



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Wednesday, May 7, 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
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Community Services; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation; Yukon Lottery Commission Government House Leader
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, May 7, 2014 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes which have been made to the Order Paper. The following motions standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin have been removed from the Order Paper at the request of the member: Motions No. 31, 37, 40, 54, 88, 89, 121, 147, 189, 264, 272, 325, 353, 365, 398, 406 and 451.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing May as Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month.

Multiple sclerosis is a complex, chronic and often debilitating disease of the brain and spinal cord. The progress, severity and specific symptoms of MS cannot be predicted. Symptoms may range from numbness to paralysis and eventually blindness. Multiple sclerosis is the most common neurological disease affecting young adults in Canada. Most are diagnosed between the ages of 15 and 40. Some are diagnosed as young as three years of age. Females are three times more likely than men to be diagnosed with the disease.

There is no known cause of, or cure for, multiple sclerosis, and the unpredictable effects of MS last a lifetime. It is estimated that between 55,000 to 75,000 Canadians are living with MS. While the majority are diagnosed with relapsed remitting MS, they will likely be diagnosed later with secondary progressive MS. More than half will develop secondary progressive MS within 10 years of diagnosis, and 90 percent will develop secondary progressive MS within 25 years of diagnosis. The thing with multiple sclerosis is that it affects each person differently and its affects can change from day to day. One day a person can feel great, and then the next day feel extremely fatigued or experience double vision. With progressive MS, symptoms may worsen day by day.

Fortunately, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada has been a leader in offering services to people and families affected by MS to deal with the issues related to the disease and to help improve their quality of life. These services include accurate information about the disease, consultation, support and self-help groups, educational workshops and

individual advocacy. They also provide equipment and social and recreational activities.

Local communities require these resources as well, since Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world. In Yukon, we estimate that about 150 individuals are living with MS. To support these individuals, caregivers and the community can help provide adequate home care — we must support these people to stay in their homes — appropriate residential care options when they can no longer stay at home, and increased recognition and emotional support for family caregivers who play an integral part in the health and well-being of people with MS.

These points mesh with the recommendations outlined in the new clinical services plan for Yukon just presented two weeks ago. MS is just one example of why we need to develop and deliver a patient-centric care system that involves supporting caregivers at all levels.

As such, the MS Society of Canada is the only national voluntary organization that supports both research and services for people dealing with MS. Since it was founded in 1948, it has invested more than \$132 million in research, yet there is still no known cause of, or cure for, the disease.

This year, the annual Scotiabank MS walk, which is usually located in Whitehorse, is now a virtual walk. That means any Yukon citizen can be a virtual walker and organize a virtual walk team to make a difference for MS and walk on their day of choice. Virtual walkers will still have access to fundraising tools at physical sites and will be eligible for the incentive prizes as long as pledges are received by June 15. Participating in this virtual walk will help support Yukoners who are affected by MS, while still raising funds to help further research into the cause and cure of this disease.

MS is life-changing, challenging and presents no answers. Thus, I believe we all have a role to play in trying to find some solutions.

While I am on my feet, I would like to introduce some people in the gallery today. As it happens, most of them are constituents of mine: Tom and Debbie Amson are here; Jenny Roberts; Florence Roberts; and I would love to introduce another constituent of mine, a great support of mine, but I understand the Leader of the Liberal Party will be doing that later.

Mr. Silver: I also rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus and the Official Opposition to join with my colleagues in the Legislature today to recognize Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month. MS has historically been referred to as the unknown disease. If a newly diagnosed patient were to ask their physician what would be the progress of their disease, more often than not the answer would be, “We don’t know.” A patient could have one clinical diagnostic incident and fully recover, as is common in relapsing-remitting MS, or a patient could be clinically diagnosed and begin a course of treatments that may or may not slow the progressive debilitating disease.

Unfortunately, MS is very complex and affects everyone differently. As with many matters involving the human brain, even with the best research, science does not have all the

answers. There is much we still do not know about MS. We do not know precisely how many Yukoners live with the disease or why it's so common among the non-indigenous northern populations. We also do not know why almost three times as many women as men are affected. Although this disease has been around for many years, there is no known cure and there is no known cause. As individuals, we can lace up for those we love and join the MS walk. The 2014 Whitehorse walk will be held at noon on May 31 at Copper Ridge Place. Every step matters for those with MS.

Today I wear this carnation on my lapel as a symbol of hope in the quest to find the cure. The MS carnation campaign raises awareness of this debilitating disease. Carnations are sold over the Mother's Day weekend because so many women — our mothers and our daughters — fight this disease.

I would like to thank the MS Society of Canada and Yukon's local division for the work that they do, as well as the volunteers who help organize the activities for MS Awareness Month for their countless hours and the support that they provide for those living with multiple sclerosis.

Mr. Speaker, I was going to wait until the introduction of visitors section of the tributes today, but I would like to ask my colleagues to help me in welcoming the former Premier of the Yukon to the gallery, Ms. Pat Duncan.

Applause

In recognition of Hunger Awareness Week

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise again today to ask all members to join me in recognizing Hunger Awareness Week.

To raise awareness about hunger, Food Banks Canada is challenging all Canadians to break the silence surrounding hunger with this year's theme: "Give Hunger a Voice" and is encouraging citizens to voice their stories, concerns and solutions about hunger.

This is a week to also take time and learn more about hunger and how each of us can help solve hunger and how to do something to help those who are hungry. Close to 850,000 Canadians turn to a food bank each month. As most of you are probably aware, food bank clients do not fit a traditional or typical profile. They can be your neighbours and co-workers; they can be families with children; employed people whose wages are simply not sufficient to cover basic living essentials; they can be individuals on social assistance; and they can be Canadians living on a fixed income, including people with disabilities and seniors.

Today there are almost 800 food banks across Canada and 3,000 food programs. Here in Yukon, the Whitehorse Food Bank is serving many more clients than when it first opened its doors.

In addition to food, some food banks also provide different types of programs, such as sharing hampers of food and personal care products, and they host soup kitchens and other support services. As you are aware, most food banks and food programs across Canada and also here in the territory depend heavily on volunteers, donations, food drives and the many people who work tirelessly to alleviate hunger in their communities.

As such, I must recognize the generous assistance of all Food Bank Society of Whitehorse volunteers, donors and supporters. Thank you for all of your efforts. Your dedication, energy and commitment are truly making a difference here in the territory. The Government of Yukon is also working on ways to support those who are struggling. A week ago today, the Premier and I, on behalf of the Government of Yukon, helped mark the Whitehorse Food Bank's annual food drive by presenting to the Food Bank Society a cheque for \$750,000. This cheque, we hope, will further help the food bank to establish itself in a downtown location and it will also help it to keep making a difference in the community by providing healthy food and support to those who need it.

In closing, I encourage all citizens to support our local food bank or our local food programs by donating food, time or funds. Let's work together and achieve a better quality of life for all Yukoners.

Ms. Stick: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to recognize Hunger Awareness Week, May 5 to 11.

The purpose of this week is to raise public awareness about the solvable issue of hunger in Canada. This year's theme is "Give Hunger a Voice". To me, it is a call to listen to those providing food, whether a food bank, a soup kitchen, school breakfasts or lunches. How do we support those individuals? We also need to listen to the voices of those who need these supports. What is their situation that means they have come to rely on these supports? What are the gaps that need filling? What are the causes?

Hunger hits much closer to home than many Canadians realize. More than a quarter of Canadians have reported being worried about how they will afford to buy food for themselves and/or their families at some point during the last year. Many of these individuals or families are working, but it's not enough.

In communities nation-wide, complex factors such as health, education and employment are directly impacting Canadians' ability to feed themselves and their families. In Whitehorse, and now increasingly in the communities, food banks are becoming the reality for more and more individuals and families. Every month the Whitehorse Food Bank serves more people — over 1,300 people. That is more than three times the number of people they originally planned for.

We can make a positive impact during Hunger Awareness Week and throughout the year. We can donate food. We can donate money. We can volunteer our time at a food bank or help out at a soup kitchen. We can spread the word about Hunger Awareness Week through Facebook or Twitter. We can talk to our families and our friends about how we contribute as a community.

We need to think about those going without or having to rely on a food bank to fill the gaps in accessibility to food and how we can help to eliminate the need for food banks.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: It is with great pleasure that I do rise in the House today to introduce a group of our youth from St. Elias Community School out in the Kluane riding, the school in Haines Junction, and a group of Quebec youth who are here on an exchange. Earlier this winter, our students had a chance to go to Quebec. They had a chance to do a lot of wonderful things. They had the opportunity to go to the Legislature, which is a little bit bigger and more active than ours, but I like to think ours is calmer and we get more done.

I know when my son came back from this exchange, we've been enjoying the maple syrup that he brought and the good times and the good stories. The youth group here — some of the opportunities they have had here in Whitehorse — they're going to go paintballing right after this so I'm pretty sure they're looking forward to that.

They came last week and on the weekend, they had the opportunity to see the great mountains of Kluane and went out and had a look at many of the sights that we have there — Million Dollar Falls. I think a few were able to see some of our animals that are coming out for the spring. A lot of us spent some time up at the gun range doing some trap shooting. They were able to see a little bit of what Yukoners do and I know vice versa when they were down there.

I'll provide to the good staff at Hansard a list of who we have in the gallery today. Before I list off the students, I want to list off the teachers. The two teachers from Quebec are Jessica and Sebastien. Cyndi and Bryan are from St. Elias. They deserve great kudos for the hard work that they've done organizing these two trips.

I'll introduce the kids now. After I introduce them, please give them a round of applause. I've asked them to come into the members' lounge to maybe have a quick chat after Question Period.

From the Quebec group we have: Ludney, Elisanne, Tanya, Ophelie, Noemie, Audrey, Emilie, Frederique, Jérémie, Charles, Philipe, the other Philippe, Aléxis, and Matthieu. Then we have my son, Travis, Michael, Zoe, Lucy, Brenna, Matthew, Sydney, Maya, Andrew, Kenny, Melanie and Christopher. Thank you for coming to the House today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Barr: I have for tabling a letter from the Council of Yukon First Nations Grand Chief Ruth Massie dated April 25, 2014, addressed to me and to the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin regarding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Ms. Moorcroft: I have for tabling the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provided by Yukon Human Rights Commission so that each member will have a copy of the declaration.

Speaker: Are there any other reports 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

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Legislative Assembly to show its support for the rights of aboriginal people in Yukon and indigenous peoples throughout the world by unanimously endorsing *Canada's Statement of Support on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*; and

THAT the decision of the House be transmitted to the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Human Rights Commission by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the Yukon government add Elizabeth Fry Society Yukon to the list of privileged phone calls for people held at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, so they can exercise their legal right to make confidential requests for representation at internal disciplinary hearings.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Whitehorse General Hospital emergency department

Ms. Stick: We regularly ask this government to do something about the inappropriate use of the Whitehorse General Hospital emergency department for alcohol-related visits. Not only are the costs unsustainable, but the ER is not set up to provide the appropriate care.

On April 1, we cited the Auditor General's finding that, in 2009-10, there were 4.8 alcohol-related emergency room admissions per day, and we were accused of cherry-picking the numbers. Last week, a Yukon Medical Association spokesperson said — and I quote: "Six to eight visits per day are directly related to intoxication."

Mr. Speaker, does the minister admit that, even with the opening of the referred care clinic, this government has failed to curtail the inappropriate use of the ER for alcohol- and drug-related problems?

Hon. Mr. Graham: There's no doubt that, at the present time, individuals still utilize the ER for alcohol-related difficulties, but with the advent of the assisted services provided at the Sarah Steele Building, we have had a number of diversions of intoxicated persons from the ER. We have also done a number of different things to ensure that these people receive assistance. We have put LPNs on shifts at the

detox centre, we have added a quality-assurance RN to the staff complement, and we have added a social worker to the detox unit. We are making those changes as we speak. We have also started a service in downtown Whitehorse — a referred care clinic — to which persons who present themselves at the emergency centre may be referred, instead of taking the time at the ER. We are making progress and we will continue to do so.

Ms. Stick: We support the Referred Care Clinic, but last week we learned that it is still the case that 22 to 25 percent of emergency visits are directly related to intoxication. Last week we again tabled the Beaton and Allen report to remind this government about the expert advice that they have ignored.

The plans for the Sarah Steele Building and the Salvation Army are still years away. Shifting toward collaborative care — to which this government is new — has a five-year planning window. The Beaton and Allen report recommended that the Department of Health and Social Services work with the hospital to — and I quote: “...alleviate rapidly the staffing and physical resource crisis of care of acutely-intoxicated persons.”

We heard the same thing from the Yukon Medical Association last week. What is the immediate plan to alleviate this inappropriate pressure and cost on the ER?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As I said, there is a certain amount of alleviation already taking place with the model to support medically supported detox. We are working with people, but this is a problem that is prevalent all across Canada. It's not unique to the north. It may be more difficult and it may be more prevalent in the north, but it's a problem that affects everybody across this country.

To have one unsupported conversation on a radio show be presented here as the facts of the situation are simply difficult to understand. Even though, once again, I realize the Leader of the Official Opposition knows everything, we know from the statistics provided by the Hospital Corporation that we are actually alleviating the problem at the ER.

Ms. Stick: The minister seems to not listen to the Yukon Medical Association when they speak. They are the ones on the frontlines. The Beaton and Allen report gave us the numbers also.

This isn't just a Whitehorse problem. This is territory-wide. The needs assessment for the Watson Lake hospital, which was, sadly, done after millions of precious health care dollars were spent, indicated — and I quote: “...estimated 60% or greater of services at Watson Lake are alcohol-related.” We can't wait for this government to reinvent the wheel as it rolls out its collaborative care plan.

What is the government's immediate plan to increase appropriate alcohol and drug services across the territory and reduce inappropriate pressures on emergencies everywhere?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, this isn't a problem that suddenly presented itself. It is a problem that has been going on for many, many, many years. The solution will be as gradual. Unfortunately, we can't jump tomorrow and hire 100 new detox people and people who will work within the ADS

system. We're attempting to plan our steps and carry them out as quickly and efficiently as possible, but some things have to occur. We will be waiting until the new Sarah Steele Building is constructed. That will provide a great new resource in cooperation with the Salvation Army. We will also be able to provide great new resources to the people of this territory to assist them in getting away from the intoxicants and the drug problem that we currently have in the territory. It's not something that's going to be done overnight and the member opposite knows that.

Question re: Emergency 911 coverage

Mr. Barr: Yesterday morning's house fire in Dawson City showed us the need for a territory-wide 911 service. The house caught on fire early in the morning and the young man inside was fortunate enough to be helped by a passerby.

The Dawson City fire chief noted after the fire that crews could have responded to the event much sooner if there was a 911 service in Dawson, as the first people on the scene did not know that 911 services did not exist in Dawson.

We are lucky that the fire only resulted in property damage and not loss of life, but we cannot ignore the fact that the current lack of 911 services could have resulted in a much more tragic consequence.

In light of the recent events in Dawson City, when can Yukoners expect the interim 911 system to be approved by the CRTC and implemented throughout the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I thank the member for the question.

While I have not seen a report yet on the incident — and I believe an investigation will be conducted by the Fire Marshal's Office in the event of a situation like the one in Dawson — has not been concluded yet, I don't want to speak too much specifically to that situation, other than to note that if the reports about it through the media have been accurate, it does seem like a situation that would be a perfect example of why the interim 911 option would improve public safety.

As noted in the letter from the assistant deputy minister of Protective Services to the executive director of telecommunications of the CRTC, the interim solution has been beta tested to our satisfaction. Our intention was to have it operational by the March 15, 2014, but based on information from the CRTC, they indicated they would not allow Northwestel to operate that system until an application had been seen and only if it had been approved by the CRTC. Again, we have indicated to Northwestel that we see this as a matter of priority and have asked them to submit an application, which staff of Community Services is currently working with them on.

Mr. Barr: House fires don't wait for CRTC approval. While the minister can't provide a timeline, Yukoners are still waiting for 911 services in many communities. The man who saved the resident in Dawson City immediately went to a next door neighbour and told them to dial 911, not knowing that the service didn't exist. The residents then tried, also not knowing the service didn't exist and weren't able to get through to emergency services. The Minister for Community

Services himself has acknowledged that many Yukoners are unaware of the fact that 911 does not exist in their community, not to mention the thousands of visitors and seasonal workers who also have this misunderstanding.

What is the government doing to make Yukoners and visitors aware of the emergency responders' phone numbers while they wait for the CRTC to approve the interim 911 service?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would thank the member for the question and note that the situation, based on reports that have been made through the media — although the Fire Marshal's report has been concluded yet — does sound like a situation that is a good example of how the interim 911 solution would have improved public safety. While I want to emphasize the fact that the Yukon government remains committed to working with all of the partner agencies on a broader 911 dispatch project, the reason that we proceeded with an interim solution is that we believe it would be the quickest way to implement an improvement to service immediately. What that would have seen in a situation where someone dials 911 in Dawson City is they would receive a recording that states emergency services for Dawson City are: "for police, press 1; for fire, press 2 and for ambulance, press 3. That would have then immediately connected them to the proper number. We appreciate the importance of this. It is a priority for this government to seek the approval of the CRTC to allow Northwestel to operate that interim 911 auto-select solution. I don't have the precise timelines right now, because we intended to have it up and running on the 15th of March. It was only when we were officially informed on March 24 by the CRTC that Northwestel was not allowed to operate it, that we had to go to plan B. That's what we are working on right now.

Mr. Barr: Visitors and Yukoners alike need to know what they need to do in the interim.

We recognize that there is some merit to the 911 auto-select system that will be in place, but it is an interim solution and Yukoners are wondering if the minister will think he's done with the file once it is in place. The 911 auto-select will not work for tourists or Yukoners who are calling on cellphones from outside the territory. While it is a step in the right direction, the system does not meet the high safety standards that Yukoners expect from this Yukon government. The government needs to be looking at long-term solutions to see what can be done to provide first-rate 911 services to Yukoners and visitors alike.

Once the interim service is in place, will the minister keep working toward a proper 911 service across the territory? When does he think this will be in place?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: What the member doesn't seem to have understood from our discussion the other day is that even in Whitehorse right now, as is common in other jurisdictions, cellular phones that have a different area code, depending on how that phone is coded by that telecommunications provider, may not reach the 911 dispatch service in Whitehorse, regardless of what we do hear. That is something that — again, we see the Leader of the NDP has no interest in the question raised by her colleague, the Member for Mount

Lorne-Southern Lakes, and doesn't appreciate the importance of this subject.

We are working on this approach. As I noted, we have actually tested — by that I mean we and Northwestel — the interim solution. It was our intention to have it fully operational before the end of March 2014. Based on the indication from the CRTC that they will not allow Northwestel to operate it until an application is made, that's what we're working on right now. I have also asked staff in the interim to also consider whether we should be looking at highway signage options with Yukon municipalities about improving awareness of the local numbers in those areas, much as when entering the 911 service area there are signs up that say, "You are entering a 911 service area." We remain committed to working with all our partners on this matter.

Question re: School calendar

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Minister of Education. In February 2013, the government proposed that Yukon schools, including rural ones, move to a common school calendar. The idea was immediately rejected by rural schools. I told the minister at that time, if you're going to go with a common calendar, adapt the Dawson model Yukon-wide. It was developed based upon local need and local input. This model was not an option when the department gave the school councils a choice for the calendars.

A year later, after many meetings and a survey from the minister's department, the government has abandoned their idea of a common calendar for both Whitehorse and rural schools. Can the minister tell Yukoners how much money was spent on this process, which essentially has left the status quo in place?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't have the numbers that were spent on consulting with school councils as well as the Yukon Teachers Association with respect to the calendars. I do know that Whitehorse, through the Minister of Education's leadership, has adopted a common start date for this coming year.

Something else that was important that emerged from those discussions was the fact that most Whitehorse schools wanted to maintain that two-week spring break, as well as having that start date the same, so that elementary school students weren't starting on a different date from high school students. I know that is extremely important to the school communities in Whitehorse. Obviously for school communities outside of Whitehorse, such as the Robert Service School, it was very important to them that they not be in school past the first of June. So those accommodations were made for that school with the introduction of the calendar that will be coming forward this year.

I know that many of my colleagues and I, as former Minister of Education, heard from a number of constituents with respect to introducing a three-year calendar, and I know that is something else that the Minister of Education has done. She listened to Yukoners through the school councils, she listed to teachers through the Yukon Teachers Association, and I believe that the solutions that she has come up with will

meet the needs of the various school communities throughout the territory.

Mr. Silver: As it turns out, rural schools have never been keen to adopt the common calendar with Whitehorse. This idea did originate with the government and, after a costly consultation process, it was wisely abandoned.

Now, Yukoners deserve to know how much it cost for this process, which ended up leaving things as they were in the first place. The government does talk a lot about spending more money than ever in education, but spending like this certainly does not improve educational outcomes. When the government announced a common calendar was in the works, a former minister said — and I quote: “The move to common start dates aims to close the disparity that exists between rural and Whitehorse secondary schools related to the number of electives available to the students.”

Now that the common calendar has been abandoned, how does the government intend to meet this objective?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As former Minister of Education, I think it is important to remind the Member for Klondike that he stood on his feet in this House and asked for a common calendar — this was not that long ago — based on the Dawson model, but the Dawson model doesn’t work for all Yukon schools.

We have heard from schools in Watson Lake that they would prefer to start later. We have heard from schools in Whitehorse that they would prefer to start elementary schools and high schools on the same date and they would prefer to maintain the two-week spring break.

It’s interesting — the selective memory that the Member for Klondike has with respect to this issue and many other issues with respect to changing positions and flip-flops that he has become famous for here on the floor of this House.

With respect to what we’re trying to do with rural equity — there are many examples. I know there was a comprehensive trades training that was conducted in Dawson City last September. I believe it is scheduled this spring to take place in Carmacks as well. Another model is that of the Watson Lake high school — the blended learning model that is extremely successful and has been or will be presented by Education officials at a number of national conferences. I was in Watson Lake when representatives of Robert Service School were down looking at that exact model and perhaps looking to adopt that into their community.

Mr. Silver: The member can twist my words around but I have been constant in my abilities and my advocating for a common calendar of Dawson.

The government thought that increasing the number of electives available to students was something that needed to be done. That’s the question in the House. It tried to do it by imposing a common calendar but it has abandoned the idea after a costly attempt to implement this idea. The fact remains that there are fewer electives available in rural Yukon and the minister can’t answer how his government plans to change that.

In February 2013, the government promised — and I quote: “Better coordination of the Yukon school calendar will

improve distance learning options and will ultimately lead to better experiences and results for students”. The common calendar has been abandoned. How does this government plan to improve distance education options?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Of course, we have a record in this House where all of our words are recorded in Hansard, and I invite the member to go back and look at what he stated with respect to a common calendar.

He stated on this floor that, based on the Dawson model — absolutely I agree with what he’s saying there. But that Dawson model doesn’t work across the Yukon.

As I’ve mentioned, the parents, the teachers and the students in Whitehorse wanted to look for a two-week spring break and a common start date that wasn’t as early as when the students in Dawson City wanted to go in. For people in Whitehorse, it wasn’t that important that they be out by May 31. For people in the community of Dawson, it is important.

When we’re looking at adjusting the electives for students who aren’t in Whitehorse, there’s the blended learning model that has proven to be very successful in Watson Lake. There are the trades events, such as the one that took place in Dawson City last fall and an upcoming one, I believe, that is scheduled for Carmacks.

I do take issue with the member opposite saying one thing in previous sittings and previous sessions and then conveniently ignoring it. We only have to look at the F.H. Collins project — a press release by the Leader of the Liberal Party suggesting that he would consider delaying the project, redesigning it or considering a new location. Now he criticizes the government for \$5 million in design expenditures.

Question re: National Building Code

Ms. White: On March 31, orders-in-council 55 and 56 were issued. These regulations allow modifications to building codes in the Yukon. The government has ordered that section 9.36 of the National Building Code of Canada not be included before April 1, 2015. This section of the National Building Code is concerned with energy efficiency for housing and small buildings. Energy efficiency is about saving homeowners money on heating bills, and it’s about responding to climate change by reducing the carbon footprint of space heating.

Why has the Government of Yukon excluded energy-efficiency requirements with these regulations to amend building codes? Why are they watering down the standards and waiting another year before adopting these changes to the building code?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I thank the member for asking the question. What happened is that, in the past, the Yukon has automatically adopted changes to the National Building Code. When section 9.36 of the National Building Code came into effect last year, it caused a number of concerns for Yukon homebuilders, especially those who built log homes and found it extremely difficult. I know that I personally had times when I had more complaints from Yukoners about the National Building Code in one week than I had received in the previous 10 years as an MLA.

Government responded to that, and I know that several of my colleagues, including the MLAs for Kluane, Pelly-Nisutlin and Watson Lake had also heard from their constituents. Since it had been the automatic adoption of a national code, what government did was listen to the concerns of Yukoners and made a decision that, for a period of one year, that section, which had only been brought into force in 2013, will not be in effect for one calendar year. We are forming an advisory committee that will give us advice on whether some or all of the provisions in that section should be brought back into effect at the end of that one-year period. Once we've heard from Yukoners and stakeholders, we will make that decision.

Ms. White: The Government of Yukon issued a regulation to exclude energy efficiency from building codes, but the City of Whitehorse has not. The City of Whitehorse knows that an energy-efficient home is more comfortable to live in, less expensive to operate and kinder to the climate. When it comes to using energy efficiently and sustainably, the City of Whitehorse has been leading the way in the Yukon and across the country. They've remained compliant with section 9.36 of the National Building Code, but the Government of Yukon has not.

Who is this government listening to? Whose needs is this government serving by watering down the energy-efficiency standards? What difference will this next year make? Why does this Government of Yukon want there to be a double standard when it comes to energy-efficiency requirements of buildings across the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: As I hear from one of my colleagues, the answer is very simple. We believe that Yukoners should be able to build log homes. We heard serious concerns from log-home builders about the effect of this section. We also heard from other Yukon home constructors. We have not made a decision that these will be permanently withdrawn. As I noted to the member, Yukon had automatically adopted changes that were made to the National Building Code without consultation with Yukoners because the automatic adoption previously occurred. We are changing that, recognizing the concerns that Yukoners had with decisions that were largely made by southern Canadians about what the requirements should be for home construction under section 9.36 of the National Building Code. We have removed the application of that section for a one-year period. We are forming an advisory committee to hear advice from Yukon stakeholders and Yukon technical people about what we should do at the end of that year, including whether all or some of the provisions contained in section 9.36 of the National Building Code should be brought back into effect or should not.

Let me assure the member that we are committed to listening to Yukoners and that is exactly why we are doing this consultation. We were very concerned about the possibility that Yukoners would find it difficult to be able to construct a log home.

Question re: Highway improvements

Mr. Tredger: The upkeep of our highways is a crucial part of this government's responsibility. There are many hard-working Yukoners who dedicate their careers to maintaining our roads and we greatly appreciate all that they do.

However, the minister has a responsibility to ensure that proper planning of highway repairs is done. I asked the minister one year ago today about the section of the north Klondike Highway between Minto and Pelly Crossing. This part of the highway is riddled with dangerous potholes and frost heaves and requires immediate attention. This government's solution has been to continually patch the highway, but that is no longer effective. The road has deteriorated beyond patching and requires a major upgrade.

When will the minister commit to rebuilding the north Klondike Highway between Minto and Pelly Crossing?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: It is nice to hear that the member opposite is an expert on highways. I am going to go with what the Department of Highways and Public Works is doing in ongoing work and what we have been doing year after year. We just finished commencing our spring road show where we rate our BST and we look at prioritizing the sections that are in need of repair. I know that the good-working employees of the Department of Highways and Public Works are out there right now — as we speak — filling those potholes and dealing with the permafrost issues.

These challenges are met on a daily basis. It is just a good testament of how hard our folks work. We are investing. You just have to look at this budget — have a quick look at how much money we are investing in infrastructure for our roads and maintaining our vital transportation links. I am happy with the work that we are doing and I will go with the recommendations from our department, from those who know what they are doing, and I will be moving forward.

Mr. Tredger: The minister says he takes road transportation seriously, but it has been all talk and little action. If the minister won't believe me, I will read him part of a note that I received from a constituent — and I quote: "All original attempts to patch appear now to have deteriorated or failed to appoint, where there are now yawning holes, some in complex stretching right across the road; many being deep and sharp edged — accidents waiting to happen."

I have been hearing for years from my constituents about their concerns, about the continual deterioration of this particular stretch of highway. I have raised this issue in the House before. It is time to show some leadership. Will the minister keep patching holes or will he do the right thing and commit to a major upgrade for the north Klondike Highway?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I would like to think that our employees aren't doing little action — they are doing lots of action. Just look at the largest transportation budget ever in Yukon history. The O&M expenditures for our roads, just on BST, have remained constant over the past several years. They average out at approximately \$5.5 million annually. That doesn't take into consideration increased material costs or the

price of fuel. We're still spending money on our roads and fixing the portions of the road that need fixing.

I used to work for the Department of Highways and Public Works and spent a lot of time dealing with the permafrost issues up in the north and in the Beaver Creek area. I know how hard it is to maintain our roads and how much work goes into it from our employees, and I'm proud of them.

Mr. Tredger: Lots of money spent — no planning done. If tourism is a priority for this government, the minister responsible for highways needs to make safe highways a priority. The Silver Trail Chamber of Commerce has repeatedly stated that the highway is a crucial link for the area. If it is not properly maintained, it negatively affects the tourism industry in the region. People are talking about the poor state of the north Klondike Highway.

With the Association of Yukon Communities meeting this weekend in Dawson City and the gold show the following weekend, many people are going to be travelling this road and talking about it even more. Does the minister recognize the impact on tourism that our highway condition has, and does he have any plans to finally fix this section of the north Klondike Highway?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I'll speak to the budget of last year. On average, in the last few years we have been doing about 100 kilometres of BST work. Last year we finished almost 150 kilometres of BST work, an extra \$2 million we put into the budget — again, the largest transportation budget. Of course, the member just asking me this question will not be voting for it so obviously he doesn't want any repairs done.

I'm proud of our transportation officials and the hard work they do. I have said this in this House before and I'll say it again: I'm confident in our transportation staff, our engineers, our guys who go out there and work on those roads. They are doing a good job whether it's for the tourists, whether it's for the ore trucks, or whether it's for the Premier or for some of my fellow colleagues heading to Dawson for AYC.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 671

Deputy Clerk: Motion No. 671, standing in the name of Mr. Elias.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin:

THAT this House urges the State of Alaska to recognize the extremely poor outlook for the 2014 chinook salmon run in the Yukon River drainage and to take the necessary management actions to achieve the interim management escapement goal for chinook salmon based upon the Eagle

sonar program near the Yukon-Alaska border, as agreed to by the U.S.-Canada Yukon River Panel.

Mr. Elias: I'm honoured to rise today in support of Motion No. 671, urging the State of Alaska to recognize the extremely poor outlook for the 2014 chinook salmon run in the Yukon River drainage and to take the necessary management actions to achieve the interim management escapement goal for chinook salmon based upon the Eagle sonar program near the Yukon-Alaska border, as agreed to by the U.S.-Canada Yukon River Panel.

I want to expand on a couple of issues in this motion: one is the Yukon River drainage, which obviously also includes Yukon; the management actions, because this is an international cooperative effort that includes various levels of government, panels, boards and committees; the escapement goal for chinook salmon, because this relates to the salmon that come into the Yukon to spawn; and, obviously, the U.S.-Canada Yukon River Panel.

Yukon is a place commonly characterized by the wealth of its natural resources and the vast expanse of its wilderness. The abundance of Yukon's wilderness has inherently shaped the narrative of the environmental issues facing us today, leaving its mark on the history, politics and the people.

Such richness has in turn created intense debate over the years, and the very poor chinook salmon runs in our territory are no different. This struggle is reflected in the testimony of so many Yukoners and how a lack of the chinook salmon fishery has affected the socio-economic lifestyles and the cultural well-being of our citizens.

Whether it is commercial, domestic, recreational or subsistence chinook salmon fishing, this issue affects us all, and I encourage all members of the Opposition to seize this opportunity and to speak in support of this motion today.

Today, as chinook salmon become increasingly scarce in our rivers, our streams and our lakes, our relationship and socio-economic and traditional livelihoods with the salmon are in danger.

I will tell a personal story about when I was very young on the shores of the Teslin River, just downstream from Johnsons Crossing. It's about the late Virginia Smarch, a respected Tlingit elder from Teslin. She has taught many children over her time on this Earth about the value that chinook have, not just to us but to the entire ecosystem. She taught us about the respect before and after the nightly drift that happened in early August of each year. She taught us about how the salmon — when they are done their life and finished spawning — throw themselves on shore so other living things can live from their last days. Even the trees use their nutrients.

I witnessed times when she would sing in her language to the smoke underneath the hanging salmon in the cache, so the salmon would all receive enough smoke equally. Once the ability to teach that cultural aspect is gone, it's gone. No amount of technology or money is going to bring that back. That's why I wanted to provide the opportunity to discuss this motion today.

The salmon culture is central to the lifestyles of many Yukoners. Understanding the cultural significance of salmon is essential if we are to realize the far-reaching ramifications of losing these last stocks of wild chinook salmon. Preserving Yukon's chinook salmon populations is essential if we are to safeguard a rich and, in my opinion, endangered natural resource and preserve natural cultures — preserve salmon cultures and traditional knowledge that have existed for thousands of years.

I believe the historical ability of our citizens to effectively and efficiently utilize our natural resource, in this case chinook salmon, has been a major contributor to societal growth, distribution and success, giving rise to the territory we all call home today.

Mr. Speaker, maybe we should ask ourselves again: What does stewardship really mean? The dictionary defines it as the conducting, supervising or managing of something, especially the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care, i.e. the stewardship of our natural resources.

My grandmother used to tell me stories of a time when all they had to do was fish for king salmon for two days and they had enough for their winter supply of food. Then they would stop fishing. My caucus colleagues and I agreed to table this motion today and discuss this crucial issue for the sake of the chinook species. Subsistence fishing means very different things in Alaska than it does in Yukon. Simply put, in Alaska, a person from Texas can move to Alaska, live there for 12 months and then they are able to get a subsistence fishing licence. In the Yukon, it's completely different and it's defined in chapter 16 of the constitutionally protected First Nation final agreements.

It is defined as this: "Subsistence" means:

"a. the use of Edible Fish or Wildlife Products by a Yukon Indian Person for sustenance and for food for traditional ceremonial purposes including potlatches; and

"b. the use by a Yukon Indian Person of Non-Edible By-Products of harvests under (a) for such domestic purposes as clothing, shelter or medicine, and for domestic, spiritual and cultural purposes; but

"c. except for traditional production of handicrafts and implements by a Yukon Indian person, does not include commercial uses of Edible Fish or Wildlife Products or Non-Edible By-Products."

Yukon River chinook salmon escapement targets have not been met in five of the last seven years. Early forecasts anticipate the salmon run to be extremely poor and predictions are that this year may be the worst ever on record. The treaty provisions were not met in 2007, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2013. The 2014 Yukon River chinook salmon run is forecast to be the lowest on record. Strong management measures in both the United States and Canada will be required to respond to this year's poor chinook salmon run. This issue is very important to me and so many Yukoners, not to mention my constituents. It affects us all directly.

I have noted in the past in this Assembly that my community has had to purchase and fly in sockeye salmon for

the annual general assemblies for us to eat, because there has been no chinook salmon to harvest in the Porcupine River. I was privileged once again to go to Washington, D.C. to have the opportunity to press our case to Canadian and United States officials. I often note that this trip is to seek out face-to-face meetings about the importance of sustaining the Porcupine caribou herd, but I also raised the critical issue of the Yukon River chinook salmon run. I want to thank the Premier for his invitation for me to help him do so. It is important for those officials to know that conservation and escapement targets have not been met for five of the last seven years.

This is the United States' responsibility to meet the terms of their agreements. It is imperative that chinook salmon runs return to their historic levels to meet subsistence and cultural needs of First Nations and to support sustainable recreational, domestic and commercial fisheries. As neighbours, we must continue to live up to our international agreements and we look forward to continued cooperation and implementation of the joint management actions as it says in the motion before us today.

Over the years that I have been in this Assembly, we've seen several poor runs of chinook salmon in the Yukon and Porcupine Rivers and the worst ever on record in the Klukshu River. We've seen Yukon-wide salmon conservation closures. We've seen only 399 salmon get through the Whitehorse fishway in years past. We've seen the Alaskans taking too many chinook salmon. We've seen the pollock fishery bycatch of king salmon in the thousands out in the open ocean. We've seen the parasite, ichthyophonous, also hurting the salmon run in our territory. Mr. Speaker, that parasite attacks the very heart of the chinook salmon.

Based on the forecast, it is expected that there will be no allowable catch of Yukon River chinook salmon including subsistence harvest in 2014. It is very encouraging to see that Alaska has responded to this poor outlook and is implementing additional measures to support chinook salmon conservation, including additional funds allocated to determine causes of the decline. Their initiative is a welcome step toward addressing the treaties that have been signed over the past 30 years.

I would like to share a short history of these treaties. Canada and the U.S. agreed to cooperate in the management, research and enhancement of Pacific salmon stocks of mutual concern by ratifying the Pacific Salmon Treaty, signed in March of 1985.

The treaty is based on the commitment of both countries to prevent overfishing, provide for optimum production and ensure that both countries receive benefits equal to the production of salmon originating in their waters. These fishing arrangements expired in 1992 and government-to-government negotiations did not result in a successful renewal of a long-term fishing arrangement under the Pacific Salmon Treaty until 1999. Canada and the United States were unable to come to an agreement on comprehensive, coast-wide fishery arrangements between 1992 and 1998. In 2008, the Pacific Salmon Commission recommended a new bilateral agreement

for the conservation and harvest-sharing of Pacific salmon to the governments of Canada and the United States.

These newly negotiated terms included changes to chapter 3, governing chinook salmon. The new fishing agreements represent a major step forward in sustainable harvest-sharing. The new regimes will be in place until the end of 2018. Details of the treaty relevant to the Yukon River salmon include Article VIII, as follows:

“1. Notwithstanding Articles III, paragraph 1(b), and VII, arrangements for consultation, recommendation of escapement targets and approval of enhancement activities on the Yukon River require further development to take into account the unique characteristics of that River.

“2. The Parties consider it important to ensure effective conservation of stocks originating in the Yukon River and to explore the development of cooperative research and identification of potential enhancement opportunities.

“3. The Parties shall initiate in 1985, and conclude, as soon as possible, negotiations to, inter alia.

“(a) account for United States harvests of salmon originating in the Canadian section of the River;

“(b) develop co-operative management procedures taking into account United States management programs for stocks originating in the United States section of the River;

“(c) consider co-operative research programs, enhancement opportunities, and exchanges of biological data; and

“(d) develop an organizational structure to deal with Yukon River issues.

“4. Prior to the entry into force of this Treaty, the Parties shall agree upon:

“(a) the range within which the accounting of United States interceptions referred to in paragraph 3(a) shall be established;

“(b) arrangements for exchange of available data on the stocks; and

“(c) proposals for research.”

The Canadian delegation to the panel continued to raise concerns around how the treaty was not resulting in the achievement of its goals or a fair deal for Canada. This past March, the panel reconfirmed the three-year commitment to the Canadian border interim management escapement goals adopted in March 2013 and referred to in this motion.

These goals include: 42,500 to 55,000 chinook salmon; 70,000 to 104,000 upper Yukon fall chum salmon, as determined by the Eagle sonar program; and 22,000 to 49,000 fall chum salmon in the Fishing Branch River, a tributary of the Porcupine River.

The next steps this year involve the Yukon River international salmon summit, a meeting of U.S. and Canadian stakeholders, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Fisheries and Oceans Canada that occurred on April 9 and 10 in Fairbanks, Alaska.

There are many leaders and spokespersons for the chinook salmon, and I'm happy to see that our requests for action are starting to yield results. Alaska has since closed the entire chinook fishery. It is a positive step for Alaska to start

to make substantial efforts to meet these target and mahsi' cho goes out to all of those who have worked so hard on this file. They are crucial to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Pacific salmon stocks. I would like to thank the fisheries managers in Alaska for taking these big steps toward addressing the ongoing low chinook salmon runs.

I would like to share the details of some of the restrictions put in place in Alaska. These changes will affect a lot of the Yukon fishermen who would normally visit Alaska. I must stress at this time that it is my hope that they be regulated, implemented and properly enforced. This season, Alaska has put into place a restriction on the mesh size of nets prior to the first pulse closure for all chinook salmon fishing. Net mesh sizes are to be four inches or smaller. The nets are to be a maximum of 60 feet in length as well as the use of only selective gear such as dip nets, beach seines and manned fish wheels. These measures are intended to allow for the release of all chinook salmon that may be accidentally caught during other fisheries.

The continued first pulse closure on Lower Yukon River is another step to prevent any harvest of salmon and this closure will remain in effect until the chinook run is complete. It is noted that this closure, which was implemented the past two seasons, is now a regulated requirement and will be monitored and enforced by state authorities.

This is encouraging, but we need to continue to look at what other measures will contribute to a healthy chinook fishery. As chinook salmon arrive in each district, subsistence fishing for chinook salmon will be closed. The closure is expected to be in place through most of the run for each section of the river. Fishermen in the coastal districts of Koyukuk, Innoku and Tanana rivers should expect some closed fishing time to protect chinook salmon in those areas.

Closures will be initiated in the coastal district and district 1, when assessment information indicates that the first chinook salmon have begun their migration along the coast and into the river. This closure will be similarly implemented in upriver fishing districts and sub-districts based on migratory timing. The sport fishery for chinook salmon will be closed in the United States portion of the Yukon River drainage, including the Tanana River drainage. Sport fishing for chinook salmon, including catch-and-release fishing, will be prohibited.

Chinook salmon may not be retained or possessed. It remains to be seen how these measures will contribute to the achievement of the escapement goal. Ultimately, the goal is dependent on adequate chinook salmon stocks arriving in our Yukon River systems.

In this respect, we work toward common management objectives of chinook salmon. Effective management measures and ongoing collaboration among federal, state and First Nation governments and boards and committees is required to respond to this challenge. Many governments, boards, councils, entities and passionate individuals are working toward ensuring that chinook salmon remain part of the social, cultural, environmental and economic fabric of our Yukon.

I understand the Premier continues to raise this issue with the Governor of Alaska when they meet to make the governor aware of the impact it's having on Yukoners and how the management of the fishery in Alaska is impacting on chinook salmon. I also understand that the minister continues to raise this with the federal Minister of Fisheries of Oceans, who has the responsibility for chinook salmon. I'm referring to the Environment minister.

I would also like to take some time to quote from a letter that was sent on August 23, 2013, to the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada. It's from our Premier of the Yukon and it is carbon copied to the Grand Chief Ruth Massie, Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nation chiefs. If I could read two sections of that letter: "As a partial response to the initial decline in salmon stocks encountered in 2000, Canada and the United States established and subsequently ratified the Yukon River salmon agreement in 2001, a subagreement to the Canada-U.S. Pacific Salmon Treaty. This agreement recognized the shared use of the fishery in both Alaska and Yukon and the need to achieve a sustainable fishery in both countries.

"Unfortunately, the cross-border escapement targets identified in that agreement for chinook salmon have not been met in 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2012. The forecast for this year also indicates that the escapement target will not be met."

Another section I would like to quote from this letter is: "We have been proactive on an operational level where we have assisted with enhancement projects related to spawning, bed improvements, aquatic health monitoring and salmon hatchery contributions, as well as implementing a more effective water management stewardship program for our mining industries."

Finally, I'll end the quote with: "While salmon management remains the primary responsibility and mandate of the Government of Canada, we are pleased to assist where possible in achieving a more effective arrangement that provides for a sustainable salmon fishery in the Yukon. In this regard, we look forward to your efforts and actions in responding to this very immediate concern. Again, thank you for your considerations and I look forward to how Canada can advance these concerns. Sincerely, Darrell Pasloski, Premier of the Yukon."

Yukon First Nations — notably the Teslin Tlingit Council, the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Selkirk First Nation — have been leaders in their management of the chinook fishery. The Teslin Tlingit Council, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Selkirk First Nation have implemented voluntary reductions of harvest and have completed their own assessments of tributaries in their respective traditional territories.

As an example, in 2010 and 2011, the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation took it upon itself to do a salmon knowledge study in their traditional territory. I pulled out one of the recommendations from that study. They recommended — and I quote: "... that the LSCFN secure funding and resources to conduct fish and fish habitat assessments in future years to increase the knowledge base as prioritized

above while also building capacity for fisheries sampling in the community."

Mr. Speaker, in that Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation salmon knowledge study, they also recommended elders' recommendations to the broader public, and I found it very important and forward-looking to have the elders have their own recommendations over and above the biologists, over and above the technicians, over and above the politicians. That was very enlightening to see, and it's great to see the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation take it upon themselves to do that.

The Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee produced communication materials that are titled "Salmon Know No Borders" and a brilliant video on the chinook salmon fishery on the Alaskan side of the river, and it has organized salmon summits with the Council of Yukon First Nations.

The Department of Environment staff provide technical input and a Yukon perspective on the Yukon River Panel, which continues to review the performance of fisheries management regimes and make recommendations on improvements. The panel meets twice a year in December and March.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has regular contact with Alaskan fisheries managers throughout the season. The department held a public meeting in Whitehorse in October to review and improve the *Yukon River Salmon Agreement*.

These measures this summer are just the first step. We need to continue to have strong actions in Alaska and in Yukon to help the recovery of the chinook salmon stock. Many groups will continue to work to return the chinook salmon run to our historic levels. I will continue to raise this issue on behalf of the people of our territory, and I would like to thank everyone for taking part in this important debate, recognizing the importance of the Yukon River salmon to the people of our territory.

At the end of the day, it's up to us to be stewards of this precious resource. We, as a collective with our neighbours in Alaska, all have to make the chinook salmon recovery a priority. I look forward to hearing from other members on this motion, and I hope to seek unanimous support. Those are my opening comments.

Ms. White: I am pleased to rise to speak to this motion put forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, and I thank him for his passion and his point of view. I, however, will be approaching this motion from a number of different angles.

First, I would like to focus on the wording of this motion: "THAT this House urge the State of Alaska to recognize the extremely poor outlook for the 2014 chinook salmon run in the Yukon River drainage..." This motion is entirely focused on what Alaska could do to improve the numbers of chinook salmon in the Yukon River, but this motion does not speak to our own responsibilities as a territory or as a country. This motion stops at the Alaska-Yukon border.

As many of you will know, the State of Alaska closed the entire chinook salmon fishery on the Yukon River system this

Monday. There will not be any opportunities for fishing chinook, whether they are commercial, subsistence, First Nation or recreational fishers. They are also working on eliminating bycatch by other fishers on the rivers by regulating the size and types of nets that are used to catch other species of fish.

Alaska has well and truly recognized this for what it really is — a crisis. In the 1990s, the chinook run numbered in the three-hundred-thousands. Last year it was well under 100,000, and this year we are expecting the lowest chinook return on record.

Alaska has taken virtually all the steps that they could to protect the chinook salmon run on the Yukon River system. They are doing what they can. More can be done when it comes to the protection chinook receive when they reach the open ocean, but I will touch on that later.

What we would like to have seen from this motion was some recognition that we cannot address this issue by lobbying Alaska to fix things. We are not doing enough in Canada and in the territory to address this crisis.

We recognize that there are jurisdictional issues that restrict the ability of this government to make laws and regulations when it comes to protecting the chinook salmon. However, this government has the opportunity to be a leader when it comes to this issue and to create a climate wherein Yukoners, First Nations and Alaskans can resolve this crisis together.

There needs to be a recognition that, first, Fisheries and Oceans Canada is failing Yukoners when it comes to protecting the vital chinook salmon. DFO oversaw the depletion of the Atlantic cod stocks and, more recently, the Fraser River sockeye salmon run. They have been trying, and failing, to address the problems facing the Yukon River chinook.

For more than 15 years, DFO has been trying to reverse the decline of the chinook, but the numbers continue to fall and the decline is actually increasing. That is why this government needs to take a more forceful approach with the levels of government that are calling the shots. I was pleased to hear that the Premier has a good working relationship with the Prime Minister and the federal government, as well as the Alaskan governor, but it does not matter how good the relationship is when the current Government of Canada has shown an unwillingness to address this issue with actions.

Yukoners are not confident in any promises made by a government that has continually made cuts to Canada's scientific infrastructure while at the same time muzzling the scientists who remain.

Yukoners expect this territorial Yukon government to stand up for them when the federal government has shown that they won't. We would like to see this government engage in a face-to-face dialogue with the Alaskan and federal governments and make our position clear, rather than asking them to improve things for us.

We also need to recognize that this issue is not limited to the Yukon River. Though we are feeling the effects of the dwindling chinook stocks, we must acknowledge that these

fish are spending the majority of their lifespan in the open ocean, where they are faced with pollution, viruses, overfishing and warming seas. During the Available Light Film Festival this year, I had the opportunity to watch a documentary called *Salmon Confidential*. For anyone who is interested in the welfare of wild salmon, I suggest you watch it. You can find it on-line at www.salmonconfidential.ca. This documentary follows the health of the wild salmon and how they are affected by the fish farms along the Fraser River. That population of fish has crashed in recent years, all for hard-to-pinpoint reasons until the fish started to be tested for infections. European strains of the piscine reovirus and infectious salmon anaemia have been discovered in the wild salmon populations and it appears that fish farms are the cause.

The reason that this is relevant is that the migration paths of our Yukon River chinook salmon and the Fraser River chinook and sockeye salmon cross paths in the ocean. I spoke to Alexandra Morton this morning, the marine biologist who has been ringing alarm bells for some time about this issue. She explained that viruses are designed to survive; that they depend on their ability to jump from fish to fish, and that's where the expression "go viral" came from — their ability to survive. I have this question: What if the decline in our chinook salmon run is directly or indirectly linked to what's happening in the Fraser River? Are we testing for these two European virus strains? She left me with a sobering thought; it was the last thing she said on the phone. She asked why wouldn't we want to rule this out?

So just like the increasing infections these salmon are being exposed to, we also see the impact that open-ocean fishing is having on them. The Alaska salmon fishery works hard to protect the offshore salmon, but they are being destroyed as bycatch of the pollock industry by the thousands. The fact is we need to do more. To do more, we need to know what is happening to these stocks so that we can fix their problems. Asking Alaska to be a leader is fine, but we need to be standing alongside them. We know that the status quo is not working. If we are to see the reverse of this decline before it is too late, this government must take a leadership role and get serious commitments from all levels of government.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this motion today. I would like to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing it forward. It's an important one and it's one that certainly has taken some of my time and thought over the past number of years. It is something that not only I but the Department of Environment for Yukon is certainly very concerned about.

As I have indicated previously, we are deeply concerned about the current status of the Yukon River chinook population. We are cognizant of the challenge that it takes to address the particular issue. As we have discussed previously, there are a range of players who are involved in this particular issue. It is incumbent on us all to recognize that we have to be creative and be aware of what each different player's role is in this particular case.

I can't speak for the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, but I think the reason that we've singled out the State of Alaska in this particular motion is not to abrogate the responsibility of either Canada or the federal government of the United States or, indeed, Yukon or First Nation harvesters along the river on both the Canadian and Alaskan sides of the border. It's in recognition of the fact that by far the most important player, when it comes to the actual activities in the river, is the State of Alaska.

I can talk a little bit about some of the issues raised by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. She talked about the pollock bycatch issue and some of the issues that are faced by the chinook salmon out in the ocean. Those are issues that are very relevant and very important, but they are something that no one really has a good answer for. There are obviously actions that can be taken in the pollock fishery that can reduce bycatch. Some actions have been taken to date, and my understanding is that there have been some improvements. There is obviously a significant amount that is unknown about what happens to the chinook salmon when they are out in the ocean. Obviously, they spend between four and six years in the ocean and, during that time, they are exposed to any number of hazards that are either naturally occurring or not naturally occurring, and some are better understood than others. For instance, I don't think the body of science is as developed as it could be around the impacts of climate change on the oceans and, more particularly, on chinook salmon in the ocean.

Some have posited the idea that there's a role for both El Niño and La Niña in impacting the chinook salmon. As well, as the Member for Takhini-Kopper King noted, there's the potential of viruses and other diseases that salmon could be exposed to when they're in the ocean.

These are all relevant issues and they're all ones that deserve comment, but they aren't ones that we have a lot of control over, and that's why I'm willing to turn now to the actions that occur in-river, because that's where there is some opportunity for a new approach to things and some opportunity for some real action to be taken.

In the motion, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin discusses the Eagle sonar program. I think it's worth providing a bit of information for folks, based on the briefings I've received from the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee over the past couple of years and from those who, quite frankly, know much more about this than I do.

When the salmon enter the mouth of the river on the Alaska side, they pass through a sonar system there and that's when we get an initial count of how many salmon are entering the river. They are then counted again when they enter the Eagle sonar system, which is closer to the Yukon-Alaska border. At that point, they are obviously counted again, and that's where we can measure whether or not the interim management escapement goals have been met or not.

As has been noted previously by a number of members, including the Premier in his letter to the Prime Minister, the salmon escapement targets have unfortunately not been met in five of the last seven years.

I would expect that at the end of this year we will probably be saying six in the last eight years, but that remains to be seen. Based on the forecast that we have currently, there will likely be no allowable catch of Yukon River chinook salmon, including subsistence harvest.

What we know typically is that a large number of salmon enter the river and a significantly lower number make it to the border. The reason for that drastic reduction is because of the activities that occur along the river in Alaska. There are commercial, subsistence and recreational harvests that occur all along the river. It is there that the vast majority of these salmon are being harvested.

When we say subsistence in Yukon, we typically refer to First Nation subsistence harvest — harvesting for traditional purposes — but in Alaska, as the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin noted, subsistence means a very different thing in Alaska. Any individual can harvest for subsistence purposes. Any resident of Alaska who has been there for over 12 years is entitled to a subsistence harvest. If an individual moves from Texas to Anchorage and spends nine months there, that individual is eligible for subsistence harvesting of salmon. What we hear, at least, is that oftentimes that harvest is significantly larger than what we think of as subsistence harvesting here. It is not unheard of — from what I have heard — for individuals in Alaska to harvest 80 to 100 salmon in a season.

You contrast that with what is the traditional harvest here in Yukon — or at least the current harvest by traditional means in Yukon — and it's much, much lower. I have heard that some First Nations will harvest as many as one dozen salmon through a season. Typically that's for ceremonial purposes as opposed to a steady food source. Nonetheless, there is some harvest on the Yukon side. In recognition of that fact that the vast majority of the harvest occurs on the Alaska side, this motion was crafted by the member to reflect that reality and in order for there to be a meaningful difference made, we would need the State of Alaska to take action, as is their responsibility.

If I could return to my original comments, I wanted to take a moment to recognize that Yukon and Alaska have a long history of a very strong working relationship on a range of issues related to economic issues, transportation issues and cultural issues. Those are all very important but those are not necessary to list today. However, I should note some of the wildlife and fishing resources agreements that we have with Alaska to provide some context to the strong working relationship we have with Alaska.

We are both responsible for management with regard to the Porcupine caribou, the Fortymile caribou, the Chisana caribou, polar bears and of course, as we're discussing today, salmon in the Yukon.

Across the board with these issues, I have to say my opinion is that our relationship with Alaska is incredible and should be the envy of any province and state in the south or any other part of either one of our countries. We are able to look past the border and manage these important species collaboratively to the benefit of not only the species itself and

the herd itself, but both of our populations who rely on these species, these herds and these salmon, in some cases, for a number of reasons.

It has been referenced already, but the announcement made earlier this week by the State of Alaska indicates that they have acknowledged, first of all, the need for drastic action and have, it appears, committed to drastic action. That's a good thing and that's something we should commend Alaska for.

I should note that the implementation of this action is going to be just as important as the announcement of it. This closure is something that is going to be very, very difficult and very challenging for the State of Alaska to implement. Doing the inspections, the enforcement and regulation of this type of closure is no small task. This is going to require state troopers, who typically are the ones who enforce these sorts of things. It's going to require state troopers to go out to communities and enforce the closure of the harvest. That is going to be a very difficult task. I'm not envious of those folks having to do that. In some of these communities, the salmon are the primary source of food and complete closure is something that's going to be very difficult.

I do anticipate that there may be some changes throughout the season with regard to this closure. I'm not sure that it will be as cut and dried or as black and white, as we might think at this point in the season.

That's not necessarily a bad thing. That's not necessarily a loss on our part. It's simply recognition of the challenge that the Alaskans will face in implementing this.

In the press release that they put out earlier this week, they did note that there's a possibility that, based on the in-season assessments, there could be some changes. As I've indicated, those could be in relation to the needs of some of the small villages in Alaska or an unexpected resurgence of the population of chinook salmon.

I want to note the collaborative relationship that we have with Alaska and acknowledge the meaningful action they've announced and, while they have our support, I'm not envious of their task. It's going to be a difficult one and one that we wish them the best in. It is my hope that, by passing this motion today, we would be able to send a strong signal that the Legislature here in the Yukon supports these actions and supports the necessary actions that the State of Alaska is taking here.

With regard to the DFO and some of the comments that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King made about the Department of Fisheries and Oceans — I am never one to defend the federal government too much, but I should note that it would be irresponsible for us to say that this is strictly a DFO issue and that we should simply blame this on DFO because they haven't taken enough action. I disagree with that.

I think that if we were to implore DFO to close the fishery right now, there would be significant challenges that DFO would encounter, in particular with First Nations here in the territory. I know, for instance, there are some First Nations that don't want the fishery closed. Those First Nations have

taken actions themselves and made sacrifices themselves, and in some cases they have voluntary closures in place already, but they don't want to see the Department of Fisheries and Oceans come over top of them and take action like that. There is no harvest of chinook salmon in Yukon by anyone other than First Nations, so it's important to recognize that as well.

As I said, the sheer number — the overall number of chinook harvested on this side of the border — is remarkably small, especially in contrast to what is going on in Alaska.

I should note then that while I do agree that there is a role for DFO, the crisis that we face certainly does not rest solely on their shoulders. We shouldn't make those sorts of claims in this debate.

With regard to the issue at hand, I wanted to add a final point. I know that many Yukoners have made significant sacrifices already themselves. There have been several years over the past 10 when very, very few people were able to participate in the harvest of salmon in the territory. That's a terrible tragedy because, when you hear from groups or individuals who used to participate in a meaningful way in the salmon fishery in Yukon, you learn how important it was. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and I met with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board a few weeks ago, and they were showing a video on some of the historical perspectives on the chinook salmon. You see these pictures from only a generation ago — only a few decades ago — of the harvest in places like Teslin where individuals are catching these massive salmon and using them for ceremonial purposes, for food purposes and for traditional purposes. It was so important to them. It was so meaningful for them, for their culture and for their way of life, and that simply doesn't exist anymore. It's very sad to see that sort of coverage in those pictures, because you realize that this has a meaningful effect on people's lives in the Yukon.

As I noted, the solution, I think, is going to be for all of us to come together and to encourage action but, most particularly, there needs to be action on the American side of the border. That's why we're urging the State of Alaska to do this. We recognize that it won't be easy and that the task they have at hand is a difficult one, but we commend them for taking it. We support them and we will do whatever we can to express that support.

Motions like this are an excellent example of things that we can do. With that, Mr. Speaker, I would thank the member for bringing the motion forward. I look forward to passing this motion. I will certainly take this motion and make it available to those who would be engaging with the Alaskans on this particular issue — by that, I mean the Salmon Sub-Committee. I'll be forwarding it on to their office for their use, as they see fit.

We hope that — I can only speak for myself, I suppose, but I hope that this motion will be an arrow in their quiver when it comes to tools for them to use to express to their colleagues how important this is and the fact that they have the support of all Yukoners, as represented by the members in this Legislature.

Again, I would like to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this issue forward. I think it's an important issue that deserves this level of discussion and I look forward to doing what I can — and what we as a government can — with our partners in Alaska, with the federal governments in Canada and the United States and with all our First Nation partners, from the southern part of Yukon all the way down the Yukon River into Alaska.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to passing this motion today.

Mr. Silver: Thank you to the member opposite for putting forth this motion. The outlook for chinook numbers this year is expected to be even worse than last year's historic low of about 10,000 fish and it's important that we take some action here. The decline of the salmon stock over the last years has affected my community of Dawson. Until the mid-1990s, there had been a stable commercial fishery there and even a processing plant.

When the chinook collapsed, the plant closed. Last summer the commercial salmon fishery was closed for the majority of the season to prevent any possible effects on the chinook run and even then, there were only a handful of commercial fishermen left in the community.

By all accounts, it appears that the State of Alaska will be taking several necessary management actions to prevent further damage to this fishery. As the outlook report stated, there is no expected fisheries for chinook in the Yukon River this year. In a CBC interview yesterday, Jeff Estensen, of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game echoed this sentiment, saying that there would be no fishing for chinook salmon on the Alaska side of the Yukon River this year either. This includes commercial, sport and subsistence harvesting.

While I do support this motion, it appears that Alaska has already taken action on the poor outlook for chinook salmon in 2014. The onus therefore, now comes on the Canadian government to take responsible action on the Canadian side of the Yukon River and I encourage the government to continue to work not only just with the Alaskan neighbours, but with our federal counterparts in helping to revive the chinook populations. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: It is a privilege to speak on this today. I have listened to the Member for Klondike speak about his riding and there are salmon issues in my riding also.

The 2014 salmon run in the Yukon River drainage — we definitely need to take some necessary management actions and it looks like we are moving forward in that direction. We have had lots of debate over the years on the poor chinook salmon runs in our territory and this year I am glad to see this motion come forward.

We can have this discussion again because it is important. So many Yukoners are affected by the lack of our chinook salmon. They're affected — their lifestyles and their culture and just the way they live their lives.

I was listening to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin tell a personal story and I think I would like to tell a little bit of a

personal story too. We have chinook that run up the Tatshenshini watershed. They come up the Blanchard River. They go all the way up the Tatshenshini through into Goat Creek. There is chinook salmon there. We see them in Klukshu. We also see them in the Takhanne and a lot of little subsidiaries around there. Where I grew up, as a young fellow we used to have the opportunity to go fish for king salmon or the chinooks — we called them kings. When I was a young boy fishing with my dad, there were king salmon — 50-, 60- or 65-pound salmon — in the fast currents of the Blanchard River. I can remember a time down there when I did hook into one of them and being young, I didn't want to let go of the fishing rod, so I went into the creek and behind me came my dad grabbing me. We managed to land that thing. We were soaking wet and pretty cold because that water is glacier water, fed right out of Blanchard Lake.

I just know that's the tradition. I'm adopted into a First Nation family and I spent a lot of years in Klukshu helping the elders gather salmon, hanging salmon, smoking salmon, filleting salmon and having big salmon roasts. I know how important it is to the residents there and you don't see that any more. The cultural significance just isn't there anymore. Now the residents go down to Klukshu or Dalton Post to get some of the sockeye run, but there isn't any chinook salmon any more.

When you go to Klukshu, they are there for other reasons. They are just camping for the weekend, still keeping an eye out for bears. You don't see the smoke shacks with smoke barrelling out of them and salmon hanging like you used to see.

I was thinking about when the Premier went to Washington to do a bit of lobbying for Shakwak. I think, for me, it was really important and I was glad that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin once again went to Washington, D.C. to press the case to the Canadian and the U.S. officials about this issue. I'm glad that every year, as I understand, he gets this opportunity to go down there. It is important.

The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin spoke about several poor runs of chinook salmon in the Yukon and Porcupine rivers and the worst-ever run in the Klukshu River. I've had that conversation many times with local residents. We've seen the Yukon-wide salmon conservation closures and the local First Nations in the riding of Kluane are just used to it being closed. They just don't go fishing anymore, and that's not the way of life that they used to see. We used to see — chinook salmon or any salmon in the ocean is a silvery, really red, great meat. When they travel those thousands of miles up the rivers, say into Klukshu, they're a little bit more red and look a little more beaten up. We used to see them in the creeks, especially some of the larger salmon, where the humps on the salmon would be out of the water. There wasn't enough water for them. They would still make it up there to go and spawn. It was incredible.

It's encouraging to see that Alaska has responded to the poor outlook and they're looking at some additional measures this year to support the chinook salmon conservation, including some funds allocated to determine the cause of the

decline. I think that's also important — to look at the bigger picture. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and the Minister of the Environment spoke a little bit about some of the treaties and stuff we've signed over the past year. Those are pretty key to some of the conservation stuff too.

I want to speak a little bit about the next steps that are involved. The Yukon River international salmon summit — and I was a member of the Alsek Renewable Resources Council and the chair for quite a few years, and we would come into our annual general workshops and we'd sit down with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and always at our workshops we would get a one-hour briefing — for lack of a better word — from some of the members who sat on the Salmon Sub-Committee. They would explain to us where we were with this, explain what the Alaskans are doing compared to what we're doing. To sit there and listen to the frustration of some of those members on the Salmon Sub-Committee, but also the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the resource councils — they keep pushing forward and trying to work with our federal government and work with their Alaskan counterparts on this. It was really good to see that there were a lot of members who had the opportunity to go to this salmon summit, more than we've ever had before. Quite often we would have a handful of Yukon Canadians in there and then you'd see 100 Alaskans in there, a lot of them in the industry, looking for salmon. I think these next steps moving forward are key in the management objectives of the chinook salmon.

I have to say that the tireless work of these appointees who are on these boards and committees — some people think it's just an opportunity to get an honorarium on there. These people are very passionate on our boards, and especially the ones on the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee. I know there are a few members who have spent a better portion of probably 12 to 15 years just working for chinook salmon.

The Member for Takhini-Kopper King spoke about our federal government, but we're all in this together. We're all doing our key parts. I think there is more to it than this. That's why I'm glad to see that we're actually putting some funds toward research and finding out whether El Niño — I've heard from the commercial fishermen in Haines, Alaska. You probably have too, Mr. Speaker, being that you're an avid boater down there. They talk about the change in water temperatures and the waters coming in from the fresh streams and how that affects the salmon. They also talk about fishing out in international waters. There is a lot to it.

I think it's just key and this is a good sign that we're all working together on it. I think it's really important that on Wednesdays, if we're going to debate a motion, it's something — this is a key motion. I'm happy that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin brought this motion forward. It urges the State of Alaska to recognize the extremely poor outlook for the 2014 chinook salmon run in the Yukon River drainage and to take the necessary management actions to achieve the interim management escapement goal for chinook salmon based upon the Eagle sonar program near the Yukon-Alaska border, as agreed to by the U.S.-Canada Yukon River Panel.

I think that's key and I sure hope everyone here supports this motion. I look forward to other members who wish to speak on this. This is important. It's a way of life for Yukoners, First Nations and non-First Nations, and I think it's key to the history of the Yukon. I commend this motion.

Mr. Tredger: I am pleased to rise to speak to this motion. I guess my first introduction to salmon occurred in the first summer I was up here. I arrived in Pelly Crossing early in July with my family to get ready for school in the fall. One of my first experiences was being taken to a fish camp by Danny Joe. The energy, the knowledge, the excitement of the people there as they shared their culture and experiences in early 1990 established in me an abiding respect for the culture and the people in Pelly Crossing and the Northern Tutchone.

We've heard some stories and I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for sharing his stories. I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for her contributions, and the Member for Klondike and other members who have spoken.

We can only begin to acknowledge the importance that salmon have played in the role of First Nations and Yukoners for thousands of years.

We are on a cusp of some very important decisions. Yesterday we got a state of the environment report and it's very plain that the numbers are dropping. The expected run this year is less than 10 percent of the run just over a decade ago. On our watch, this is happening. I thank the member for bringing it forward. I'll speak a little more to that later.

The salmon are the university of the Northern Tutchone. I can remember sitting by the river with elder Tommy McGinty and with four students — I had had a hard time keeping them focused for five minutes — focusing for hours on the river as they watched to see the salmon run and to be able to identify a salmon, and hearing Tommy say, "Well, that one's a female and that one's a male." I couldn't even see salmon where he was pointing. The traditional knowledge may help us and it may show us the way to help restore the salmon.

I was pleased to be debating this motion. I would have been more pleased if it focused a little more on what we can do and what we can control. We know that we are not doing enough when it comes to protecting the chinook salmon of the Yukon River. Fisheries and Oceans and other governments have been trying and failing for the last 15 years to reverse the decline of chinook stocks.

What can we do differently? When the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin was sitting as Liberal in Question Period he asked the Minister of Environment about what his government — this government — was doing to reverse the decline of the chinook salmon. In response to an answer from the Minister of Environment, he said — and I quote: "I hope that what I am hearing is not that the minister is going to wait for someone else to act." Well, here we are debating a motion to encourage another jurisdiction to act — a jurisdiction, I might add, that as of Monday has taken the lead on protecting the chinook salmon run by closing the fishery from top to bottom.

So what can we do? Where do we go from here? What is within our control? We can talk — as the Premier has done

with the Prime Minister — about the salmon fishery. What has the Prime Minister done?

He has made changes to the *Navigable Waters Protection Act* that limits the protection for the tributaries of the Yukon River. He has weakened environmental legislation that would protect our salmon habitat. The Minister of Environment said we need to know more; we need to understand more about the science. Yet the Prime Minister has reduced the involvement of scientists.

We have waited for Alaska to live up to their legal obligations, by agreement, to meet their escapement numbers. As the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin said, five out of the last seven years, they have failed to live up to their legal obligations. The Minister of Environment says we have an incredible relationship with our Alaskan neighbours. We do. Let's insist that they live up to their obligations.

So what can we do? Where can we go from here? Restoration and enhancement — we have an agreement that \$1.2 million from the State of Alaska will be spent on restoration and enhancement. This was established in 2002. Unfortunately there were no escalators, so it's capped at \$1.2 million. How are we using that fund for restoration and enhancement? I learned on reading through it, close to half of that money is spent on counting salmon on sonar installations. What can we do? We can augment that fund, as a territory, and ensure that it works with local people, works with traditional knowledge, with elders, First Nation governments, with community groups up and down the stream, to enhance the environment and to restore our creeks.

What we have done has proven successful. Last year, the Na Cho Nyäk Dun were very excited that, for the first time in a long time, a salmon was seen swimming up the Mayo River and at the base of the dam. We hear successes from Wolf Creek, the Ta'an Kwäch'an, and their restoration projects and the creeks they've done.

It's a beginning, but that's what we can do as a territory. We can work at educational projects. I remember when I was in Pelly Crossing, there was a salmon hatchery program. Schools at the time would receive fish eggs from the salmon hatchery, care for them through the winter and release them in the spring.

It created a lot of interest and excitement. How many schools are involved in that now? It was a good idea; a good project. Let's fund that and ensure that that education is there. Let's work with the First Nations so that they can fly salmon in when they catch them, as the Teslin Tlingit do and as I hear today the Vuntut Gwitchin are doing. Let's enhance that program so that the children of the First Nations have a sense of how important salmon are to their culture.

Let's talk to Carl Sidney, Chief of the Teslin Tlingit Council, who has spent over 20 years working on salmon, who encouraged his First Nation 15 years ago to stop fishing — well ahead of his time. Let's use his knowledge. Let's use the knowledge of elders in each of our communities to begin a real enhancement and restoration program. Yes, we are working on it. We have some successes. Let's build on them.

As an educator, I learned that sometimes things can be overwhelming. Kids can get overwhelmed or depressed or give up because they don't know what to do. The best thing for that was to see adults in their lives — leaders in their lives — making energetic progress, working on it because it gave them hope.

It is too easy to lose hope when we look at the declining numbers over 15 years. I know I named some people in this and it is of concern — not to blame, but to insist that we can do more.

Last night, as I was thinking about what to say, I wondered what the legislators 25 years ago in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia were talking about when they were faced with the decline of the cod fishery. The cod fishery, once the richest cod fishery in the world — the Grand Banks. When people came over from Europe, they were astonished, and we have managed that nearly to extinction. What were the legislators talking about as they watched it happen? What were the people saying? What were they pleading for? What excuses were they making? What promises were they giving? What good intentions were they talking about?

I know — as was referenced — that we cannot expect the DFO to do our work. We can't expect Alaska to do our work. We can't expect the government to do our work, but we must count on people around us, people who are on the river, to come together. We must believe in people if we are to have any chance at all of saving this fishery. We are at a crux. It is important and it is critical. Leadership is all of us. We need to work together. We need to depend on each other.

I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this motion forward. I will be supporting it. I wish it went further. I want to be able to say to the people in my communities, to the children and to my grandchildren that I was there when our territory took a great risk, a great step forward, and worked to save the longest migration route for salmon in the world. What a treasure we have. Let's not sit idly by. Let's work together. Let's call on everybody.

As the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin said, we only have one chance. Once the salmon are gone, they are gone. It has been 25 years-plus and still the cod fishery off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland is not sustainable — 25 years. This is our chance.

Mr. Barr: I wasn't going to speak, but I just feel like I want to say a few things in support of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. I listened to the remarks from the other side of the House, from the Minister of Environment and the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin — I thank him for bringing forward this motion — as well as from the Member for Kluane.

It just strikes me that, when I've travelled with the elders and gone to the fish camps and spent time when the kings are running or the dog salmon are coming up — to know where, in the short time, we are at now. Where we are at now is a crisis — and hearing for all those years from the elders that there has to be more done.

What I hear from this side is that we're asking for more to be done. We're not saying that efforts of the people who have been doing things aren't working and they haven't been doing anything.

What is very clear to me is that we have to do more. We have to — as Yukoners, as legislators, as the Government of Canada, as those, in whatever capacity, who are dealing with the chinook salmon run — do more. This is true because what we're doing is obviously not working. It's so simple. We can say, "We're kind of happy with this and we're happy with the efforts that are being done." It's not to judge the efforts that are done by the people — people care — but, if it was enough, we would not be in this situation. I just want to make that point. We have to do more — period. We can say, "No, we don't", but then we will not have the salmon. As the elders say, if you don't respect something, it goes away, and it's going away. We are there. What are we going to do? Just keep saying, "Well, you know, we're trying." Well let's do more because if we know something, it's that history repeats itself.

When the Member for Mayo-Tatchun speaks about the cod fishery — Roy Payne wrote a song, *Where Did Old Yesterday Go* — "the cod fish are gone and lobsters are midgets". Now we'll be having another one written about chinook salmon because as they did not do enough there, the kings are leaving here and we are not doing enough. We have to do more.

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

Mr. Elias: I thank the members who spoke in support of this motion today. I just want to close by covering a few points here. But you know what? I'm a bit perplexed, because I was thanked by just about every member who spoke from the Opposition — from the NDP and the Liberals. Yet yesterday, to my utter amazement, the NDP and Liberal caucuses tried to block this motion from being discussed today and they didn't have the intestinal fortitude to get on their feet and explain to Yukoners why. I'll leave it at that.

It was touched on by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun about the very important work that the Yukon River Panel is doing with regard to the Yukon River restoration and enhancement fund. This year the panel approved more than \$1 million in U.S. funds for 28 project proposals for salmon and habitat restoration and enhancement projects in Alaska and the Yukon. The panel has allocated more than \$12 million in U.S. funds since 2002 to projects supporting the management and restoration of Yukon River salmon stocks originating in Canada. There are 28 that will be sponsored this year and I think it's important to recognize them.

The approved Yukon River restoration and enhancement fund project proposals for 2014 include: Blind Creek chinook salmon enumeration weir; a chinook salmon radio tracking and genetic sampling in the Porcupine River in Canada; a chinook salmon sonar enumeration on the Big Salmon River; collection and analysis of Yukon River DNA baseline samples in Alaska and Canada; the collection of genetic material from

adult chinook salmon in the North Big Salmon watershed; the exploration of potential early life mortality in Canadian original chinook salmon eggs due to thiamine deficiency; the Fox Creek salmon restoration project; the genetic stock identification of fall chum salmon and commercial harvest in the Yukon River; the genetic stock identification of fall chum salmon and subsistence harvest from the Tanana area, Yukon River; the mainstream Teslin River sonar project; the McIntyre Creek salmon incubation project; the McIntyre Creek stream bank stabilization; the Michie Creek salmon and habitat monitoring project; the Porcupine River chinook salmon sonar program; the Porcupine River chum salmon telemetry project; the Rampart Rapids all-season video monitoring; the restoration of chinook salmon in the Upper Mayo River; the salmon stewardship coordination for Yukon schools; the temperature monitoring of Yukon River chinook salmon spawning and migration habitats in Canada; the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in first fish culture camp; the Whitehorse Rapids hatchery stewardship; the Yukon River chinook salmon mainstream outplant program spawning success evaluation; the Yukon River chinook salmon subsistence sampling at Anvik, Galena, Ruby and Fort Yukon; the Yukon River educational exchange trip; there's the Yukon River in-season management teleconferences; the Yukon River north mainstream stewardship program; the Yukon River pre-season planning process; and finally, there is the Yukon River salmon stock identification.

Mr. Speaker, you can see that the Yukon River salmon enhancement fund is going to be doing some good work this year and I look forward to that success.

I heard some things from the Opposition that I want to respond to. One of them was the Member for Takhini-Kopper King suggesting that DFO held a lot of the fault for what is happening with our chinook salmon runs. I disagree with that comment for a couple of reasons. I think, one, in our Canadian *Fisheries Act*, sections 34, 35 and 36 are some of the strongest pieces of environmental legislation that our country of Canada has to offer. They touch on the deposition of deleterious substance in fish-bearing waters — that is in section 34. It talks about depositing, spraying, releasing, spilling, leaking, seeping, pouring, emitting, emptying, throwing, dumping or placing any deleterious substance in fish-bearing waters.

In section 35.(1) it states: "No person shall carry on any work, undertaking or activity that results in serious harm to fish that are part of a commercial, recreational or Aboriginal fishery, or to fish that support such a fishery", and it goes on. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is an important player and partner in this effort. I want to congratulate them on their efforts.

In closing, it's also important to recognize that the Yukon River hosts the largest migrating chinook, chum and coho Pacific salmon stocks in the world. That's what we're talking about here. Statistics from Fisheries and Oceans Canada state that the Canadian origin of Yukon River chinook salmon population status in 2003 was 150,000 salmon. There has been a steady decline each year since then to the point where this year, the expectations are between 32,000 and 61,000.

The river empties the fifth-largest drainage in North America, an area more than 330,000 square miles or 855,000 square kilometres. The people of the Yukon River drainage have been utilizing salmon since inhabiting the area. Approximately 128,000 people live in the Yukon River drainage today. For nearly all of the people who reside in the Yukon River drainage, fish and wildlife resources provide the foundation for their survival and livelihood.

I also disagree with the members from the New Democratic Party when they say that this motion stops at the Yukon border.

I disagree with that because Canadian-origin salmon are a shared resource, and fish spawned in the Yukon Territory waters are vulnerable to harvest in Alaskan waters. As the Minister of Environment said, the most important player is the State of Alaska. When we, as elected members of the Yukon Territory, support this motion and support Alaska in their endeavours to conserve the Yukon River chinook salmon, that immediately sends a message to our Yukon and federal counterparts working in this conservation effort.

I thank everyone for their comments today and I look forward to unanimous support of this motion. Just thinking about those elders who have passed on, I commend this motion to the House.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Deputy Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: 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. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Deputy Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yea, nil nay.

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

Motion No. 671 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Graham: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to proceed at this

time with Committee of the Whole and third reading of Bill No. 74, *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*.

Unanimous consent re proceeding with Committee of the Whole and third reading of Bill No. 74

Speaker: The Minister of Health and Social Services has requested the unanimous consent of the House, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, to proceed at this time with Committee of the Whole and third reading of Bill No. 74, entitled *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 74, entitled *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 74: *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 74, entitled *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I would like to introduce my able assistants here. I was going to try to fly solo but all the members of my own party disagreed with my doing that any more. Brian Kitchen and Shauna Demers are here to assist me in seeing this bill through Committee.

I'm pleased to bring the amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* to Committee of the Whole. These amendments will address the registration of parents on the birth registry of a child that reflects modern social relationships, including same-sex parents, as well as parents in opposite-sex relationships.

If members will bear with me, I would like to give a brief summary of the changes proposed and which clauses have changes — and the others, of course, will not.

The act amends the *Vital Statistics Act* and then there are consequential amendments to the *Children's Law Act*. In

section 1, the following definitions are added in alphabetical order: definition of “father” as the biological father of the child; definition of “mother” as the person who gives birth to the child; definition of “other parent” who is a person who must be a spouse of the mother or father and intends to participate in the upbringing of the child; “parent” who is defined to include four possible parents — this broad model encompasses the modern family structure in a number of instances; and finally, there is the definition of “spouse,” who is a person married to or cohabitating with the mother or father, through the immediately preceding 12 months at the time the child was born.

The next change is in section 4(2), which is replaced. This section addresses the persons obligated to complete the registration of birth statement. The addition of “other parent” is made to the persons who have an obligation to register a birth. The time in which a birth shall be reported and registered has been extended from 30 to 60 days. This will allow additional time for the various parents to sign on to the registration. This also better reflects the delays in birth registrations that the registrar has had to address in the past and it will be more in line with the current administrative and operational realities.

The next change is in section 5, which is replaced with the following: Registration must include the particulars of the child and the mother. The bill does not address the issue of surrogacy at this time. This section replaces the previous rules around registering a father for a married and unmarried woman. Under these amendments, the particulars of the father or other parent are included if they sign the statement along with the mother.

The next change is section 6, which is also replaced. The current act required the surname of the mother and/or the father. Under the new proposed rules, the parent or parents will be able to choose a surname. This provides flexibility to choose a name for cultural, ethnic or religious purposes and is consistent with a number of other Canadian jurisdictions. It provides for a maximum of two surnames, hyphenated or combined. In the case of disagreement among the parents on a surname, the bill outlines how a surname of not more than two names will be selected, with preference given to the names of the mother or father over the surnames of any of the other parents. There will also be a clause in section 6 for a registrar to refuse a surname that might reasonably cause mistakes or confusion or that is sought for an improper purpose or on the grounds that the name is undesirable in the public interest.

This is a new power for the registrar under the act and an appeal to a refusal of a surname by the registrar has been added to section 33, on appeals of a decision made by the registrar.

The next section that is changed is section 10(1) and it's amended. This section simply replaces the term “both parents” with “parents” with regard to who can do an alteration or addition of a given name, as there may be more than two parents in a given situation.

Section 10(1) and 10(2) are added. Section 10(1) addresses the addition of a parent to the registry who would

have been eligible to be on the birth registration of the child at the time of the birth in the absence of a court order otherwise declaring parentage. This process requires the consent of all the parents involved, and there is the opportunity at this point to change the surname in accordance with the surname rules. This section will enable parents who were not able to register as a parent under the current act to now get on the birth registry — in other words, retroactively.

Under 10(2)(b), the mother may add the father to the registry without being vetoed by another parent. Under subsection (4), if a child is 12 years of age or more, their consent is required prior to changing their surname. This age is the same as that set out in consent for adoption, so it's a benchmark age and an accepted standard.

Under subsection (6), removal of a parent from the registry can only be done through a court order declaring parentage of the child.

Section 10(2) is in place in the event there is a disagreement among the parties regarding consent for changes. Dispensing with consent will be decided by the courts.

The next section to be amended is section 11. This section corrects reference errors made in the current act to a section reference and form name.

Sections 22, 23 and 31 are all amended. Several provisions are amended as minor housekeeping changes to correct the language in the act to provide for greater clarity. If you want more information on that as we go through, I would be happy to provide it.

Section 33(1) has been replaced. This section provided an applicant the ability to appeal a decision of the registrar to the court. It has been amended to add the ability of an applicant to appeal the registrar's decision around refusal of a surname.

Section 34.1 has been added to address the approval of forms. The registrar now has the authority to determine and approve forms. Certificates and other forms will remain prescribed in regulation. However, the registrar will have the flexibility to approve forms that are administrative in nature. This power is consistent with the powers of other registrars in the Yukon.

Those are all the changes to the act itself. Consequential amendments to the *Children's Law Act* are also included. This section updates the *Children's Law Act* references made to sections of the *Vital Statistics Act*. It's noted that the *Children's Law Act* is one of the major pieces of legislation that still needs to be examined in addressing further parentage laws.

There are a number of transitional provisions as well. These are in place to deal with the transition of the amended act. Section 15(1) states that the act has effect on births or stillbirths not yet registered on the day the act comes into effect.

15(2) states that certain sections of the act apply to all births, definitions, alterations of or addition of given name and alteration respecting parentage and surname regardless of whether they occurred before, on or after this act came into effect — into force. Section 15(3) allows the registrar to

waive a fee in just circumstances, such as for parents who could not have registered as a parent prior to these amendments coming into effect. Section 15(4) allows for registration of birth activities not completed before this new act comes into force to be completed under the rules of the new act. Section 15(5) provides the ability to address any unforeseen matters in regulation necessary to transition to the new act.

As for coming into force, the act will come into force on a day to be fixed by the Commissioner in Executive Council. That basically concludes the overview of the details of the bill and I would be pleased to answer any questions on a clause-by-clause basis.

Ms. Stick: I want to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for bringing this bill forward so quickly in response to a concern raised by a Yukon family. I also want to thank his officials for their work on this act. I am sure they were under time pressures also.

I also want to thank those individuals who stood up to the act — what's there now — and said, "No, not good enough" when told they could not have both parents' names on the birth certificate of their newborn child, and that one parent would need to adopt their own child. I want to thank them for their ability to stand up and say that.

I am pleased that these changes include up to four names on a birth registration, if that is what a family wants. I'm pleased to see that this is retroactive and that families caught in this dated legislation can go back to Vital Statistics and make the appropriate amendments or changes that they want to see on their birth registration, on their birth certificates, even with regard to names. The fact that these fees can be waived in this is only fair. I thank the officials and the minister for that also.

I am looking forward to seeing legislation that has not kept up with our laws that recognize that families can take many forms. I look forward to further legislation being brought forward that needs updating. I would only ask for one clarification from the minister, because it took me a bit to understand it. This is just for people listening or who are going to be looking at this after. Could they please explain once more and perhaps give an example of how more than two names can be under the parents' names?

Hon. Mr. Graham: That one is relatively easy to answer. It's the mother who gives birth to the child, the biological father and up to two additional parents.

They could both be spouses of the mother and father. So in the case of a same-sex couple, it could be the mother, the other parent, the biological parent and the biological father's spouse as well. It can be up to four.

Ms. Stick: I thank the minister for that answer. That clarifies that for us. The NDP will be supporting this *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*.

Chair: Does any other member wish to be heard? We are going to move into a clause-by-clause examination.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Clause 5

Clause 5 agreed to

On Clause 6

Clause 6 agreed to

On Clause 7

Clause 7 agreed to

On Clause 8

Hon. Mr. Graham: I just want to make sure that it's clearly understood by everyone that persons, and especially same-sex couples, who have not had the ability in the past to be registered as parent and other parent, now will have that ability. Even if the registration document says parent and adoptive parent, they can now make application to the registrar's office to have that changed to parent and other parent. That to me was a very important thing, because people in the last few years may have gone through the adoption process and they should now be able to be registered as parent and other parent.

Clause 8 agreed to

On Clause 9

Clause 9 agreed to

On Clause 10

Clause 10 agreed to

On Clause 11

Clause 11 agreed to

On Clause 12

Clause 12 agreed to

On Clause 13

Clause 13 agreed to

On Clause 14

Clause 14 agreed to

On Clause 15

Clause 15 agreed to

On Clause 16

Hon. Mr. Graham: Again, just a comment — the regulations under the act are almost complete. As soon as we have an opportunity to take the regulations to Cabinet they will be in effect, so we hope to proclaim this act as quickly as we possibly can.

Clause 16 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, I move that Bill No. 74, entitled *An Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*, be reported without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Graham that Bill No. 74, entitled *An Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*, be reported without amendment.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 74, entitled *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*, and directed me to report it without amendment.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 74: *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act* — Third Reading

Deputy Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 74, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Graham.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I move that Bill No. 74, entitled *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services that Bill No. 74, entitled *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I'm very happy to be able to pass the amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* so quickly. I really have to tell all members how much I appreciate the efforts of my staff, who began to move very quickly on the amendments necessary and assisted me in shepherding this through the system within the government, which includes policy evaluation and, further, going on to the legislative committee, and so on.

It was really done in record time for any bill passing through this Legislature. I think there was a great deal of effort in the background, but I also want to take the opportunity to thank the Member for Riverdale South. She has also been a great supporter of this act as well.

I also want to thank a couple of people who are sitting in the gallery. I won't mention names, but thank you very much for first of all bringing it to my attention. Even though you did harass me a little bit later on, it spurred me on to greater action and we do appreciate it. It's an indication that all members of the Legislature can work together. We were able to move quickly on this issue to remove barriers for same-sex couples to be recognized, not only on the birth registry, but on the birth certificate of their child.

The amended legislation, I think, recognizes modern structures. We're acknowledging and we're recognizing spouses who intend to not only participate fully in the upbringing of the child, but bear some responsibility for that child as well. I think that's a really important principle. The broad approach of this piece of legislation promotes equality of treatment of couples and their children. It's a very, very important thing. It protects against discrimination by providing a registration process that is the same, regardless if the child was conceived by assisted or natural reproduction and who the parents were.

That's about all I have to say other than that we were only too happy to make this bill retroactive. We will be only too happy to waive the fees for couples who have not had this privilege in previous years. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, all members of the Legislature.

Ms. Stick: I rise on behalf of the NDP to support this bill. We will be supporting it because it's important legislation. At one time, the Yukon led Canada in allowing for same-sex marriages. Since then, we have not kept up so well with our legislation and it's time that we did. This is an important first step but hopefully, in the very near future, we will be seeing more legislation come forward that needs to be amended to recognize the reality of this day and age and of our communities and of the families represented there.

I thank the member for bringing this forward. I know it was a fast time frame for legislation to be amended and brought forward. I appreciate that. I appreciate the work of the staff, and I appreciate those people in the public who brought this forward and said, "No, this is not good enough."

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

Hon. Mr. Graham: On behalf of myself and my staff — and not only members of the Opposition, but I would like to thank members in my own party who assisted me to get scheduled special sessions for the legislative committee and other things in getting this bill to the House in as short a time as we did. Thank you.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 74 agreed to

Speaker: I declare the motion carried and that Bill No. 74 has passed this House.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 14, *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works in Bill No. 14, *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*.

Department of Highways and Public Works

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I would like to thank Chad and Scott, our officials from the Department of Highways and Public Works. I welcome them to the House today. I thank everybody for coming to listen to my riveting opening remarks on the Department of Highways and Public Works.

Madam Chair, the Department of Highways and Public Works is committed to responsible construction, maintenance and management of Yukon's roads, highways, airports and government-owned and leased facilities. Highways and Public Works faces many challenges in maintaining our infrastructure, such as extreme weather conditions, permafrost, vast distances between the communities, our aging infrastructure and limited resources.

This past year, severe weather during spring thaw presented challenges for my department and put stress on our Yukon infrastructure. My department's quick and effective response demonstrated the dedication and innovation necessary for overcoming these unpredictable climate changes.

We were reminded, as we are every year, of just how important a functional transportation network is to ensure the continued flow of goods and services. Our highways and airports are an essential network that allows for the movement of resources this territory relies on in order to thrive. This essential network connects our northern communities together.

A territory as vast and as remote as the Yukon requires strategic planning and the ability to rank our capital projects in a manner that best uses public funds and meets the needs of our Yukon infrastructure. We do this while ensuring that Yukon transportation networks, buildings and other resources are maintained in a safe, effective and timely manner. These responsibilities and challenges are reflected in the initiatives identified in this budget. As an overview, the budget provides \$90 million for transportation maintenance, planning and

infrastructure; \$13 million for building maintenance, planning and infrastructure; \$6.5 million for information technology infrastructure systems, development and support.

I will speak a little bit about the Tatchun Creek bridge replacement. Construction of the new single-span bridge at the Tatchun Creek on the Klondike Highway north of Carmacks has started, with the majority of the work expected to be completed this summer. The original bridge was built as part of the Klondike Highway construction in 1959. A total of \$5.5 million is allocated for this project. Primary construction components will include steel girders, a concrete deck, abutments on a pile foundation, and guide rails. To limit wait times and ensure the steady flow of traffic during the busy summer season and to keep the Minister of Tourism and Culture happy, a single-lane detour will be provided throughout construction.

Shakwak permafrost and paving — something near and dear to my heart, as most of it is in my riding. Work continues this year with existing funds for the Shakwak project. This is a partnership with the Government of Canada, the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Alaska to ensure a safe and modern highway corridor leading to Alaska — the only highway to Alaska.

A total of \$8.2 million has been committed for repairing various sections along the Alaska Highway. Work will mainly involve stabilization of sections of the highway that are severely distorted by melting permafrost. This includes repairing or replacing culverts damaged by permafrost, settlements, grade restoration, paving and production of aggregate to support current and future years' remediation work.

Another \$7.8 million of Shakwak funding is designated this year for pavement overlay on a deteriorated section of the Haines Road that was originally paved back in 1986. Work will be carried out by contractors with supervision by consultants and the department's Transportation Engineering branch.

All Shakwak funding from the United States government is provided through provisions in federal legislation. The most recent law, known as Map 21, did not include that project, so the Government of Yukon together with the Government of Canada will continue to make representation to U.S. legislators to restore the fund for Shakwak projects in any new bill.

Highways and Public Works is continuing to work closely with the U.S. Federal Highway Administration to determine how to best spend the remaining funds and the time frame over which such spending should occur.

I would like to speak a little bit about the ongoing work that I have done, that the department has done and that the Premier has done in lobbying in Washington and in speaking with many of our federal representatives.

Campbell Highway reconstruction and resurfacing — work does continue this year with the reconstruction of a section highway from kilometre 67 to kilometre 107. The department has allocated \$8.77 million toward improvements that include realignment to meet the 90 kilometre per hour

design standard, reconstruction of the roadbed, resurfacing, drainage improvements and right-of-way clearing for future years' construction.

As well, \$1.5 million has been assigned for aggregate crushing, subgrade strengthening, resurfacing and drainage control where required. It is important at this time year, as we get to sections that need it immediately, that we can spend part of this \$1.5 million on those sections.

There is \$230,000 of the assigned amount for work between Faro and Ross River. These improvements will help maintain the integrity of the road surface until future road reconstruction takes place.

The Robert Campbell Highway improvement work will be carried out in collaboration with the department's Transportation and Engineering branch, private contractors and private equipment rentals. Both the commercial trucking industry and private citizens will benefit from these upgrades — Yukoners working.

Dempster highway erosion control: we have put in \$1.4 million this year. It has been allocated for the placement of protective rock blankets — known as rip-rap — on the side slopes of the Dempster highway where it will be routed along the shoreline of the Blackstone and Ogilvie rivers and Engineer Creek. This should make the MLA from up in the Tuktoyaktuk region happy, who calls me on a constant basis when the road is washed out asking me when it will be opened. This is some of the good work that our department will do. Work for this project includes production of suitable armour and filter materials, placement of these materials in areas identified as being susceptible to severe erosion — I have spoken about that — and construction of additional culverts where water crossings are inadequate. A continuing program is proposed for future years as this is ongoing, preventive maintenance and good planning.

Our Whitehorse corridor project will see improvements of the Alaska Highway through Whitehorse from kilometre 1401 to kilometre 1441. Long-term project cost scopes remain to be determined, but \$1.6 million this year has been allocated for this project to complete the planning and the advanced necessary design work.

Essential items anticipated to bring the corridor to a uniform and modern standard include upgrading the roadway to accommodate increased traffic volumes, improving major intersections, consolidating access and establishing better traffic control signage. I spoke a little bit about this in the House during Question Period.

In 2013 and 2014, a consultant was hired to analyze existing data and evaluate potential engineering options for development. A functional plan was developed, which recommends and prioritizes the improvements needed to support a safe and effective corridor in the long-term as volumes increase.

Discussions in 2013 with stakeholders included local businesses along the corridor and as well our partners, which will be the City of Whitehorse, our local First Nations and the utilities companies. A public participation component will be used to refine the plan once we've decided which construction

will be moving forward. It will be used to refine the plan and produce a comprehensive development program that could be brought to the Management Board for implementation approval.

Additional engineering work anticipated in the 2014-15 year includes some geotechnical investigations, surveying, regulatory licencing and some permitting. The detailed corridor development design will begin in 2014-15 and, assuming that the Management Board approves the plan with construction, it will be potentially commencing in the future.

As well, the Atlin road — \$1.4 million has been allotted for the continuation of the Atlin road reconstruction. Construction plans for the 2014-15 season are aimed at ongoing granular search, design work, partial reconstruction, including design and permitting for the Snafu and Tarfu bridge crossings. This is work that we need to do to bring our O&M costs down immensely.

Some of the pavement rehabilitation as I've said before — the maintenance of our existing infrastructure is of critical importance; \$5 million has been assigned to the rehabilitation of existing pavement by full-pavement overlays, recycling the pavement into a base and resurfacing the BST or other rehabilitation procedures of different types.

I will speak a little bit about our airports and aerodromes. Right now, there is work going on at the Whitehorse airport. The apron panel-one replacement, \$8.1 million has been assigned to the Whitehorse apron panel. This project will consist of the removal and the construction of new concrete apron panels. The existing concrete panels were constructed when the airport terminal building was built in 1985. These apron panels are an integral part of the aircraft maneuvering area and this project will ensure that our infrastructure continues to meet the needs of the air carriers that serve us. I can note that the ongoing work is coming along great and we're not behind schedule. I believe we're probably a bit ahead of schedule.

This project ensures the continued safe access to the passenger boarding bridges in the terminal building and will ensure that Yukon's International Airport maintains the capacity to support larger aircrafts such as the Boeing 767 to facilitate both domestic and international travel.

I would be remiss if we did not thank the Government of Canada, which provided more than \$6.4 million for financial support for this project through their airports capital assistance program.

I had the opportunity to speak last week to a room full of the industry. Most will agree that Canada's transportation costs are highest in the north. This is a significant factor in the price of goods and other services. This is due, in part, to our small and widely scattered community infrastructure and demanding operating environment, which features challenging terrain, adverse weather and distant alternates.

The Whitehorse airport parallel runway pavement overlays must be done on a critical basis to maintain the integrity of the infrastructure. The parallel runway surface requires the pavement overlay to preserve the integrity of the

infrastructure, so we have allotted \$3 million this year for this project.

We are also doing more work with the Whitehorse airport on the sewer and water construction. The sewer and water system project will be completed at a cost of \$1.74 million, at the south area of the terminal. This will meet the current and future development of the operational needs. The unanticipated costs and delays have been due to unsuitable soils, requiring the contractor to haul in suitable soils to replace the trench materials. We found the materials were not usable. This increased the cost to the original contract and pushed the schedule back two months, requiring a deferral of a portion of the work to get finished this summer.

Some of the community aerodromes — \$2.9 million has been designated to continue improvements at the various Yukon community aerodromes. The project components will include the addition of the Dawson air terminal building due to CBSA requirements and our extensive work in the Department of Highways and Public Works with Holland America and Air North.

Other items that are included are some electrical upgrades, some navigational aid purchases and installation, signage, grounds upkeep and upgrading, lease lot development, vegetation control, wildlife control fencing, and our slightly expensive dust control product and application — but it's a good thing and it's necessary.

Swift River living complex — \$2.2 million has been allotted for the replacement of the Swift River maintenance camp living complex. The project will require design and construction to replace the living quarters for our Transportation division staff housed at the Swift River highway camp, one camp that receives more than the average amount of snow load every year. The current facilities are at the end of their useful life and have several identified deficiencies resulting in a high operating cost. The new facility will be designed to have smaller individual living quarters but more common usage areas, all with a single building footprint.

The *George Black* ferry and the Pelly barge maintenance — \$1.7 million has been assigned to the maintenance of the *George Black* ferry and the Pelly barge. The *George Black* ferry will be repowered to include a new engine, some marine gear, shafts, props and generators. New controls will be added to the house as part of the repowering process. Other items will include new paint and new lifejacket replacement. Just a bit of information for those members who are listening and for the Member for Klondike, the Yukon River has gone out now and I know residents look to get the ferry in as soon as they can. To pass on to those people who are waiting — before we put the ferry in — for the White River ice to come out — nothing like getting your ferry in and having more ice come down.

The Pelly barge will undergo maintenance and replacement of equipment, such as life jackets, an engine rebuild and deck retrofitting. Stability upgrades will also be done in order to meet Transport Canada standards.

A little-known and underappreciated part of our department — the ICT people. Another important service provider in the department is the Information and Communication Technology division, otherwise known as ICT. This division provides cost-effective information management and information technology and telecommunication support for internal government and administration and the delivery of services to the public. It does oversee Yukon government's ATIPP intake office in which it consults with the public on ATIPP-related matters and works with internal program areas to manage these requests while remaining a primary point of contact for the Yukon government with the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

It does manage a \$6.5-million capital envelope on behalf of the Yukon government. It makes its recommendations with the support of client departments for the introduction of ongoing enhancements to the applications and systems that program areas depend on, as well as e-service initiatives for the public.

This year we created a new unit focusing on e-services — things that we heard and some of our campaign commitment promises — the e-services opportunities for the Yukon government for 2014-15 and beyond.

This year, approximately \$2.5 million is dedicated toward the upgrading, the repairing and, where necessary, replacing Yukon government's IT infrastructure. This fund is required to upgrade, replace and repair assets on an ongoing basis or as needs arise.

This will consist of, for example, printer upgrades and replacement; server upgrade and replacements; data centres, including business continuity, off-site facility and the main administration building computer room. Other upgrades and replacements are some network connectivity, network security, and other hardware — there is lots out there — and network components. \$3 million is allotted for system development, including new and ongoing enhancements to our system and \$1 million has been allotted for system support. ICT works with the local ICT industry sector to build capacity that enables ongoing support and development of YG system applications and infrastructure, as well as helping the Yukon ICT sector grow beyond Yukon government for the Yukon.

Our Property Management division of Highways and Public Works is the manager of Yukon government buildings and facilities. Those are our schools, our office space, our highways camps, nursing stations and everything in between. Many of our buildings are aging and in need of substantial upgrading. Some of the poor insulation and inefficiencies in design and heating systems make them more expensive to operate. This is something we need to bear in mind when considering the costs of upgrades versus replacement.

Property Management advocates a holistic approach to planning, managing and maintaining government facilities. I've said this in the House before. This means looking at various department facilities needs as a whole, identifying opportunities to achieve the economies of scale, energy-saving and program delivery efficiencies.

That's why you'll see us doing some work on the main administration building. We have \$2.3 million for capital building maintenance; \$1 million for Project Management Services; \$1.375 million for capital overhead — I could go on and on, but specific questions can be asked on the highlighted budget items when we go into line-by-line general debate.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to begin by thanking the officials for providing a briefing on the expenditures in the Department of Highways and Public Works. This department has a lot of responsibilities and a very large budget and I appreciate their work. I would also like to thank the public servants for coming in here to help us better understand the department and for all the hard work keeping up a huge amount of Yukon infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, technology infrastructure, telecommunications and so forth in good shape.

Before I jump into questions, I would like to speak to a few issues that we have raised in the House for Highways and Public Works. As Attorney General of Canada reports have said, the long-term planning that the department lays out for spending in the Department of Highways and Public Works could be improved. We have seen that on a number of occasions and it makes us question why decisions are being made the way they are.

For example, the rehabilitation of the Robert Campbell Highway has seen the section beginning toward the Watson Lake end being repaired and then from kilometre 67 to kilometre 107 — the area where it finishes is right next to the Wolverine mine. We understand why the mine needs improved road access. The trucks carrying ore are heavy and there is a need for that improvement.

As well, we've heard from residents from both the Watson Lake and Ross River ends of that road that they do meet a lot of heavy traffic and that the road could use improvement, since there is a mix of industrial and local traffic.

The people of Ross River have been asking for improvements on the Robert Campbell Highway for years, and their pleas have been ignored. Now that enhancements are finally being made to the road, Ross River still seems to be last on the priority list. That's one example of where we think the minister could improve in providing fair and timely services to Yukon.

I also want to ask the minister, when he's next on his feet to speak — because I don't believe he finished his opening statement — whether he could let me know whether the department has prepared a legislative return for some of the questions the Opposition members asked during the departmental briefing. Some of the questions that I am going to put on the record now were first raised at that departmental briefing, and some of them may be new.

Beginning in Information and Communications Technology, the department has budgeted \$3.9 million for service agreements. I did ask at the briefing how much of the cost of data and phone service is charged back to the department. I would also like to know what the total cost of telephone and data coverage in all government departments is.

The Nisutlin River bridge was budgeted to begin work this year, but the tender was cancelled at the last minute. The bridge is an important link for Teslin and it has needed work for a number of years now. What was the reason for cancelling the tender? When will the process get back on track and what improvements is the department planning on making to make sure that the tender goes through next time?

Earlier in this sitting, we raised concerns about the width of the Takhini River bridge, noting that it was tight for two cars and a bicycle to safely cross all at once. What has the government done to examine that and to look at improving the safety of the bridge? Has the minister made any plans for improvements? Are there going to be any safety improvements in the short term?

Another issue that I have raised a number of times in the House is the safety of the Whitehorse airport. I would like the minister, if he would, to give us an update on the status of the Transport Canada safety audit completed for the Whitehorse airport this summer. What deficiencies were identified and what remediation work has been scheduled and what remediation work has been done?

I do have other questions, but I think I will stop there and allow the minister to conclude his opening remarks and maybe respond to some of the questions I have put on the record, and we can proceed from there.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I will attempt to get through this with her. I guess the first one I will speak to is the Campbell Highway. This year we've allotted an extra \$250,000.

I don't know if I spoke to this in the House, but for spot repairs, et cetera, for the section that the member opposite was talking about, our transportation professionals find — and I actually spoke to this in the House today about doing our BST rating, our road rating — that looking at the number of vehicles and the current conditions of the road and the traffic that it bears — that's the amount of funds and that's why we put this \$250,000 aside for spot repairs.

I mentioned in my opening remarks about the other portion of the Robert Campbell Highway that there are funds set aside for spot repairs too. I know that, working with Wolverine mine and the other people who access that portion of the road, with the quick run and some washouts we had last year, we're doing a better job of reappropriating funds and putting them right on — besides the contract we have out and some of the other areas that need that repair.

The Takhini Hot Springs bridge — our bridges are all rated. They are inspected. The bridge is safe. I'll speak a little bit to the Nisutlin Bay bridge later. We do ongoing maintenance when it comes to priority, and we do ongoing maintenance on some of our bridges so they can last another 50 years. It is how the department looks at it. Our bridges are rated and they are numbered for which is next in the loop to be maintained. The Takhini bridge is operational and it's good. There are no upgrades necessary right now.

When it comes to the Nisutlin Bay bridge, some of the concerns that were raised by the community regarding the project — due to the time constraints associated with our

Building Canada funding, it was necessary for us to cancel this in order to re-profile this funding toward other eligible and planned projects — some shovel-ready projects.

We did meet six times. We held community meetings recently as well. Recently we had an open house — on the 26th. The open house was well-attended with about 50 community members present.

I met on two separate occasions with the CAO of the Village of Teslin and the chief and some of their staff. They had some concerns with YESAA. The Yukon government is of the opinion that the project is exempt from YESAA, as were several other bridge deck rehabilitation projects conducted in the past several years.

Some of these were the Upper Liard bridge deck replacement, the Stewart River bridge, the Aishihik River bridge, Jarvis bridge, the Flat Creek bridge and Morley River bridge. An assessment wasn't required for the Robert Service bridge when the City of Whitehorse went to YESAA. They're putting in bike lanes or doing some work on that.

There are no issues with the safety of the bridge. The current bridge structure is safe and it underwent maintenance and repairs in 2009. The proposed improvements for the project were proactive to reduce further maintenance cost through a deck replacement to provide a smoother, quieter, enhanced bridge.

On that note, our officials and I will keep in contact with the Village of Teslin and the chief and council on next steps, moving forward, looking at how the next line of Building Canada rolls out.

Another question that was asked was about ICT — I can provide this to the member opposite also, but I'll read it out here. Northwestel provides service annual cost estimates — and this is for all of the government. Distributed department costs and services, Centrex, 3,400 lines at \$35 a month — \$1.428 million.

Voicemail is 3,000 lines at \$7 a month, which was \$252,000; B1 lines key systems \$450,000; alarm loops \$120,000; cell usage \$864,000 — that is a total of \$3.114 million.

Our information and communication costs services for the whole government — WAN was \$1.644 million; MAN in Whitehorse was \$687,000; MAN in communities was \$560,000; the MRS tariff was \$1.5 million; the MRS maintenance was \$850,000; Internet gateway was \$780,000 — that was a subtotal of a little over \$6 million. I will provide this to the member opposite.

I believe the member asked about the Transport Canada audit. Was that the question? When it comes to that, the Whitehorse, Dawson and Old Crow airports are being audited by Transport Canada. The audits are meant to identify the deficiencies so they be corrected before they become factors that might adversely affect safety. Transport Canada has identified eight findings affecting the Whitehorse Airport to date. The findings are mainly administrative in nature and largely related to documentation and the need for additional staff training to meet the industry best practices. There are no

audit findings for deficiencies related to the airside infrastructure or the services being provided to the public.

Our Aviation branch submitted its initial responses to Transport Canada's auditors and is now working on a corrective action plan to address the initial findings. Once Transport Canada has approved the corrective action plan, the branch will then have a period of time to address any of the deficiencies. The federal audit is ongoing and the findings are protected by the federal government until the process and corrective actions are completed at the end of the year.

I'm not sure. Maybe I'll sit down and let the member opposite give us something there ask something here.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to thank the minister for his responses to those questions. I will review the record in Hansard and see if I have anything that I do need to come back to on those.

The minister responded to my question in relation to the Transport Canada safety audit of the Whitehorse airport. I asked him to identify what deficiencies were reported and what work had been done to remediate those deficiencies. He spoke to that. I would like to ask the minister if he could also provide the same information in relation to the Transport Canada audits that have been done for the Old Crow airport and the Watson Lake airport. He referred to both of those in his comments.

I would now like to move on to Ross River. The minister indicated that he had said there was \$250,000 for spot repairs to the section of the road between Ross River and Faro. I'm happy to hear that. That is something I've been asking about in the House every year since this minister has taken on responsibility for the department.

Spot repairs, however, will not take into account the fact that the road beyond Faro and going toward Ross River narrows and is not in as good condition as the road up to that point. I believe that it does need more than spot repairs and I want to again put that on the record for the minister.

There are other transportation concerns in the Ross River area. We have seen that the Ross River bridge has not been repaired yet and that calls into question the safety of the Ross River ferry. It also leaves us wondering what transportation access will be available for businesses, for commercial and industrial development, for residents in the area, for tourists, for trappers and hunters — for anyone who may want to get across the river and up to the North Canol Road. I know that safety is a concern and it's a concern for me too. Having access and having the transportation infrastructure functioning is also very important. I would like to ask this minister what options the government is looking at to improve access to the far side of the Pelly River at Ross River. I have asked the minister about this in Question Period, but that allows for a very brief period of discussion.

In particular, I would like to ask the minister whether there has been any consideration of transferring control to the Department of Highways and Public Works for the Ross River bridge? The Highways and Public Works department certainly has a lot of experience providing the transportation infrastructure, both roads and bridges, and they have a

mandate to develop and regulate Yukon's transportation infrastructure.

With that, I'm going to allow the minister to respond. What options are they looking at to provide access for the coming summer season across the Pelly River? Is the Department of Highways and Public Works prepared to take on the responsibility for the Ross River bridge? I know they have the expertise; are they willing to see this happen?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I believe when I spoke to the member about the audits — and I'll confirm it for the member opposite — but the Watson Lake, Old Crow and Dawson ones are currently being audited. I don't think they're finished yet, so I'll make sure I find that out for the member opposite.

When it comes to the Ross River suspension bridge, the most important thing is safety and for us to run the ferry. I have a bit of a note here that I'll read. This is basically our up-to-date note on what we've done. The Government of Yukon committed to providing a modified ferry service across the Pelly River at Ross River in the summer of 2014. How that's going to look, we're not quite there yet. In order to provide these services, the government must have confidence that the Pelly footbridge is stable and does not pose an immediate health and safety risk to either ferry users or members of the community.

To support the stabilization initiative, the Yukon government has issued a sole-source contract for \$25,000 to All-Span Engineering & Construction from Delta, B.C., for a technical assessment of the Ross River suspension bridge, with a view to enabling an RFP to be configured that qualified proponents can address.

This assessment will begin on May 7, 2014, and we expect completion in the future. All-Span Engineering and Construction will advise on the specific areas requiring technical investigation and/or assessment and how best to undertake the investigation in order that the RFP for stabilization can be issued with the specific focus on developing the information to allow for a successful RFP process. Currently, we are not able to provide enough technical information on the existing condition of the bridge to allow proponents to provide a reasonable solution through an RFP process in a timely and efficient manner.

A 70-year-old bridge that crosses the Pelly River was originally built in the 1940s as part of the Canol pipeline project and, as drawings and specifications of the bridge are unavailable, we are unable to determine the key details concerning the design and construction of the bridge. All-Span will determine the course of action to stabilize the bridge structure, which would, if possible, allow the ferry to resume some sort of standard hours of operation. All-Span will also consider the cost and requirements to fully restore the bridge in the long term to allow for informed decision-making about the future of the structure. I could get into a whole bunch more on it, but basically the Department of Highways and Public Works is working with the Department of Community Services, hand in hand on this project, because, like the member opposite mentioned, we're all in this together. I know the bridge is under Community Services, but the ferry is under

Highways and Public Works. We are working with Occupational Health and Safety and all the key players and we are also in constant dialogue with the Chief of the Ross River Dena Council and the community members. Last week — I believe on the 25th — we had officials there from the Yukon government and sought some input from the chief and council on the next steps working forward with us. Our primary concern is and always will be public safety.

Ms. Moorcroft: To begin, I would like to ask the minister if he would please table a copy of the document that he has just read most of into the record. I believe it is procedurally in order to request copies of documents that members read from during debate in the House. We have been told that many times in this Assembly. It would be helpful to be able to see the document.

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Chair: Order please. Ms. Moorcroft has the floor.

Ms. Moorcroft: Essentially, the minister is saying that they will not be doing any work before next winter. The assessments already done indicate that the bridge needs to be stabilized when the ground has thawed and is not on frozen ground or ice. This project has seen multiple tenders over the past five years and as recently as July 2013. Proponents of repairs have not been able to complete the critical repairs. Why is this work not being done on an emergency basis? Why wasn't work done when the ice bridge was in? The ice bridge was constructed at an effort of \$100,000 this year, and then it was not used to facilitate repairs of the Ross River suspension bridge on an emergency basis.

Why was a simple construction management approach not used to get the work done immediately? What has been included in the request for proposals that the minister just referred to? I don't understand why there is continued hardship being placed on this community by not stabilizing the bridge immediately so that we could have full ferry service from May through to the end of October.

The minister did not respond to my question asking why the critical bridge and ferry are not both fully within the responsibilities of the Transportation division of Highways and Public Works where it could be competently managed by the department with specialization in transportation.

Those are a number of questions simply related to dealing with the transportation infrastructure needs and the Ross River area. I would like to know what the position is of the Minister of Highways and Public Works when it comes to maintaining this critical infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: A few notes — like I said before, our primary concern remains to be the public safety. The member spoke to hardships in the community. The Yukon government is continuing and will continue our dialogue with the RRDC chief and council on any new details with the well-being of the residents and visitors at the forefront of our discussions.

When the member started her round of questioning on this, she spoke to people who need to access the other side.

I am hoping I can access the other side this year also, because the North Canol Road is one of the roads that is under

my portfolio that I haven't had a chance to — I have been up there a few times in the past, but as the minister, I would like get up there and see some of the work that we have put into the private-sector jobs in the last few years.

The Ross River bridge — we all know there was an assessment done by David Nairne and Associates in the fall of 2013. That focused on a high-level review of the current conditions of the bridge and possible options for how best to address the concerns with the bridge. They reached an engineering conclusion that the bridge was at imminent risk of collapse and identified technical information about the bridge that was not currently available.

Like I said before, All-Span will be investigating these gaps in information and determining what needs to be done to enable the proponent to bid on the stabilization project. This technical assessment will provide the information that the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Community Services working together — we do work together on many projects, as the Minister of Health and Social Services and myself work on many capital projects together. We are constantly working together and sharing our knowledge when it comes to issues. The technical assessment will provide the information to give potential bidders on the RFP, like I said before — the confidence to fully understand the scope of work and risks associated. This is part of our due diligence in providing all necessary information that would allow proponents to successfully bid on this RFP. So we can look at this — we are committed to moving forward on this — and I am looking forward to getting across and heading up the North Canol, as I hope other members do.

There is not much more that I can add to that. It is a work in progress. We are working with the local community on that and we are in constant communication.

The bridge is in the Department of Community Services and the ferry is in the Department of Highways and Public Works and we're working together. As I've said, I've done this with the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Minister of Education and other ministers.

Ms. Moorcroft: The minister is not making any sense. If the Yukon government is concerned about public safety, why hasn't the Yukon government repaired the bridge? Will the Yukon government repair the bridge?

The minister just stood up and said, well, we've been told it's in imminent risk of collapse. Then he also stated that the government has been talking to the Ross River Dena Council and that they're working together, but he's not bringing to this House any solid answers. The bridge has not collapsed. There have been documents submitted about repairing the bridge and the necessary work could be done with local contractors to repair the bridge. Why is the government seemingly unwilling to accept local tenders in order to proceed with repairs on an emergency basis?

Not having the bridge repaired is what is putting the ferry service in danger of not being available for the current summer season. So there's a risk of doing more damage by not repairing the bridge. Can the Minister of Highways and

Public Works not take responsibility for maintaining the critical road infrastructure and the bridge, as well as the ferry?

Could he answer that question? Why haven't they repaired the bridge? Will they proceed to repair the bridge and stop the delays?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I'll try to simplify this as best as possible for the member opposite.

I spoke to gathering a little bit more information so we can get an RFP out, so local contractors can bid on stabilizing the bridge, so we can operate the ferry. That's what the Department of Highways and Public Works and Community Services, working collaboratively, are doing as we speak — always being in constant communication with the locals and the local First Nations, updating them as we go along.

Ms. Moorcroft: For the record, I'm disappointed that the Minister of Highways and Public Works is unable to take responsibility for the viability of the Ross River footbridge. I would again say to the minister that both the bridge and the ferry service are critical and they are transportation infrastructure. It would be nice to see the government taking action to ensure that the Ross River suspension bridge is repaired and that the ferry service can operate on its full schedule this year. I will move on because the minister is not able to provide satisfactory answers.

The 2007 Auditor General's report noted that inspections of government buildings were inadequate. Recently, the department has released its response to the Auditor General's recommendation.

In 2012, the Auditor General again highlighted that problem of inspection, saying the progress was slow and, at that time, fewer than a quarter of the government's nearly 500 buildings had been looked at. Now that the government has taken the time to come up with a good inspection system, I would like the minister to share some details about that plan. How far along is the department in inspecting all of the buildings? How long will it take to inspect all of the government-owned and government-leased facilities? What is the annual reach of the plan? Could the minister just provide an outline of what's involved with that?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Seeing the time, I say that I answer the question. The building condition assessments, the recommended response — humour is always a good thing, Madam Chair. The Yukon government is responsible for the management and condition of hundreds of public buildings and we do take pride in keeping our buildings in good repair and want Yukoners, likewise, to be proud of their public buildings. A key strategy to ensure our government buildings are in shipshape is to conduct regular assessments of their condition. We are doing this on a community-by-community basis so that we can make smart, holistic decisions about the complement of our facilities in each location.

Highways and Public Works has implemented a new inspection program that targets 20 percent of Yukon government's priority buildings for condition assessment each year. This approach enables us to keep on top of repairs, renovations and building code upgrades as needs emerge. The assessment provides a consistent benchmark for the buildings

being inspected, which allows us to compare the condition of the facilities within the portfolio and also with similar facilities in each of the jurisdictions.

The results of the building condition assessments are used to guide investment in Yukon government's building infrastructure. The results also indicate which facilities are at or near the end of their functional life so that planning can be undertaken for major renovations or replacements.

On an annual basis, the Yukon government does spend about \$11 million directly in the maintenance of these assets. A few facts — the government does own over 300 buildings that merit regular condition assessments. These buildings that are more than just storage sheds have mechanical or electrical systems and are at least 10 square metres in size. Approximately 50 building condition assessments were carried out in 2013 and early 2014. The communities targeted to date include Mayo, Dawson City, Watson Lake, Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay and Carcross. During 2014-15, the condition of approximately 130 Whitehorse buildings will be assessed.

There's not much else I can add to that. If the member has other questions, she can ask and I can provide more information.

Ms. Moorcroft: The minister just indicated that the inspection plan was looking at inspecting approximately 20 percent of the buildings per year.

Looking at the supplementary information, page 14-23, in the budget book, there are 487 buildings that are owned, 69 that are leased, and 23 that are fee-for-service buildings. Does the 20 percent per year inspection include only government-owned buildings, or does that also include the leased and fee-for-service buildings?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: We don't assess leased buildings. It is the responsibility of the owner of the building.

Ms. Moorcroft: Of the inspections that have been done, are there any buildings that are worth repairing? Are there any buildings that the assessment would determine are no longer able to be occupied or used for the intended purpose?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I'm not exactly sure how to answer this, but basically I think we have to complete the assessments first. Then, like I said, the holistic approach that we have in rating them gives us the information to move forward on things like the old jail being torn down.

Ms. Moorcroft: A general question that I had for the departmental budget was: What is the total value across the entire Department of Highways and Public Works for the collective agreement and managers' increases?

The second question that I have that relates to personnel is: How many apprentices are employed in the Department of Highways and Public Works? There are a number of trades associated with Transportation and Property Management and other areas. Are there apprentices working across the Department of Highways and Public Works? If so, how many are there?

The next personnel-related question is: How many auxiliaries on-call are employed in the Department of Highways and Public Works?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: The total number of auxiliaries on-call is 81.78. When it comes to the question that the member opposite asked about the apprentices, I'll have to get back to the member on that. I'm not sure about in the Property Management division, but I do know of a few in the Transportation division, so I will get back to the member opposite on that.

The total of 2014-15 salary increases is \$3.208 million.

Ms. Moorcroft: Moving on to the construction that recently began on the new F.H. Collins Secondary School replacement project, will the minister be including the geothermal heating that was promised at the outset in the building construction?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: To get it in Hansard, I'm just pretty excited about dirt being moved and people working over there. I'm really looking forward to the completion of this wonderful school. I had the opportunity to tour the one and I think Yukoners are going to really be impressed.

When it comes to the geothermal, the F.H. Collins project is an affordable design, a modern facility that will meet the LEED silver energy efficiency standards. That's our goal — to provide an efficient and sustainable source of heat for the new facility. Because the facility has moved to this end, we're undertaking a review of all the available alternate heating options. Geothermal hasn't been ruled out. We're taking it into consideration. Highways and Public Works is working with the Energy Solutions Centre to develop a tool to assess the various heating sources to ensure the appropriate primary and secondary heat source for any government buildings — on this project too.

Redundant capacity for heat is always a critical element in the design, so once some of this information gets back, we're going to have to look at the costing of it before we can make a decision on that. The redundancy is always put into the design of it. That's about all I can say on that.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would point out that it doesn't seem to be very good planning to design a building and then think about what kind of a heating system you're going to put in afterward. The Yukon Party government has been planning the construction of a new F.H. Collins secondary high school for a decade or more, and the initial research was done in relation to being able to put a geothermal heating system there, which would be energy efficient.

I believe studies have demonstrated it would be an expenditure that would result over time in savings because of the energy efficiency. I will again, as members on this side of the House, both in this legislative sitting and previous ones, have done, recommend to the minister that they include geothermal at the outset, rather than going to additional expense to add it later on in the project.

Moving on, I would like to turn to the Highways and Public Works maintenance yard in Carmacks. The Village of Carmacks would like to take over the use of the maintenance yard because it is prime real estate right in the middle of the community. Will the Department of Highways and Public Works be moving the maintenance yard out of Carmacks? If not, what are the reasons for keeping it on land that is so

valuable to the community? Has there been an estimate of cost to clean up the contaminants at the site of the maintenance yard in Carmacks?

Another question related to the community of Carmacks, which my colleague from Mayo-Tatchun has brought up on several occasions, is the creation of a Carmacks bypass. The people in that community would like to know what the status is of the Carmacks bypass.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: When we talked, the member opposite asked about the audit and about the building condition assessments and that's going to be a big player into which buildings are either ready for renovation or ready for replacement. On that, we are in dialogue with the mayor and council of Carmacks and we've had that conversation about the Highways yard being prime land for them for development — so we are working with them on that.

The Member for Mayo-Tatchun, asked about the bypass. I have the same answer as I've answered in this House before. We've committed to doing it when it's needed. There is not an operating mine of that scale that requires it right now. We've heard from the community and the local First Nations. When the time comes and the traffic and volumes are there, that's something that we'll have to do.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following document was filed May 7, 2014:

33-1-83

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, letter re (dated April 25, 2014) from Ruth Massie, Grand Chief, Council of Yukon First Nations to Kevin Barr, Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, and Darius Elias, Member for Vuntut Gwitchin (Barr)