative approaches to meet the needs of the Yukon electorate, but we do remain committed to meeting those platform commitments that we made during the 2011 election.

My first opportunity to speak to the agriculture sector was at the annual banquet of the Yukon Agricultural Association that was at the High Country Inn in October of this year. At that, I had an opportunity to look back over the past year — although my time had only been a couple of months in that role by the time I went to that event. But there were a number of milestones that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Agriculture branch and the industries stakeholders achieved together, beginning with the launch of the Growing Forward 2 agreement.

Growing Forward 2 came into effect on April 1, 2013. The government was pleased to have been able to include in this agreement the input received from local agricultural groups. The new program allows for significant reinvestment in innovation and market development. It will enable farmers to become more competitive and all Yukoners to have a more secure food supply.

The intent of the Growing Forward program is to help create a profitable, sustainable, competitive and innovative

industry. It is designed to create an industry that is market responsive, an industry that anticipates and adapts to changing circumstances, and is a major contributor to the food security and well-being of Yukoners.

Growing Forward offers Yukon-specific programs that were developed in consultation with local agriculture producers and processors to suit the industry's specific development needs. At that time, a progress report on Growing Forward was provided and there was funding to give long-term stability to the Fireweed Community Market here in Whitehorse, as well as funding for community markets and gardens in Carcross, Carmacks, Dawson and Burwash Landing.

Funding from that program has also provided first-aid training to 4-H members, hired farm interns and was used to implement best management practices on farms identified through environmental farm planning. The Yukon Agricultural Association also received support to build access roads and to fence their leased land on the north Klondike Highway. The program has provided funding for workshops and training, including the seminars presented by the Yukon Agricultural Association and the Agriculture branch at the symposium that happened here in Whitehorse in late October.

Looking ahead, we believe these programs will position the Yukon agricultural industry for future growth and success. I'll speak briefly to the Yukon Agricultural Association's leased land. There was a long-term lease entered into with the Yukon government and the Yukon Agricultural Association for 65 hectares of agricultural land on the north Klondike Highway.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Nixon: If I could ask the indulgence of all members of the Legislative Assembly to welcome two friends, Rod Snow and Heather MacFadgen, to the gallery today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Kent: Over the past year, we have provided assistance to the YAA to hire a consultant to help develop both short-term and longer-term goals and project ideas for that site. This report has now been completed, which allows the YAA to advance its plans for centralized services and facilities for the Yukon farming community.

The infrastructure developed will help to address a variety of key objectives, including food security, and will lead to more simplified direct access to retail markets in the territory. Other activities identified for the site include packing, storage and value-added processing of meats, vegetables and other agricultural products, which will greatly assist the industry and, most importantly, provide a central location for the handling of locally grown food.

When it comes to local food and food security, the ability for the average consumer to go to their community market or drive out and meet a producer to get their meats and vegetables is important for consumers and producers alike. Locally grown food is a great way to provide fresh and nutritious meals to our families. As well, consumers are

showing increased interest in buying local, eating local, and supporting local agriculture.

With respect to that, I have family who own local restaurants and local retail outlets that supply fruits and vegetables as well as local meats and local products to consumers, and I know they're very proud of what they're able to contribute through the retail sector and the restaurant sector to support local agriculture.

Promoting local agriculture supports our economy by reducing the amount of money flowing out of Yukon for imported food. We have a long way to go. I believe the local agriculture industry represents a \$1-million commitment of approximately \$100 million spent annually by Yukon consumers, so there is a lot of room for this industry to grow, and we look forward to assisting it.

What this also does is lower the environmental costs associated with transporting food from outside and it fosters local food security. As most of our food is transported here, having locally grown products available brings an even greater level of self-reliance to the territory. Our government continues to work with farmers and industry associations to implement the Yukon agriculture multi-year development plan — which I mentioned in my opening remarks — which supports the infrastructure required to access markets and to encourage local food production.

When it comes to agricultural research, another initiative that continues to support the sector in the Yukon is our ongoing research program. Working with local producers and conducting trials at our research farm increases the knowledge base about crop varieties, input management and the economics of production. This is important information when producers are trying to make decisions that could affect the viability of a project and, ultimately, the bottom line.

We will continue to support this important agriculture-related research, recognizing that Yukon farmers have to be resourceful and adaptable to deal with the unique growing conditions of our territory.

When it comes to agricultural land — it's an issue that is very important to Yukon farmers, whether they are well-established or whether they are young farmers trying to get into the business with soil-based or non-soil-based agricultural activities.

We made a commitment to Yukoners to make land available to them, including agricultural land. Over the past 10 years, the Yukon government has entered into 124 agreements for the sale of agricultural lands through spot land applications and planned agricultural subdivisions.

New planned area initiatives are underway in Haines Junction, Sunnysdale and Marsh Lake as well as the McGowan lands in the Mount Lorne area. Combining the release of agricultural land with new rural land and country residential initiatives has allowed us to reduce the pressure for agricultural parcels and enabled us to get land into the hands of our commercial farmers.

Success in any land planning or land sale initiatives, of course, requires a cooperative and constructive working relationship with Yukon First Nations, so to that end we are

working very closely — government to government — to effectively plan and direct spot land agricultural applications for appropriate areas within their traditional territories. Our government continues to build positive relationships on many fronts in regard to land and we will maintain our efforts in getting agricultural land into the hands of farmers.

When it comes to the motion, as amended, I know the Member for Klondike was disappointed — given his remarks — feeling that this substantially changed his motion, but I think the important part that is included in the motion as amended is that we will continue to investigate the merits of introducing a local food act modelled on legislation passed in Ontario in 2013.

When it comes to Ontario's *Local Food Act* — again it was Bill No. 36, which fits into the ministry's broader local food strategy. The purposes of the act are to foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems in Ontario, help increase awareness of local food in Ontario and develop new markets for local food. This legislation was the first of its kind in Canada and it recognizes the ability of the agricultural industry to build the economy, create more jobs and expand the agri-food sector.

It is also our intention to continue to grow the ability for more local food to be available in our markets, our schools, our cafeterias, our grocery stores and restaurants throughout the territory. That is what the intent of the act in Ontario is. I think it's important for me to highlight some of the Yukon Agriculture branch programs that support the industry and accomplish much of what Ontario's food act accomplishes.

Just to read a number of those into the record: the release of agricultural land by way of spot land sales for farming and grazing; planned agricultural land sales through multi-lot subdivisions and infill projects; extension services that provide professional education and technical services to farmers; research and demonstration projects designed to improve the economic delivery of northern agriculture; meat inspection services, including operation and maintenance of the mobile abattoir and animal health and testing programs; and delivery of the Canada-Yukon Growing Forward 2 policy agreement that will provide up to \$1.48 million per year on a 60:40 federal-territorial cost-shared basis to deliver programs that target three strategic outcomes. The first is innovation; the second is competitiveness and market development; and the third is adaptability and sustainability.

Key outcomes of government support provided through Growing Forward 2 — many of which I have mentioned, but some are worth mentioning again — are the operation and maintenance of the mobile abattoir and the meat inspection service provisions to allow for retail market access for livestock producers, and support for the Fireweed Community Market here in Whitehorse. I know members from all sides of the House have attended that market on Thursdays when it's open.

I should congratulate again the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for his announcement of annual support for the Fireweed Community Market, as well as support for community gardens and greenhouse projects in

Old Crow, Carcross, Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Dawson and Haines Junction.

There is much to speak of when it comes to improving our local market share with respect to the agricultural industry. I think there are things from the Ontario legislation that we could possibly look at. I think when we see success it involves all of our stakeholders no matter what the program is. I would be interested in engaging with the Yukon Agricultural Association, the Yukon Game Growers Association and GOOFY — Growers of Organic Food Yukon. I've had a number of interactions with them as well as interactions with our agriculture industry advisory committee which includes representatives from all of those aforementioned industry associations.

When we work together, we're able to move forward together and we're able to identify opportunities that exist. In speaking to the motion as amended, I don't believe that — perhaps when the Member for Klondike is able to take another read of the motion as amended — it still allows us to investigate the merits of introducing a local food act, but also recognizes the importance of the Government of Yukon meeting its final platform commitment with respect to agriculture development, which is to develop a Yukon-grown food policy.

With that, I'll conclude my remarks. I look forward to hearing from others on what is an extremely important motion that's before the House today.

I congratulate members of the House for passing the motion back in 2012 unanimously, which spoke to similar aspects. I look forward to meeting that final commitment in my mandate letter with respect to agricultural development in this year and again moving forward and looking at other opportunities that the agriculture industry will be able to bring forward as positive ideas to make sure that we can increase that one-percent share of the local food's economy that the local producers have. The agricultural industry has room for an awful lot of growth.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to hearing from other members.

Ms. McLeod: My thanks to the Member for Klondike for bringing this motion forward for discussion. I'm pleased to rise to discuss this motion as amended by the Minister of Community Services. This government has done a lot to encourage local food production. I recall that funding was provided to the Liard First Nation for the development and creation of a community garden. That project, of course, did not go forward for a variety of local reasons, but it's just one example of how the Yukon government is willing to assist with community efforts.

I appreciate the challenge of growing in a zone 0 growing climate. Much effort is made to extend the growing season through the use of greenhouses and row covers and it's a challenge to be a grower in the Yukon.

I would be curious to find out how much excess food is grown by farmers and would be available for donation — like the previous speaker, I think it might not be a great deal.

I can support the motion as it now reads after amendment because it is now far less prescriptive and obviously allows for the possible inclusion of any, or all, of the specific items that were listed by the Member for Klondike.

I just want to say that I certainly appreciate the value of home-grown vegetables, and the freshness and flavour just can't be compared to any of the freshest produce that we can buy in the supermarket. I certainly see a lot of room for educating Yukon citizens that they don't need to be large-scale farmers to do food production and look after some of their own needs.

Mr. Hassard: It is a pleasure to rise and speak today on behalf of the motion as amended. If we are to know where we are headed going into the future, one only needs to look back at our past. Yukon agriculture came from humble beginnings in the mid-1800s when the Hudson's Bay Company traders grew the earliest Yukon agricultural crops as they tried to augment their insufficient supplies at the time.

This then rose to peak production during the Klondike Gold Rush, when farmers prospered with a booming population and limited transportation of goods into the territory by storing and marketing their produce through the late fall and winter.

Until the mid-1950s, farms around Dawson City, Mayo and along the Yukon River produced healthy crops of vegetables and hay, delivered economically by a fleet of sternwheelers.

Today, according to the Yukon Agricultural Association, there are approximately 160 farms in operation throughout the territory. Add to this the community gardens and greenhouses in the communities, such as Dawson City, Haines Junction, Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Whitehorse and Teslin, with multiple community gardens throughout the city. I would be remiss if I did not mention my own home town of Teslin, where the First Nation youth engaged in a community food security project that included interviews with elders, Teslin Tlingit citizens, outfitters and youth alike.

Farming north of 60 represents special farming opportunities and obstacles. Although southern imports may be available at a lower cost, several farms locally raise pesticide-free and free-range foods for prices lower than imported organic food. The report, *Strengthening Yukon Local Food*, completed in 2010, was prepared by the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal with funding from the community development fund and speaks to the importance of decreasing our reliance on food that is transported from southern jurisdictions and farms thousands of kilometres away.

The term used in the report describes this as an oil-addicted food supply. With the price of gas continuing to increase and with only one road in and out, there are serious concerns about the security of Yukon's food supply on multiple levels.

There are certainly examples from the past of empty shelves at grocery stores throughout the Yukon due to a

transport truck breaking down or a creek washing a culvert out — as we've seen down at Rancheria.

There is a strong, intelligent and progressive agricultural community that has been working tirelessly on the strategic vision that will require some action on the part of this government. In fact, there are proactive consumers who are making a conscious choice to buy locally grown foods. Many are working to build on partnerships that are creating farmers markets, buying clubs, cooperatives and community gardens or greenhouses. We can support this momentum in building a sustainable Yukon food system. Put this all into perspective — the total sales of Yukon produce in 2006 was \$4.19 million while the cost of production was \$4.75 million. Essentially we have producers who are subsidizing consumers.

It's time to turn the corner and support the Yukon Agricultural Association and the Growers of Organic Food Yukon in the development of a multi-year development plan as well as a grown-in-the-Yukon brand.

Some of the things that the Yukon government has done are through the Growing Forward 2 agriculture program funding and supporting local food awareness and industry development. Growing Forward 2 provides approximately \$1.5 million a year on a 60-percent federal/40-percent territorial cost-shared basis to develop agriculture in the Yukon between now and 2018.

As well, to promote the donation of excess foods to food banks, the Agriculture branch has for the past three years donated all food harvested from trials at its agricultural research and demonstration sites to the local food bank right here in Whitehorse.

Through the Growing Forward 2 program, we've entered into a five-year funding agreement with the Fireweed Community Market Society to provide facilities and services to farmers. Funding provided to support the market is twice what it was under the previous Growing Forward agreement. It's now \$50,000 per year for five years, so a total of \$250,000. As well, we have provided funding to several community garden and greenhouse projects in communities outside of Whitehorse to develop skills and awareness that increase local food security. We've provided funding for an agriculture education program called Kids on the Farm. This is a pilot program to facilitate school field trips to local farms by providing resources to connect teachers with farmers, and resources to help farmers lead high-quality school tours.

On the topic of local food week — Yukon has its own annual celebration of local farming, ranching and food production. Each year during the first week of November, the Agriculture branch with the Yukon Agricultural Association host the annual North of 60 Agriculture Conference and Banquet.

This conference includes two days of seminars for agricultural producers, processors, stakeholders and all interested members of the public on topics of interest regarding the development of the agricultural industry in the Yukon. The conference wraps up with the agricultural banquet, which is a celebration of local food. The banquet's chefs source locally raised and grown foods, recognizing the

farms that prepare the products and then prepare a feast that features Yukon farm products.

As well, the Yukon Farmer or Farm Family of the Year award is presented in recognition of the achievement in Yukon agriculture during the past year. Nominations come from their peers in the industry. Each nominee is publicly recognized and celebrated at the banquet. The banquet is widely attended by the industry and supporters of agriculture in the Yukon.

The Agriculture branch programs that support this industry do much of what Ontario's food act accomplishes — the release of agricultural land by the way of spot land sales for farming and livestock grazing, planned agricultural land sales through multi-lot subdivisions and infill projects, extension services that provide professional education and technical services to farmers and research and demonstration projects designed to improve the economic delivery of northern agriculture.

As well, the meat inspection services, including the operation and maintenance of the mobile abattoir, animal health and testing programs and delivery of the Yukon Growing Forward 2 policy agreement will, as I mentioned, provide \$1.5 million.

Key outcomes of government support through this Growing Forward 2 include: the operation and maintenance of the mobile abattoir, as I mentioned; reclamation of 290 acres of farmland; and wildlife damage prevention through the funding for fencing and/or guardian dogs. We'll see environmental best management practices that improve water access, quality and irrigation efficiency on farms, support for the Fireweed Community Market in Whitehorse, support for community gardens and greenhouse projects in Old Crow, Carcross, Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Dawson City and Haines Junction, as well as cooperative equipment and storage facilities that have reduced input costs.

The current agricultural land initiatives include, in the Hamlet of Ibx Valley, planned land sales include a 519-acre parcel of land at kilometre 1462 of the north Alaska Highway, as well as two small soil-based lots to be made available this year. In the Hamlet of Mount Lorne, four to 10 non-soil-based lots are planned for the McGowan lands in the Golden Horn planning area and one non-soil based lot planned on Gentian Lane.

Also in communities, planned agricultural lots will be offered for sale in Upper Liard, as the demand offers. Work on directed spot land application areas are taking place in both the Na Cho Nyäk Dun and Selkirk traditional territories to meet anticipated future demand with the cooperation of the local First Nations.

Since 2002, approximately 90 spot agricultural applications have been approved. In the summary of land sales from 1982 to January 1 of this year, we've seen sold and titled lands equally — 33,505 acres. There are currently 60 agreements for sale on agricultural land. Land sales are dominantly in the Whitehorse area, with over 70 percent of the agricultural lands within 60 kilometres of the City of Whitehorse.

I think it's pretty safe to say that this is an important subject to this government and we do take it seriously. With the motion as amended, I think it will be good to see this go ahead. Hopefully we get unanimous consent.

In closing, I would just like to re-read this excerpt from the Dawson *Daily News* from July 21, 1909, since the Member for Takhini-Kopper King seems to have forgotten.

It reads: "Careful and systematic farming operations, with due regard to the peculiarities of the climate, would abolish the importation into the Yukon of many of the agricultural products required by the people of Dawson City and surrounding district. If hay, oats, potatoes, et cetera, were grown in such quantities as would supply the local market, the price would be much less than is paid at the present time for imported products, the transportation rates would be avoided and the consumer would derive the benefit. Instead of the people of the Yukon paying large sums outside of the Territory for these products, the agriculturists in the Yukon would transact the business, and the money would be retained in the Territory, and probably invested in such a way as would aid in its future development."

As I said before, it is very interesting to see that things have not changed that much in some 100 years.

Mr. Elias: It is a pleasure to rise today to speak in support of the motion as amended. I want to thank the Minister of Community Services for bringing this amendment forward. I think in the development of a Yukon-grown food policy it's important to recognize some of the global perspectives, regional issues and local issues as well in the formulation of this policy. One of things that catch me with regard to this motion is the issue around food security. The World Health Organization speaks to the value of agriculture and food security.

I want to read into the record a little bit about what they had to say, and I quote: "The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing 'when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life'. Commonly, the concept of food security is defined as including both physical and economic access to food that meets people's dietary needs as well as their food preferences. In many countries, health problems related to dietary excess are an ever-increasing threat."

"Food security is built on three pillars: food availability, sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis; food access, having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet; food use, appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care, as well as adequate water and sanitation.

"Food security is a complex sustainable development issue, linked to health through malnutrition, but also to sustainable economic development, environment, and trade. There is a great deal of debate around food security with some arguing that there is enough food in the world to feed everyone adequately, the problem is distribution; future food needs can — or cannot — be met by current levels of production; national food security is paramount, or no longer

necessary because of global trade; and globalization may — or may not — lead to the persistence of food insecurity and poverty in rural communities.”

That’s a little bit of what the World Health Organization had to say with regard to food security and its relationship to agriculture.

On a regional scale, I think agriculture has grown over the last five to 10 years in our territory, and it’s becoming a substantial financial engine for our territory. I believe, from the research that I could come up with, that in 2006 we had approximately 138 farms in production in the territory — and there are various mosaics of them in the Yukon — and now we have approximately 160, so the agriculture industry is growing. If you’re looking at the bedding plant industry here and in our communities as they are growing — whether it’s in Watson Lake, Dawson, Whitehorse, Mayo or Old Crow for that matter.

In my home community, we did receive funding from the territory government a couple of years ago to develop a raised-bed community garden, on a volunteer basis, and it’s quite interesting to see how that community garden has flourished over the last couple of years. It’s very well-used during the short growing season that we do have in Old Crow.

I think that greenhouse production in our communities is also growing and it’s becoming stronger. Of course, every weekend during the summer you only have to go down to the waterfront and participate in the farmer’s market to see the wonderful variety of vegetables that are grown in the summertime in our territory. With the quality of products come the sales that we want to see out there in our community to make our community more self-sustainable in this day and age.

Currently the local agriculture industry supplies only a very small percentage of the local food consumed in the territory. There is considerable opportunity for growth in the industry to supply and meet more of our food needs.

I think that the vision for Yukon agriculture is to significantly increase production of healthy, locally grown food for local consumption. To support this, the Yukon government has given priority to improving utilization of agricultural lands, expanding the agriculture land base in a carefully planned manner and the development of programs and infrastructure support that facilitates the growth of an economically viable and environmentally sustainable industry.

On the topic of food security — in my home community of Old Crow, I think it’s well-known that on April 1, 2011, when the Nutrition North Canada program was changed from a transportation subsidy to a retail subsidy, it really affected our community of Old Crow. Just to give a quick example about the availability of food and the cost of food — I actually did this myself. I actually purchased 50 kilograms of fruit, vegetables, dairy products and meat and shipped it to Old Crow when the Nutrition North Canada program came into effect. The cost of that box of food was \$96 under the Nutrition North Canada program. Then I calculated it with the old food mail program and the cost was \$40.75.

In speaking with the Auditor General’s office last week and this week, they’re actually going to audit the Nutrition North Canada program. They’re travelling to Old Crow next week and they’re going to have a community meeting and speak with the various stakeholders in Old Crow. I’ve been giving them information with regard to the history and the debate that has happened in this House — in terms of all of us during this legislative sitting and the previous Yukon Party government as well — passing several unanimous motions, sending a united message from all of the MLAs to Canada, suggesting solutions to the availability, accessibility and affordability of food in my home riding.

It’s much appreciated, by the way.

Our community has also advocated for joint letters that were signed by me, Premier Fentie at the time, and Chief Linklater to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, expressing our concern and suggesting some possible solutions. I was invited to travel to Ottawa to submit testimony to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development about the effects of the Nutrition North Canada program on the citizens within my riding, my constituents. Speaking with the Nutrition North Canada advisory board — at that time, Elizabeth Copeland — they expressed interest in actually holding a meeting in Old Crow and hearing from the citizens of Old Crow — our community of Old Crow is the only community that — “benefits” is not the right word, but — has access to the Nutrition North Canada program.

In addressing the issue of the accessibility and affordability of food in the community of Old Crow, what we have done now — and it was a pleasure to travel to Old Crow with the Minister of Education the other day to witness the first pilings being drilled into the ground to build an Arctic co-op, where our citizens of Old Crow have the opportunity to have as much control as possible over the food in Old Crow. Under that agreement, under the principles of the cooperative that we partnered with, is the ability to purchase and sell Yukon-grown food. We seized control of the opportunity and that is one of the solutions that our community is working toward — increasing the level of food security in north Yukon and to the citizens.

Whether non-food items or nutritious perishable food, non-perishable food or non-food items and essential non-food items, I am just so proud of my constituents in Old Crow for seeking out and building a building and doing all the planning and bringing it in on the winter road, and just taking control over the food security issue in Old Crow.

I also want to thank this Yukon Party government for participating in that effort and helping, through financial allocations, to make these types of initiatives successful in our community of Old Crow.

I think this motion as amended really doesn’t deviate that much from the original motion, in my mind, from the Member for Klondike. I think it accomplishes the intent of the original motion. Just looking at some of the quick facts from Ontario, it seems to me that their piece of legislation for locally purchased food and grown foods into stores and restaurants

and schools seems to be moving along quite well and is benefiting hundreds of thousands of their citizens and it contributes approximately \$34 billion to the Ontario economy right now.

I think with that I will sit down and let other members contribute to the debate today. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to the motion as amended put forward by the Member for Lake Laberge.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: This motion hits home for me. Sometimes I take it for granted that I grew up on a large dairy farm in the Niagara region in Ontario. In fact, we had about 800 acres in the early 1970s and milked about 120 head of cattle — I think we had maybe 200 head of cattle at any given time and three families running the farm — my dad and his two brothers.

In the early 1980s, they split their partnership up, that farm was sold off and we moved up into the Walkerton/Hanover area just south of Owen Sound in Ontario. But I remember growing up as a child — and sometimes I take it for granted — we had so many opportunities. I think just going to school in the morning — we had about a half a mile to walk to school — we had a graperly on the way and we would grab a bunch of grapes right off the vine and that would be our snack at school. I don't want to take it for granted, but they were some very memorable times.

In the early 1980s — as I said — we moved up to the Hanover/Walkerton area where we downsized to a 200-acre dairy farm and milked approximately 40 head of cattle. I think we had maybe 80 to 100 head in total, including calves. We had hay, mixed grain and soy beans that were grown on the land. I've seen the evolution of farming over the last few years, but the memories of growing up as a child will stay with me forever.

Speaking to the motion as amended, locally grown and raised food is something that I truly believe that every Yukoner can appreciate. Looking back over the past number of years, we've had a number of milestones that we've achieved together, beginning with the launch of the Growing Forward 2 agreement. That agreement came into effect on April 1st of last year. The new program allows for significant reinvestment in innovation and marketing development. It will enable Yukon farmers to become more competitive and all Yukoners to have a more secure food supply.

Growing Forward offers Yukon-specific programs that were developed in consultation with local agricultural producers and processors to suit our industry's specific development needs. I should note that Growing Forward has provided funding to give long-term sustainability to the Fireweed Community Market here in Whitehorse and funding for community markets and gardens in Carcross, Carmacks, Dawson and Burwash Landing.

Mr. Speaker, funding from this program has also provided first-aid training to 4-H members. It has hired farm interns and it was used to implement best management practices on farms identified through environmental farm planning. Speaking to 4-H, I know that growing up on the

farm, I had the opportunity to be in 4-H for about five years. That was the dairy club in our local area. We showed registered Holsteins, heifers from the ages of anywhere from probably six or eight months to a year and a half in summer festivals and fall festivals throughout Ontario, including London, Ontario, and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto at the exhibition grounds. Looking back, I think my dad always had a real knack at matching a good pedigree with a heifer and a bull and producing some super offspring — I guess if you'd call them that.

I can recall showing a calf that was probably a year old at the London fair in Ontario and won first place. As I was taking the calf back to the stall where the cows were kept, a gentleman followed me back and met up with my dad at the stall and we were talking about the cow. That guy ended up purchasing my 4-H calf for \$30,000.

The ability for the average consumer to go to their community market or drive out and meet a producer to get their meat and vegetables is important for consumers, and it is important for producers. Locally grown food is a great way to provide fresh and nutritious meals to our families and consumers and there is increased interests shown in buying local, eating local and supporting local agriculture.

Promoting local agriculture supports Yukon's economy by reducing the amount of money flowing out of Yukon for imported food. It also lowers the environmental costs associated with transporting food from outside and fosters local food security. Our government continues to work with farmers and industry associations to implement the *Multi-Year Development Plan for Yukon Agriculture and Agri-Food*, which supports the infrastructure required to access markets and to encourage local food production.

We know that land is a very important issue to Yukon farmers. This government has made a commitment to Yukoners to make land available, which includes agricultural land. Over the past 10 years, the Yukon government has entered into over 120 agreements for the sale of agriculture lands through spot-land applications and planned agricultural subdivisions. In fact, new planned area initiatives are underway in Haines Junction, Sunnyside, Ixby and Marsh Lake.

Our government continues to build positive relationships on many fronts with regard to land and we will maintain our efforts in getting agricultural land into the hands of farmers. I commend the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for the amount of work he has done in this area.

As the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has already stated in the House, we've done a lot in Yukon through the Growing Forward program. We've entered into a five-year funding agreement with the Fireweed Community Market Society. We have provided funding to several community garden and greenhouse projects in communities outside of Whitehorse. We've provided funding for an agriculture education project, called "Kids on the Farm." We've provided a mobile abattoir, operation and maintenance services and territorial meat inspection services. I should also note that all the produce harvested from trials at agricultural

research and demonstration sites is donated to the local food bank — so thanks to them for the work they've been doing there.

In closing, promoting local agriculture by supporting initiatives like the Fireweed market, for example, is an important part of our efforts to increase local production of food and supports continued growth in this sector and the Yukon economy. I appreciate the motion being brought forward by the Member for Klondike and I think our friendly amendment, as the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has said, seems to suit nicely with the motion.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I wanted to rise and speak in support of this motion and add a few brief aspects that haven't been touched on already. The first thing I wanted to mention was that, in order to have sustainable, locally grown, industry-producing meat products, we need to ensure that they are healthy and safe for the consumers.

In that aspect, the Department of Environment plays a fairly important role. Over the last few years, we have developed the Animal Health unit, which provides the oversight for the review of locally produced livestock and meat products —

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Riverdale South, on a point of order.

Ms. Stick: I would just like to bring attention to Standing Order 6(7): "Members shall take care not to pass between a member who is speaking and the Speaker ..."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As I was saying, one aspect of the motion that I think hasn't been touched on yet was, of course, the need for the attention to the fact that in order for locally grown meat and meat products to be available to Yukon consumers, they have to be safe to consume. To that end, we have taken a number of measures over the last few years to ensure that that is the case.

As members will recall, last year we passed an amended *Animal Health Act*, which contemplated ensuring the sustained health of both livestock and wildlife populations in the Yukon.

Prior to the passage of that act and the creation of the Animal Health unit and staffing and resourcing of that unit, Yukon government didn't have the tools that it needed to respond to any potential animal health outbreak that might occur, so that was an important step forward, I think — for the government to be able to say to citizens that we know and we have the tools to respond if an outbreak does occur.

I wanted to note, of course, that the *Animal Health Act* and the subsequent creation of the chief veterinary officer and the Animal Health unit were important.

Ensuring that the health impacts of any potential outbreak are contained is something that's important. That's why that new act creates a number of tools, including a quarantine, a

surveillance and a control order, for the government to have should they need to employ those tools.

The amended act also created an expanded scope for the chief veterinary officer to provide some expertise around the animal health issues with regard to the livestock industry and the meat industry. It's important to note that, as I said before, those tools didn't exist before. Having those tools at our disposal now are important, and I think that as we move to develop the Animal Health unit by further staffing it, resourcing it and giving it the tools it needs, we can assure Yukoners that our meat products here in the territory are safe and that, if anything does happen, we can respond to them.

The other aspect that I want to touch on very briefly is the issue of game farming in general. Throughout the history of Yukon, we've had a number of experiences with game farming. Those changed a few years ago, with a moratorium on game-farm imports — but one of the things I wanted to mention was that later this week I'll be meeting with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

We'll be discussing the development of an import protocol for bison to the territory. The reason we are doing that is because we want to have the chief veterinary officer create an import protocol to allow the game farmers to import bison to the territory to provide bison as a locally developed meat source for Yukoners.

We've heard from farmers, we've heard from consumers and we've heard from groups that having locally available meat products is very important. I think this motion supports that action that we'll be taking in the near future the development of that protocol.

Through a number of the measures that you've heard today — and the ones that I've just mentioned — I think we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that Yukon has locally grown meat products available. We can tell Yukon citizens with confidence that those products are safe and that the government regulates these industries and is aware of what's going on with them to provide them with the confidence to purchase them.

I would conclude by commending the motion to the House. I did have a number of other topics that I wanted to mention, but I know that members are interested in bringing this to a vote quickly, so I will abstain from commenting more on the agricultural research components, which I think Yukon really leads the way on. You can look at things like biochar and some of the work done at the agricultural research farm to see some of that, but I won't get into that despite my intention to earlier.

I would like to commend this motion to the House and thank the Member for Klondike for bringing it forward and for the Member for Lake Laberge for providing the amendment, which strengthened the motion.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: It is a pleasure to rise. I was looking forward to saying a few short words. I think my fellow colleagues have said probably just about everything that I wanted to concur on.

I wanted to talk a little bit about some things in my riding that I wanted to highlight. The last time we spoke to the motion in the House that the member from across the way brought up, we talked about farming and we talked about Kluane and the old research centre having the least number of frost-free days in the Yukon for the growing season. Since then, we've seen a great increase in farming in our neck of the woods. Actually, one of the local farmers, Mr. Rod Tait — I would like to get him on Hansard — decided to stay after the experimental farm and he's one the guys who pushed for many years with farming. Maybe a lot of Yukoners will remember his Yukon gold potatoes and the hay he used to grow. I had the pleasure many times in the fall working with Mr. Tait, loading hay up and selling it around the Yukon and down into Haines, Alaska.

One of the other things I wanted to speak to a little bit is the fact that — with the motion that was put forward by the Member for Klondike and then the amendment by the Minister of Community Services — I believe that one of the things that is quite important is that when we talk about locally grown food — I like to think of something that doesn't get brought up a lot, which is our wild game, which is near and dear to my heart and near and dear to many Yukoners — whether it be moose, whether it be caribou, whether it be sheep and some of the animals that we eat that are local — the 100-mile diet that you hear about, Mr. Speaker.

In my riding of Kluane, there are not many people who don't have moose, sheep, caribou or bison in their deep freeze at all times. It is a traditional food, but it also a locally grown food that mother nature has for us.

We have seen a big increase — if you go to www.yukonfood.com, there are a lot of different sites that you can go to. There is Yukon Farm Products, there is the Food Systems Project, there is Food for Learning, there are the Downtown Urban Gardens, and there are many other things on there. Some of my fellow colleagues have spoken about the Fireweed Community Market. In my riding of Kluane, we have quite an active community garden on Thursdays that has popped up. Last year at our community garden, locally grown corn from a resident that lives down the Marshall Creek Road was actually grown outside from start to finish and on the cob — it was very delicious.

On that note, with our community garden out there and this motion as it is today — with the Yukon-grown food policy that we are committed to working on — it works well with the fact that we need infrastructure as well so that we can get this locally grown food out on the market. But not just out on the market for Yukoners for the busy summer season, which the Minister of Tourism and Culture promotes so well, but also so tourists have opportunities to access some of this locally grown food.

We have the beautiful Da Ku Cultural Centre out in Haines Junction, in a great partnership with this government, Parks Canada and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

Right beside it we have rodeo grounds that I'm working with the municipality on to develop. We're going to have a lot of tourists and, hopefully in the future we'll start seeing more

tour buses come. For them to have that opportunity within a close walking distance — as we know, a lot of the tourists who come to the Yukon are retired seniors. They're not big into the long hikes and walks, but having an opportunity to have a garden or a market close to our cultural centre will aid in getting some of the locally grown food products out.

A little history: my family from my biological father's side farmed in Manitoba. They still do. They own sections and sections of land. My biological father was a cattle farmer, so I have a lot of interest in farming. I spent a lot of time on the farm and I do look forward to us moving forward with this motion.

I would like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing this motion back for debate. I think we proposed a friendly amendment. Being that I was a little concerned about Ontario's new legislation, though not having a good working knowledge of it — bringing this forward and having a discussion, as I did last night with a constituent from the Member for Lake Laberge's riding — we talked about the *Farmers' Almanac* and how things are going to be on the farm this year with growing products.

It's good we have this on the docket and we get to debate this in the Legislative Assembly today. I definitely do support this motion as amended and I look forward to more comments in the House.

Mr. Tredger: I rise in the House today to speak on the Member for Klondike's Motion No. 616, as amended, urging the Government of Yukon to investigate the benefits of introducing a local food act in this House that would be modelled on the legislation passed in Ontario in 2013.

We have an opportunity here in Yukon to build a growing, sustainable and viable local food industry; one that nourishes and sustains our citizens and provides jobs and economic opportunities, diversifying our economy.

Last summer I met people in farmers markets across the Yukon in Faro, Carmacks, Dawson City, the Stewart Valley market in Mayo and here in Whitehorse at the Fireweed Market. Incidentally, I and many residents are pleased to see that the Fireweed market has been so successful that it will be operating on Saturdays in addition to the usual Thursday evening market. The success of these markets is an indication of the growing interest of local food here. I've had the opportunity to visit with farmers and gardeners in all areas of the Yukon — in their homes, in their fields and in their gardens. Over cups of tea and coffee I've listen to their dreams and heard their concerns.

Without a doubt, growers and consumers are enthusiastic about local food. They are alive with possibilities of Yukon food grown in the Yukon, a brand to trust and enjoy. In the past, agriculture and wild harvesting sustained Yukoners. Farms in central Yukon — in Mayo, in Pelly, in Dawson and in our river valleys — fed workers at Yukon mines and fed many people in our communities. Of course, local food has sustained the First Nations of this territory for millennia and continues to play an important economic, social and cultural part in rural Yukon communities.

Mr. Speaker, we can become much more self-sufficient. Our agricultural sector is growing and we can help it flourish by strengthening cooperation between all those involved in local food production in places in the central Yukon River valley, river valleys like the Mayo district Stewart River and the Pelly River valley.

There is a burgeoning organic food producers group — GOOFY. They have had workshops. They've engaged people at the markets. They've shared their knowledge and they've shared their expertise. It can be done with support to open up land and make it available. With improvements to help our rural farmers access markets, central Yukon has the potential to become the food basket of the Yukon. A key goal would be to support local food production and to support Yukon farmers and gardeners.

This motion is a good start to begin achieving a movement toward a thriving local food economy in the Yukon. There are many reasons to support a reliable, sustainable and strong local food economy — an agricultural land base.

Local food has the potential to become a thriving and sustainable industry and presents many new opportunities. One of the key factors for developing a local food economy is food security. Local food production and its consumption contribute to increased food security. We only need to remember recent events that closed our main highway to the south to realize how dependent we are on distant food sources.

Our major grocery stores greeted their customers with empty shelves after three short days.

Currently the average meal travels 1,200 kilometres from the farm to the plate. Food that is grown closer to home will therefore have fewer transportation emissions associated with it. It will also be fresher and, as I mentioned earlier, will support local farmers in their endeavours. It will create an economy and it will encourage innovation.

As the distance food travels decreases, so does the need for processing and refrigeration to reduce spoilage. While food miles — the distance food is transported from the time of its production until it reaches the consumer — make up a relatively small percentage of the overall carbon footprint of food, local food production means we have greater control over the way our food is produced. That's increasingly important to the effort to reduce the carbon footprint of the food we eat.

It also allows us to become innovators. As we learn to work our land and our farms and our gardens, as we adjust to changes in the climate, Yukoners have shown an ability to develop new crops and crops that are new to the area.

I must commend the Agriculture branch for the work that they have done in bringing new crops to the area. I've read information on the haskap berries and the goji berries and other new crops that they are promoting. Those types of innovations allow our farmers to occupy niche markets and also to meet the challenges of a changing climate in order to ensure that local people have access.

While food miles — the distance the food is transported from the time of its production until it reaches the consumer

— make up a relatively small percentage of the overall carbon footprint of food, local food production means we have greater control over the way our food is produced. That — as I mentioned — is becoming increasingly important to the effort to reduce the carbon footprint of the food we eat.

The other aspect to reducing the carbon footprint is the encouragement of local, fresh and organic produce. Studies have shown that organically produced foods are much more sustainable and have a much higher reduction in our carbon footprint. For the 21st century, encouraging local, organic foods makes a lot of sense. It reduces our dependency on the length and the distance foods travel and must be transported supporting the carbon industry.

I was a little concerned to see that the part of the motion referring to farmers donating excess food production to food banks by way of tax credits was removed. Food banks across Canada have welcomed Ontario's new tax credit for farmers who donate to food banks. Food banks give strong support to a growing movement to combine local food production and food security. This was one of the jewels of Ontario's food act.

The 2013 *Local Food Act* enshrines into law a new tax credit for farmers who donate food to local food banks. I think this provides an important example that Yukon should explore. I do hope that this government lives up to the commitments that they made from across the floor today and do explore this option. The bill created a non-refundable tax credit worth 25 percent of the fair market value of agricultural product donated by farmers to community food programs, including food banks.

Food Banks Canada has been encouraging governments across Canada to enact such a policy and was very happy to see the Ontario government become the first to implement this measure. It helps farmers while increasing the amount of fresh, nutritious food available to those who depend on food banks each month.

Wouldn't it be nice if this government chose to augment the act that was brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, the *Donation of Food Act*, which allowed restaurants, caterers and businesses to donate excess food to those who have need of it? This would be a wonderful companion piece to that.

Yukon-grown food is a great food option because we know the source of the food, it's fresher, and the production of the food is more manageable. Many studies have confirmed the importance of local food to improving community and population health outcomes.

It might seem to only apply to the food, but I have seen many instances of consumers and farmers sitting down and talking about production methods, deciding what is the healthiest way to get the potatoes from seed to market, deciding how and what they would like to eat in a healthy way. The more interest and the more conversations we can have around local food, the healthier it will be for our population.

Another aspect to that are our community gardens. When we see producers of food and we find out at the markets what

they can grow, many people have said, “Hey, I can do that too” and started a backyard garden, or participated in our community gardens. We are growing more food — that activity is a healthy activity. It is a growing activity and it is a community activity.

So efforts to promote local food activities and promote awareness in consumers about ways to grow and use local products; about ways to preserve and cook new produce, is beneficial to the health of our communities.

Some of the new products that I mentioned — haskap berries — it is interesting to read how people are taking them and incorporating them into their cooking, whether it be as an accent for a steak, or whether it be used for their juice or for their dried berries — many options and many possibilities.

I repeat — promoting access and awareness of local food is a great way to build stronger communities, by strengthening the connections between Yukoners and their local food producers and between Yukoners themselves. Anyone who has enjoyed the atmosphere of a local farmers’ market, or spent some time at a fish camp, talking to local harvesters, or gone moose hunting, can attest to the communality of gathering, of growing food together.

We need to make every effort to build and foster successful and resilient local food economies in Yukon. The benefit, in terms of personal and community health, our environment and our local economy, are clear. Government can help increase a stable demand for local food by encouraging government institutions to buy locally produced food, by showing an example and buying local. Public sector organizations can do a lot to increase the scope and reliability of the market for local food producers. Such a market would increase innovation, would increase economics and would increase the viability for local producers, encouraging them to continue to produce and expand their production.

I have noticed more and more local grocery stores promoting and selling local grown produce. I would encourage the government to work with local organizers, organizations, producers and consumers to increase the support and promotion, and give direction, in order to create more jobs, expand the local agricultural sector and make more local food available in markets, schools, cafeterias, grocery stores, hospitals and restaurants throughout the territory.

We need to work together to create more options for food storage and access to markets for rural producers to meet the increasing demands and challenges of producing food here in the Yukon. Initiatives such as the local Potluck Food Co-op here in Whitehorse, the Growers of Organic Food food talks, which were highly successful, the community gardens and the community greenhouses are all doing a great job of increasing public awareness of the growing diversity and abundance of local food production in the Yukon. Ongoing research activities and opportunities must be encouraged.

Another major benefit of a strong local food sector is its contribution to combatting climate change. I strongly support this motion’s proposal for an annual local food week here in the Yukon. I think this is an idea whose time has come. It is an opportunity for producers and consumers to visit.

Ms. Stick: I want to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward the original motion today. I thought it was thorough. I thought it covered everything that needed covering and I’m disappointed with the amendments that were made to it. I heard from a number of members on the other side that they had not yet seen the *Local Food Act*, which was passed unanimously on November 5, 2013, in the Ontario Legislature. It’s on-line and it’s only eight pages. It’s a very clear, plain-language description of what they were looking for and those pieces that were taken away from this original motion are found there. To suggest that we needed to investigate and — what were the words being used — suggesting that we would need to review these things — I’m not saying we shouldn’t, but I think people could have done their homework and looked at what act Bill No. 36, an act to amend the *Local Food Act* actually said. We did have a motion in 2012 very similar to the one present. I think what we were looking for is more. Here were some concrete steps that could have been taken and, instead, we’re going back to investigate.

I can hear heckling from the other side and I have the floor here, so I thank the members.

Other comments I’ve listened to today about why we needed to change this and go with this amended motion — I have a number of comments. One of them was about access that local farmers might have. I find that over the last number of years, farmers are finding they can produce more and more and they can sell their product. A good example, of course, is the Fireweed market here in Whitehorse on Thursday evenings. It’s now also going to be on Saturdays.

We know there are markets in local communities and we appreciate that. There are also gate sales, where you can deal directly with farmers to purchase their produce or their meat or eggs — those are good too. But there are other things that have happened in this community that have really put the farmers on notice and given them hope of what they can do and how they can increase their production, increase what they’re producing now and be guaranteed they’ll sell it.

We’ve heard talk about the potluck food co-op, which is the first co-op of its type in the Yukon where all the members pay a one-time fee to join and have a part in this. They now have a storefront where members can go and buy not only locally produced food, but also some organics that are brought in from outside the Yukon, because it’s hard at this time to supplement everything that people would like.

This group has grown over the last number of years. They have a storefront and a manager that they’ve been able to hire. It’s a great thing, but the other thing they’ve been able to do is start going to local farmers and say that if you produce this many tonnes of potatoes, we will buy and sell them. If you produce this much of another product — potatoes, turnips, whatever — they’re giving these farmers a guarantee that hopefully there will be a great crop and those things will be able to be sold.

The other great thing that I have had the good fortune to be a part of is that schools are increasingly going for new

fundraisers, which are boxes of local produce versus boxes of chocolates. It is much better for you, and it has become quite a fundraiser for the schools. It has also been a great opportunity for farmers to plan ahead, knowing what they are planting and knowing that it's going to be sold. I think that this has been going on for at least two years, possibly three.

The number of schools that have participated in this has increased and the amount sold, the amount raised and the amount made by farmers has been beneficial to everyone. Boxes of potatoes, carrots, beets — all locally produced by local farmers. Those are the things we want to encourage. Those are the things that farmers want to have guarantees on — that they know that this produce, if they grow it, it will be sold and it will be purchased.

As my colleague mentioned, food security is, as we know, not as great as we think it is. Once that highway was closed off and the shelves cleared off at the local grocery stores, there weren't a lot of other options until someone started flying in produce. It doesn't take much to put a run on produce in this community, I find. Once word gets out that the highway is closed or trucks aren't making it through due to weather, you quickly see things deplete in the produce section of the larger grocery stores in town.

I think being able to encourage a Yukon-grown food act that will encourage farmers and do some of these things that had been in the earlier motion, it gave us some goals and it gave us some direction. I find that going back to the amended — it is where we left off two years ago.

When we look at this act that was passed unanimously in Ontario, the highlights — you know, it's very easy. It is about local food week. It is setting dates for those. It's about local food goals and targets — not just talk, but goals and targets. It's about reporting on those. It's about really providing the support to ensure food securities for our communities and it's a good thing. The other thing — someone talked about food banks and the growing number and we've seen the food banks here try to encourage people to donate local produce. It's called the "grow an extra row". So if you have a garden or if you are part of a community garden, they're asking people to grow an extra row and donate it to them.

Under the Ontario act, I'm not sure that it would go to individuals if it were just me with my backyard, but it would certainly go to farmers if they were able to grow an extra row and donate healthy, locally produced food to a food bank. Too often, food banks are giving out processed foods and canned foods. Those are great and people need them, but we all know — all of us know — that locally grown, fresh produce is far better for us than the other refined foods or foods that come in cans. It's better for us.

It's unfortunate that there was an amendment on the floor today that we could have all supported, but the amended motion just seems to take away a lot of those goals and those targets that really we all should have been agreeing on. I cannot support the amended motion because I don't feel it goes far enough.

Ms. White: I have the amended motion in front of me. I misspoke once already and I would endeavor to improve my Google searching, and I thank the Minister of Environment and Economic Development for the correction. I will wear this I am sure for a while, and that's okay, because we all learn from our mistakes.

What I would like to talk about today is kind of some stuff that I have been lucky enough to learn in recent years. When I look at the idea of developing of the Yukon-grown food policy, I have some hopes about that and they all stem from my own personal experiences. I hope that the Yukon-grown food policy will have things that will encourage and enable home gardens — that will give people the opportunity to have a garden in their homes. Whether it is a small high-density potato patch, or whether it is raised beds or whatever it is, I hope that this food policy will enable and encourage home gardens.

I hope it will encourage the creation of community gardens and greenhouses. I live directly across the street from the Takhini North community garden, so I get to see what happens there. I have spent a lot of time at 600 College Drive and I get to see what their community garden does there. I hope that another thing it can do is encourage school gardens and school gardening programs and that it will support both large and small producers.

My first grown-up experience of gardening was when I worked in corrections. I am not sure how this happened. I was the cooking instructor, but then I also became the main greenhouse potato patch supporter, which is a daunting task for someone who had never gardened before.

With Corrections and the help of YWITT, women came up and built a greenhouse, which was a fantastic project. It took a couple of days, and then they built a similar greenhouse that went to the downtown community garden. That's a pretty incredible thing.

When I was in Corrections and we were given this — well, here's a greenhouse and we'll get you some soil and it's up to you to make it go. I was incredibly intimidated and was a little bit stressed out about it for quite a bit. I did some Googling and I tried to learn how to grow potatoes. I had to confidently lead the women in gardening, which was a bit daunting. So if you drive past Takhini Haven now, there are still the rows where we grew potatoes. There is a sign attached to the greenhouse that says, "Dickson's potato patch". That's because Ross Dickson — a fantastic man who worked in Corrections — moved all my soil with a BobCat as opposed to us having to do it by shovel-load, which would have taken forever to make the potato patch.

When I was in Corrections, we grew probably what ended up being way more potatoes than we could possibly eat, and that was because I had no idea how one potato could actually grow a lot of potatoes. I was bit sad because I got elected before we harvested that garden, but I knew it was going to be incredible.

In the summer months at Corrections when we nurtured that garden and greenhouse, it became a real learning experience for all of us. I am not going to say that I was

confident by the end, but it was growing and that was really exciting. I know that, after I left, they were able to harvest the potatoes and they ate them for most of the winter — that's incredible.

I like to think that not only did I learn a lot about gardening there, but so did the women I was working with, and that's a pretty phenomenal experience, because not everyone has the opportunity to grow a garden. It's really incredible.

We're lucky that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun has a homestead down the Pelly River called Stepping Stone. Out at his homestead, there is an incredible garden. It's a garden that requires a lot of work. It's an off-grid place, water has to get hauled and you can use a pump for a short amount of time, but this is a garden that will feed the family not only for the entire summer, but it will be harvested and brought into town at the end of the season.

To see what the Member for Mayo-Tatchun was able to do in a completely remote area — and to see how fertile the land was there — was really an incredible thing. The times I've been at Stepping Stone, it has been a pleasure to spend time in the garden. Really lucky is that, when you want to go to Stepping Stone, you actually have to drive down the Pelly River farm road, which means you get to the Pelly River farm, and that's where we leave our vehicles.

I had never seen free-range chickens like this, or roaming cows — I'm not sure if you would say a cow was free-range — but the Pelly River farm has the happiest animals in the entire world. The chickens are everywhere, the cows are everywhere, and for someone who grew up in the City of Whitehorse — I didn't actually know that we could have cattle, but there is the example.

The Pelly River farm is an incredible place. The family has been there for a really long time, and it's this beautiful expanse of flat land that's surrounded by small hills in that area. The cows are everywhere. You sometimes have to patiently wait for them to leave the road, and the chickens are everywhere and fairly friendly.

I was lucky, on the day that we left Stepping Stone, that I got to harvest beets with the family. So this is another example of an off-grid homestead. Grandma, grandchildren and cousins were out in the garden, and they were harvesting beets for the market. They predominantly deal with chickens, eggs and cattle, but they have a garden patch that is for the Fireweed market.

For the first time ever, I picked beets out of the ground, and it was quite the process and the kids were way better at it than I was. We were thinning the rows and they were just going to take what we had at that point in time. They have a phenomenal set-up where you wash the produce on these big grate things, but you are using water from buckets because, also in the same thing, you have to turn on the pump but you don't want to leave it on for too long. It was a really phenomenal experience, and I can understand why people do something like WWOOFing and they travel around working on organic farms, because there is something that is really spiritual about being connected to the land in that way.

I mentioned that my house is across the street from the Takhini North community garden. The Takhini North community is very strong and, at one point in time, they were embroiled in a court case with the City of Whitehorse so it got that community pretty tight-knit pretty quickly. They created a community garden up there and it's really spectacular. My living room window faces that. On a regular basis all summer long, I have the opportunity to watch families of all ages — from young children to grandparents — go and work on these gardens. I think the phenomenal thing about a community garden is that if you can't be there for a week, someone will water your plot. They won't let it just die without you. Watching people work together in the community garden was an incredible opportunity, but it's also a way to grow communities — as cheesy as that sounds, it is an opportunity to get to know your neighbours and to have that ability.

It was really neat last fall to watch people harvest their gardens — so coming down with wagons and boxes and all that and watching people reap what they sowed, which was incredible.

I am also really lucky that I live in a riding that has edible roundabouts. I think this is something that could be incorporated in more jurisdictions — understanding that the City of Whitehorse is responsible for that. In my riding, we have one roundabout that is totally dedicated to berry bushes — it has saskatoon berries and raspberries — and to watch families take their children down there all summer long, especially near the end of summer when they started eating the berries, was incredible.

The other roundabout that is closer to my house is one that has things like pineapple weed, and it has quite a bit of mint and it has some lettuce and things. That was incredible to watch families working in that as well.

All of these things together led to me having my very first grownup garden at my house last summer. This is incredible, because up to this point in time I had rented and didn't necessarily have the space to garden. I bought a house that had beautiful garden beds, so I thought I would try to grow potatoes for the second time. Despite the blue healer that was against me until the potatoes got strong enough to protect themselves, I grew potatoes in my back yard last year. I grew potatoes and I grew kale and I had berry bushes, so last fall I was collecting kale, potatoes and saskatoon berries.

I had an aha moment that I would never really had before. I'll share some of those next time when I have more. My aha moment was the realization that if we were able to, as government, encourage home gardens, not only do you have an incredible sense of accomplishment, but you also have local food security. You have the ability to produce things. You can do high-density boxes on people's front steps or even on apartment balconies, and wouldn't that be an incredible thing? I use potatoes as an example because I was very successful and I have enough seed potatoes to start again this year. If anyone would like seed potatoes, they can contact me because I have plenty.

The aha moment was: Wouldn't it be incredible if everyone in the Yukon who wanted to grow a garden had that

opportunity? I am not sure how that would look, and I'm not sure how that would work, but my hope is that in the development of the Yukon-grown food policy, we can somehow address that. If there is an interest and a will and someone has the ability to take advantage of it, but aren't quite sure how to start, wouldn't that be the fantastic if the government had a program that did just that — a local food security?

All of those things have made me kind of a passionate gardener and I look forward this year to trying my hand at some more things. There are incredible lessons in it. I am not a really big fan of basil, but I have been growing a basil plant for a year. I am not sure how it survived, but I could possibly be making a huge amount of pesto at some point in time. There are those small successes that I think everyone should have the opportunity for. I'm not sure how to make that happen, but I hope that in the discussion and the creation of the Yukon-grown food policy we can do that.

I am lucky, as well, to have 600 College Drive in my neighbourhood. The seniors at 600 College Drive take gardening very seriously. If someone hasn't had the opportunity to go up there and look at their community garden, then you should do that. Yukon Housing Corporation has done a fantastic job of building senior purpose garden beds up there. Everything is high enough that you don't have to bend over. They have both a greenhouse and outdoor garden plots, and it is an incredible thing to see. So if I was proud of my accomplishments of a couple of potato plants, then it has nothing on what the seniors can grow.

When I go up there in the summer, I often get the tour of the plots, which is very exciting. Someone was growing pumpkins last year in the greenhouse, which for me was kind of a big deal. The seniors appreciate their gardening area, and it's something that they take very seriously when it happens. I think, wouldn't that be fantastic if every seniors facility in the territory had a community garden of its own, and what would that do? It would get seniors out of their houses and it also gets them growing their own food, which brings down their own cost of living, which also brings up their food security. Wouldn't that be a fantastic idea?

The principal at Takhini Elementary School is a fantastic role model and she has incredible teachers who work there. I'm lucky I get to spend time at that school at all. One of the projects they're going to do this spring and early summer is they're going to go around the neighbourhood and find host families. What these host families will do is they will agree that, once the kids are done school, they will continue to grow and water whatever it is that they're working on. So they have been battling around the idea of high-density potatoes, and I think that's an incredible way for the school community to reach out into the community at large — by them starting the process and then nurturing those. Imagine how those kids are going to react when they come back in the fall and the things they planted have grown into vegetables, whether they be potatoes or carrots or whatever they happen to choose. I think that is going to be a phenomenal thing. I look forward to being a host family for some of those boxes.

Right now in my front yard I have grass and I can't wait until, at one point in time, I have an edible front yard. My hope is, with that edible front yard, it will encourage people to come into the yard and help themselves. It's not about me having more raspberries than I could deal with; it's the idea of growing food in my front yard as opposed to growing grass. I hope the Yukon-grown food policy will encourage people to have edible yards, as opposed to grass. As we all know, that is a waste of resources, whereas if my front yard were edible, it would be a phenomenal asset to my community.

All of these different options, although they don't sound as regal as gate sales and land sales and stuff like that, I really believe all these smaller scale things would lend to local food security by giving people the encouragement, the supplies and the knowledge to help them grow gardens on their own, I think that is something that I look forward to.

With that, those are my comments, but I look forward to the gardening season and I hope everybody else is as well.

Mr. Barr: I'm happy to speak to Motion No. 616, although I also have to echo my colleagues' remarks that the amendment at hand seems to leave the original — what was intended here today, brought by the Member for Klondike — lacking in the complete direction and I would just like to just say that off the hop.

However, agriculture and growing food is something that — when I think back, both my grandparents farmed. As a kid, we would go to the farm.

I have many fond memories of that from swinging in the barn on the rope and landing in the hay, to running through the fields, jumping in the cow patties and down to the creek to wash off your feet. They were cool. On a hot day, you could cool off your feet, but then it was good to wash them off.

I have to say that we also learned a lot. When we talk about agriculture and Yukon-grown food, it's about respect. It's about understanding that food isn't grown in a supermarket, which many probably believe today in the cities — not so much in the Yukon, because we are close to the land, as the Member for Kluane said earlier.

I also hunted all my life and fished all my life, so even though I came from Ontario, we were close to the land and I knew my food didn't come from the grocery store. I didn't take for granted what farmers offered. It just made me think of that song, *Dusty Old Farmer*, out working the field. It's a great song, and I remember being down in the country, whether it was my Grandma and Grandpa Barr or my Grandma and Grandpa Shields.

There was big respect. It was hard work, and along with the farming, we would go hunting. You would either get moose or deer because wild game was a part of the diet. You didn't want to eat the cow, because that was what you were going to sell to get some money, so you ate a lot of wild meat.

I remember apple trees — eating apples when I was young — from my father's apple tree that he planted from a seed as a kid and going to the gooseberry bushes. My grandmother would say: What do you want for dessert? What do you want for supper? We would go out to the garden and

pick the fresh vegetables or pick the apples off the trees. There were many selections of apple trees in the front yard.

When you are little and you are close to food and you're there with your parents and family, it's a good thing for the community. It's a good thing to learn that what's in front of me on my plate has given its life for me. I think of the chickens on the chopping block with my Grandfather Shields chopping off the heads and then we'd run after them — chickens with their heads cut off — as little kids to bring them to my grandmother and my mother and my sisters. They would be plucking and — hey, you're on the farm and that's the kind of thing that when we were growing our food and eating that food, those memories are forever in my mind.

Drinking the milk right from the cow, when you're milking it and squirting it into your cousin's mouth — it's great. Have you ever done that? I'll tell you — lots of great memories and lots of fun.

I think here in the Yukon, as we move forward — especially with climate change — when I have listened to different elders saying, “You know, you can't grow anything up here.” Well, our season is longer now; it's hotter. The ice is going out sooner and the sun is longer, so there is a growing season.

When I think back to when I was a NNADAP worker in Carcross many years ago, we planted a huge garden — it was all root vegetables — my son and some of the youth in the community — as part of programming. So when we're looking at the merits of locally grown things, there is so much advantage to involving community. There would be a lot of youth — we are still waiting on a community centre in Carcross to attend.

So we went out to plant a big garden down at Branigan's old farm and, at the end of the season — myself with the youth — it was donated. We had enough root vegetables at the end of the season. We kept nothing and we brought them to every elder's door and every senior's door in Carcross and Tagish. You should have seen the smiles on their faces when we did that.

So when we're talking about food security and being able to grow our own food and some of the benefits from being able to not only eat the food — which makes your stomach feel good — but the mental and emotional well-being of seeing the elders' and seniors' faces when you walk up — they didn't even have any idea. You just show up at the door and, here is 20 pounds of this, 20 pounds of that. The youth felt really proud to be able to do that; they talked about that. It is similar to going on your first hunt, when you give all of the moose away — you don't keep it. You honour and make it a gift to your community.

There are a lot of values that are instilled by us growing our own food in this sector of — I call it agriculture — coming from where you are just farming, you just get your hands in the dirt and you don't really think about terminology too much. At the end of the day, as I think about my father — growing up, there was not a lot money — no one had a lot of money — but you ate well. There was always food on the table and there was thanks for that. The strong sense of

community that comes from knowing that you are a part of that is priceless — when I think of agriculture in those terms and growing your own vegetables and harvesting your own meat.

When the Member for Klondike was speaking, to be able to have the ability to give that away on a large scale — here in the Yukon, there are opportunities, and I have been gifted by pounds of potatoes. When I hear from some of the members opposite say, “Well, there's not really enough” — I know from my own experience that, just in Tagish alone, the root vegetables — just in the area of John Street, people are giving away 50 pounds. One guy with his garden is giving away potatoes for 25 people for the winter. That's out of one garden.

The opportunity to have us eat healthy, not genetically modified organisms, is a huge part on our — how do we say — our health and our society. We had a tribute to cancer today and what I really want to say about that is that there are a lot of opinions around that what we're eating today is causing us a lot of diseases. Even how we're contaminating the land with — even our wild meat, is that, if we're going to grow — we're not even growing it, but our moose population, our sheep, our fish in the water here that feeds us — that's our shopping centre here in the north. It's out on the land. It just made me think of an elder. She said, “What do you need a freezer for? You just leave it on the hoof and you go out and get it when you're ready to go out and get it.”

Oftentimes I've been to an elder's place with the meat cache, and you have a hindquarter of moose hanging in the moose dry meat cache, and you just take off what you're going to eat that day. You saw it off. When you're done that, you're feeling good and you're bringing some over to the person next door. I just know that it's a good thing when you can get your own grub.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those are my words for today.

Ms. Moorcroft: Every morning, as I enjoy my breakfast of a delicious fresh-laid egg from one of the pretty brown hens that I can see pecking away across the yard — and, I might add, a breakfast prepared by my favorite local farmer — I appreciate the value of local food.

I would like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward his motion today to debate the introduction of a local food act.

Whether it's eating home-grown meat or pulling a package of frozen broccoli out of the freezer that tastes as good as the day it was harvested back in August, or purchasing local meat, cheese or produce at the Fireweed Community Market that other farmers have grown, local food not only tastes better and is better for you, it is a responsible choice for our food security.

This week the Member for Klondike brought forward his motion seeking all-party support to investigate the introduction of a local food act modelled on legislation passed unanimously in Ontario.

What was the Yukon Party government's response? To amend the motion, to investigate whether in fact there were

merits to introducing a local food act. Here's what the government struck out of the motion — they do not support promoting farmers to donate excess food production to food banks by way of tax credits, promoting local food awareness, making more local food available in markets, restaurants, schools and institutions and allowing for the creation of a local food week. Those are all good ideas. Those are all ideas and activities that we in the Official Opposition would support. We also would have supported unanimous agreement for a local food act.

The Member for Klondike is fortunate to live in the central Yukon where there is good soil, lots of summer sunshine and amazing gardens.

I had the pleasure of working many years ago at Yukon Archives for a time. I quite enjoyed the ability to review the photo collections there. There are many photographs of the gardens and the produce that was produced during the Klondike Gold Rush, when there were 30,000 people estimated to live in the Yukon and very poor access to food. We didn't have the highways. The trail and river access was not as conducive to bringing in the food freight that we do today.

Local food production is not new to the Yukon. First Nations harvested traditional foods — fish, wildlife, berries, wild plants, herbs and medicines — and there are a number of First Nation farmers in Yukon today.

I am disappointed with the government's decision to gut the motion's intent, with its unfriendly amendment, which I do not support. The Yukon government will only commit to investigating the merits of a local food act. I hope, in time, they may agree with those of us on this side of the House who see those merits of a local food act today.

I do want to say, before I close, a big thank you to the many Yukon farmers. Farmers are working hard for the community, not only growing food, but farmers are active politically too. They advocate for food security. They call for a ban on genetically modified organism food in Yukon to protect our food source. They start up the Potluck Food Co-op and more. All of this benefits the people of the Yukon.

So thank you to the farmers of the Yukon and thank you to the Member for Klondike for his attempts to have a motion approved today on introducing a local food act.

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

Mr. Silver: It is not often that I get to have a final word in this House, so here's to that.

This government has been talking about a policy for local food since the 2011 campaign. We are still waiting.

The Yukon Party can spend the day listing all of their briefing notes on agriculture and farms and the projects and programs that they are investing in, but we are passing the halfway mark of this Assembly's mandate, and we have some program funding but we don't have a plan. Instead of expressing the challenges and explaining the delays, the

Yukon Party government has missed the boat today — I meant to say "yacht". The Yukon Party prefers yachts.

The Yukon Party has successfully hijacked the debate today. It is a majority government and they have that ability. In doing so, they have hijacked the intent of a non-partisan, forward-thinking motion that would have supported food banks and local restaurants with a conscious agenda to lower their carbon footprint, and a motion that would give tax breaks to farmers.

They have replaced it with a motion that does not commit them to tax cuts for farmers, that does not commit them to helping the food bank, and that does not commit them to promoting local businesses that use local foods. They will say that this is important to them but, as we found out today, they will not commit to this. Their amended motion has no teeth.

I will continue to push for the ideas contained in the original motion, including the creation of a local food week and the establishment of a tax credit for the donation of agricultural products to the local food bank.

I will continue to promote local food awareness and work to make local foods available in markets, restaurants, schools and institutions.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the motion as amended?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

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: Disagree.

Ms. Stick: Disagree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Mr. Tredger: Disagree.

Mr. Barr: Disagree.

Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yeas, seven nays.

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

Motion No. 616, as amended, agreed to

Motion No. 638

Clerk: Motion No. 638, standing in the name of Ms. Hanson.

Speaker: It is moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to demonstrate its support for Bill C-583, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder)* by:

(1) urging the Government of Canada to support Bill C-583;

(2) urging the Government of Canada to schedule full committee hearings, including the testimony of expert witnesses, respecting Bill C-583;

(3) collaborating with the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Nunavut to express pan-northern support for Bill C-583; and

(4) introducing to this House amendments to Yukon's *Corrections Act* in order to better meet the needs of individuals with FASD, and to accommodate FASD as a disability in Yukon's corrections system;

Further, THAT this House directs the Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly to convey the consensus of this House in support of Bill C-583 to the Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada, the Speaker of Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut.

Ms. Hanson: I'm honoured and a bit daunted by the challenge of speaking to this motion. As a social worker in an earlier career, I had some sense of the issues associated with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

In those days, there was not a lot of real information or understanding about fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Today we have significantly more information, but we are woefully short on understanding.

The motion today provides all members of this Legislative Assembly with an opportunity to work together as representatives of all Yukon citizens to support an initiative that has the potential to change lives, not only in Yukon, but across Canada and, by our example, elsewhere in the world.

As the Leader of the Official Opposition, I stand here today to urge this House to set aside our partisan differences, to support the initiative of our Yukon MP, Ryan Leef, who has brought forward a private member's bill, Bill No. C-583, *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder)*, and to commit to making amendments to the Yukon *Corrections Act* in order to better meet the needs of individuals with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and to accommodate fetal alcohol spectrum disorder as a disability in the Yukon correctional system.

This motion is an ambitious one because it asks us to not only demonstrate our support for the necessary changes to our criminal justice and correctional systems to recognize that fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is a permanent brain injury acquired before birth — a brain injury that sets in motion a broad spectrum of disability, but we are also being challenged to stand by our convictions, to work with our colleagues in our

sister territories — the Northwest Territories and Nunavut — to ask them to join us in a pan-northern demonstration in support of these important changes to how we treat people born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. It does not stop there.

Bill C-583 received first reading on March 31, 2014. The bill would amend the *Criminal Code* to add a definition of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and establish a procedure for assessing individuals who are involved in the criminal justice system, and who are suspected of suffering from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. It requires the court to consider, as a mitigating factor in sentencing, a determination that the accused suffers from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and manifests certain symptoms.

Bill C-583 is scheduled to go before a parliamentary committee in early June. To be frank, private members' bills rarely get more than a cursory glance. This Assembly has the opportunity to demonstrate that we believe that, although not perfect, Bill C-583 is important and that it deserves a full committee hearing. Our united voice can help our Yukon Member of Parliament make a much-needed positive change to our criminal justice system.

The Official Opposition — the NDP Official Opposition in Ottawa — has indicated their support for Bill C-583. Our job today is not simply to say: "Yes, we support changes to the federal *Criminal Code*." We must also make sure the laws within our control as Yukon legislators reflect the reality of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Last week, the past president of the Canadian Bar Association, Rod Snow, spoke at the national biennial conference on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in Vancouver. He identified the need to ensure that one consistent principle guide both judges and jailers. He said — and I quote: "I believe that it is neither ethical nor just for the law to punish individuals for failure to meet a standard of behaviour that their disability prevents them from meeting, yet that is what the law and our justice system institutions do when they fail to accommodate fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. In this way, our society criminalizes individuals with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder because of their disability." He went on to say, "I believe that when a law is unjust, we have an obligation to change it."

Ryan Leef's bill, C-583, will change the *Criminal Code* to allow judges to accommodate fetal alcohol spectrum disorder offenders where there is evidence that their disability contributed to their conduct. Judges will do this by treating fetal alcohol spectrum disorder as a mitigating factor in sentencing. They will understand that it is not ethical, fair or just to punish an individual for failure, because of their disability, to meet a standard they cannot meet. We do not do that for other disabilities and we should not do it for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. That is why I believe we must support Bill C-583.

In his speech, Mr. Snow also said that if a judge decides to treat fetal alcohol spectrum disorder as a mitigating factor because she understands that the offender's disability is responsible for their behaviour, will our corrections system

accommodate that person's disability when they arrive in jail? Or will Corrections expect the offender to meet standards of behaviour that their disability prevents them from meeting. We cannot be guided, he said, by one principle of justice, fairness and ethics in the courts and by a different principle of justice, fairness and ethics in our corrections system. Our judges and our jailers must be guided by one consistent set of principles applied both outside and inside our jails.

Bill C-583 is guided by a single principle that explicitly accommodates fetal alcohol spectrum disorder as a disability in the *Criminal Code*. That same principle demands that we explicitly accommodate fetal alcohol spectrum disorder as a disability in the *Corrections Act*.

"Just as Bill C-583 would give judges the tool to deliver smart and effective justice to individuals with FASD, or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, within the courtroom, we must give our Corrections staff the tools they need to be smart and effective when dealing with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder individuals inside the jail," said Mr. Snow

That is our challenge and our opportunity here today. We do this confident that Yukon is again leading the way in deepening our understanding — not just of the impact of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, but also our obligation to address the serious legal, social, economic and moral challenges that this disorder presents to us all.

I remember in the late 1970s, Dr. Kwadwo Asante was one of the first pediatricians to study and publish on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in Canada. Based out of Prince George, his expertise helped several generations of parents, advocates and helping professions, including those within the justice system, understand the complexity of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

We have come a long way. When Dr. Asante first spoke in Yukon and elsewhere about fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, the reality that this is a brain damage caused by alcohol use during pregnancy and that it is wholly preventable, I can tell you the reaction was negative. It was essentially denial, fear and shame.

We are not there yet, but the fear of stigma slowly erodes as we focus more on dealing with reducing the incidence of FASD and understanding its prevalence in our communities.

The amount and scope of research that has been carried out in the past 40 or so years on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is truly astounding. Despite the knowledge we have accumulated about the causes of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and the implications of this permanent brain damage on the day-to-day lives of those who have fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, we have been slow to change our interactions and expectations of people who often do not look very different from you or me.

When a person with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder gets into trouble with the law, the outcome is most often not good. As a prominent judge said in a very candid statement, "What a judge sees is defiance of court orders. What a judge sees is absence of remorse. What judges see is a criminal record of incorrigibility, calling, of course, for stiffer penalties in the cause of deterrence. What is missed is ideology or the cause of

the apparent incorrigibility and with it the chance to fashion a disposition that is responsive to the special needs of the defendant."

Spreading understanding of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder for the Canadian justice system is due in no small part to the dedicated efforts of our own local, small legal community. In 2010, the Canadian Bar Association decided to elect, for the first time ever, a president from one of Canada's three northern territories — Rod Snow. Becoming the president of the Canadian Bar Association is no mean feat, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Bar Association is a voluntary, professional association representing more than 37,000 lawyers, judges, notaries, law teachers and law students across Canada.

About two-thirds of all practising lawyers in Canada belong to the Canadian Bar Association. Since its founding in 1896, the Canadian Bar Association has earned a reputation for principled, non-partisan comments on justice issues. Its distinguished former leaders include many who became judges and two Prime Ministers of Canada.

Not only did the Canadian Bar Association elect a president from the north for the first time, in that same year — 2010 — the Canadian Bar Association voted unanimously to accept the challenge of the northern branches of the Canadian Bar Association to make fetal alcohol syndrome disorder a priority in their advocacy work.

My former colleagues — Todd Hardy and Steve Cardiff — and I met with Mr. Snow when he assumed his role as president of the Canadian Bar Association. We were just one small group. During his tenure, Mr. Snow met with ministers, politicians and policy-makers across Canada.

His commitment to working to get others to recognize that the time has come for the justice system to face up to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and to understand that our legal system is failing those who live with the disorder was as evident then as it is now.

He was, and is, prepared that, instead of being tough on crime, we need to be effective on crime. We need more police officers, not more jails, and we need to give judges more options, not fewer, because people with fetal alcohol syndrome come into frequent and repeated contact with the justice system. We see them in court much more often than the general Canadian population. Too often they start as children in care, progress to become youths in a criminal justice system and then enter the adult criminal justice system. As they have children, they go back into the child protection system when their children are taken into care.

When the Canadian Bar Association started to consider why so many people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder were coming into the justice system time after time, they realized that the legal system has a fundamental problem when it comes to dealing with people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

That problem is that criminal law is based on certain assumptions. It assumes that individuals make informed choices, that they decide to commit crimes and that they learn from their own behaviour and the behaviour of others.

Another assumption is that people can be rehabilitated. However, each of these assumptions is frequently invalid for people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Because of their permanent, organic brain injury, people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder often lack impulse control.

Even if they know something is wrong, they may be unable to resist the impulse to do it again. Therefore, a jail sentence often doesn't work. It does not deter and it does not rehabilitate — and it certainly does not keep people from re-offending.

A permanent brain injury is not like a mental illness. A mental illness can be treated but there is no cure for a permanent organic brain injury, even though with treatment outcomes can sometimes improve — but you can't cure it. Sending a person to jail will give them structure. It will often allow them to function better for a time but it won't rehabilitate them and it won't cure them of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. If there's no structure when they are released from jail, they are at high risk of re-offending.

Unfortunately, in Canada the justice system works in what could be called a binary fashion. You're either criminally responsible or not criminally responsible. There is no in-between. The binary nature of the legal system makes for clarity but some issues just don't fit neatly into yes or no categories. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is one such issue.

The question becomes: Could there be another option, a suite of alternatives, a third option? To that end, the Yukon bar association developed a resolution which, as I said, was unanimously adopted by the Canadian Bar Association. The resolution has three points. The introductory elements of the resolution — it was actually introduced twice. It was introduced in 2010, unanimously, and again in 2013, unanimously, because despite the promises made post 2010, there were some delays in progress. The Canadian Bar Association felt it was incumbent to bring it forward again.

Speaker: Order please. 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.

The following documents were filed April 16, 2014:

33-1-79

On the path together — Wellness Plan for Yukon's Children and Families (Graham)

33-1-80

Queen's Printer Agency 2014/2015 Business Plan (Istchenko)