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HANSARD

Wednesday, October 16, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2019 Fall Sitting

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

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

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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, October 16, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Van Bibber: I want all my colleagues in the House to help me welcome an auspicious group who we have in the gallery. My guest of honour is Mr. Hank Karr — and his beautiful wife, Pam Karr; Hank Karr Jr., son; granddaughter Nikki Belanger; Laura Grieve; Ginny Malchow; Lynette King; Ed Isaak; Ray Park; Dave Terris; Karen Forward, president of the Hospital Foundation; and my husband, Pat Van Bibber.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors? Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Hank Karr

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I am honoured to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to offer a tribute to Hank Karr.

My parents were huge fans and his music has always been important to our family and to all Yukoners. I remember many, many road trips with my parents, listening to Hank Karr. It has been absolutely my pleasure over the past few years to spend time with Hank and his family. I co-hosted the launch of both the book *The Hank Karr Story: Now and Then* and the Hank Karr gospel album. Those events were packed at the MacBride Museum with old-time bands and many new ones.

It was absolutely an honour to be with Hank and his family recently when he was honoured by the Western Canadian Music Association with the Heritage Award. Hank was born in Saskatchewan and has been a singer since he was a young child. It was clear early on that music would be an important part of his life. He started out as a part-time performer and supported himself as a carhop at White Spot in Vancouver. It says so much about Hank and his friendships that he still visits his co-workers from over 60 years ago, whenever he is in town.

Hank came up through the bandstand — no formal training — but two shows a night for six nights a week was how he earned his musical chops. In early 1964, he emigrated to Ketchikan, Alaska for a job at the Yukon Club. When the season ended, he was visiting the legion in Vancouver, when Al Oster came over and said, “How would you like to go to Whitehorse?” This was Hank’s first trip to the Yukon and it would be an important one.

March 1, 1965, was the first time that he played at the Whitehorse Inn, replacing the Canucks, who were on vacation. Hank met Pam, who was working as a waitress next door. Hank started flirting with Pam through the window between the bar and the restaurant. Their first date was Easter weekend. Four weeks later, they were married. Local bookies thought it would last only four weeks. Well, 54 years later, Hank and Pam won the bet, and we were absolutely thrilled to see them honoured in 2019 as the Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous’ Mr. and Mrs. Yukon.

Hank represented the Yukon at Expo 67, which meant that he had to make a choice to go to Montréal instead of Nashville, where CBC was doing a live recording of *The Yukon Stars*. By 1969, the Yukon was calling them back home. Hank became a partner in leasing the Kopper King in Whitehorse, and his family settled into the Yukon. In 1975-76, the Hank Karr Band took over the music scene in Whitehorse. Hank remembers — and I quote: “Everybody played full out and then a little extra, all of us were and still are good friends, we never wavered and the money never became an issue.”

Hank has played just about every bar in Whitehorse, the communities, the Commissioner’s Ball, the legion, parades, weddings, and celebrations of life. In 1982, Hank worked with renowned Yukon broadcaster Les McLaughlin to release *Paddlewheeler and other Northland Ballads* on CBC Northern Service. His love for the Yukon is clearly stated in his song *Where do you go after Yukon?*, which is the closing anthem of every Hank Karr show.

Hank’s music is a soundtrack of Yukoners’ lives. He is part of our events, our ceremonies, and our stories. He still plays regularly and supports local organizations like the MacBride Museum and cancer care. Family means everything to Hank — his daughter, Kerry, and his son, Hank Jr., along with grandchildren, Brydon and Nicole, are the centre of his world. Hank said it best — and I quote: “... it’s been a wonderful ride. I have been blessed to have so many great and talented musicians with me and Yukon to support me through these years. I am a lucky person.”

So, the road and thousands of miles always pointed to, or back to, the Yukon. When asked why he never moved to Nashville, he replied, “The Yukon is my Nashville.”

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition and the Third Party to pay tribute to Mr. Hank Karr — an interesting life that I am supposed to do in four minutes. I’ll try my best, but I’m sure I’m not going to do it justice.

A Saskatchewan boy, Hank always had a love for music. He found that singing relaxed him and people thought he was pretty darn good. He was good. After moving to Vancouver, where he began a career with White Spot, he moonlighted with various bands. Hank purchased a guitar for \$125 — \$25 down and \$25 a month — and he was on his way to a stage career.

At an event, as was mentioned, he was noticed and he got an invite that we are glad he didn’t refuse. Al Oster asked him to come to Whitehorse, Yukon, and on March 1, 1965, he

played for the first time in Yukon at the Whitehorse Inn lounge. Now, that will bring back a few memories.

Now, I understand the inn had an order window between the bar and the kitchen, and he spotted a cute new waitress named Pam. He flirted, she flirted, they dated and, four weeks later, they were married. Through thick and thin, they supported and helped each other and here we are, 54 years later, and still together — and our current Mr. and Mrs. Yukon.

Hank played across the United States and Canada, rubbing shoulders with people like Merle Haggard, Bobby Bare, and Loretta Lynn — but that world wasn't for him. In the hard knock world of the music recording industry, it can be lonely, demanding work at any level, and if one is recognized, difficult to stay there. To get a hit record — well, the odds were against the writer and/or musician. Hank wanted to stay in Yukon, and he did.

A few years ago, I heard Hank was in the hospital and I went over for a visit. No, there was no Hank Karr listed as a patient. I was puzzled because my source was pretty reliable. Finally, a nurse I knew said, "Henry Karhut." Very few knew that Henry Karhut and Hank Karr are one and the same. I certainly didn't, and it delighted Hank to no end to pull one over with his real and his stage name.

Hank Karr is the ultimate gentleman and he cares deeply about those around him and his community. Of course, he does paid gigs — most notably the seniors soiree and the Vancouver Yukoners' annual banquet — along with the Canucks. He also gives so much of his time to charity and he volunteers his talent to raise funds for others.

Hank has done so much for the Yukoners cancer care fund and we can't thank him enough for his care and support. He is a cancer survivor, so Hank knows the trauma that people go through when they learn of their diagnosis.

For several years now, Hank, my husband Pat, and I have done a road trip during late summer. We have a Dawson City event on the Klondike Spirit, all donated by Brad Whitelaw and the Triple J Hotel. Hank is the headliner and it is always sold out.

When Mike Craigen was commissioned by the MacBride Museum to write *The Hank Karr Story: Now and Then*, I was asked and was very pleased to write a piece for the book. In my final paragraph, I wrote, "Yukon memories may be different for each of us, but I am sure there is not one long-time Yukoner that has not been touched by Hank Karr and his music in some way. I am truly blessed to have him in a starring role in a small chapter of my life."

He said recently that he doesn't deserve all these tributes, but we know better. Thank you, Hank Karr, for all you do for Yukon and thank you, Pam Karr, for all you do and for sharing Hank all these years with us. Bless you both.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon caregivers and National Foster Family Week

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Liberal government and the Third Party NDP caucus to pay tribute to Yukon's caregivers. Family caregivers are often the

nursing heroes and unsung heroes of Yukon communities. They provide informal support for children, parents, families, and friends, some who have acute or chronic conditions and need assistance managing a variety of tasks, such as bathing, dressing, and taking medications. Not only is caregiving greatly appreciated by those receiving the support, but it is also a major unrecognized form of charity throughout Yukon and Canada.

A 2011 report in *Healthcare Quarterly* stated that caregivers who look after seniors save the Canadian health care system between \$24 million and \$31 million annually. Additionally, nearly one in three Canadians provide informal care to a family member or friend and 10 percent of caregivers spend more than 30 hours per week providing care. Many of these caregivers take vacation or unpaid time off work to provide their support.

Mr. Speaker, we don't need to look far to find examples of people who, at some point in their lives, have acted or will act as caregivers. They are Yukoners who have left their home communities and taken time to move their parents to more appropriate housing or parents who have stepped up as primary support and health advocates for children with complex or chronic health issues.

There are siblings like long-time Yukoner Gord Bradshaw, who has had to leave his territory for extended periods of time to look after his sisters, Peg and Megan. Peg has early-onset dementia. Megan has recently been diagnosed with breast cancer. This was not how Gord planned to spend his retirement, but if you ask him, he will tell you that, while the past few months have been hard, they have also been an incredibly meaningful time for his family.

I want to take a moment to pause and recognize individuals like Gord Bradshaw and many other caregivers in our communities — recognize what it takes to put our own lives on hold and care for a loved one who can no longer care for themselves. It is an incredibly difficult thing to do and yet it is often something we wouldn't think twice about doing because, when we love someone, you're there for them. Those heroes deserve our praise and, in turn, they deserve our support too.

I encourage all Yukoners to reach out to those acting as caregivers. Give them a hug, ask them how they're doing, and offer a helping hand so that they know that they are not alone. Many hands make light work, Mr. Speaker. That means we all have to play a role in supporting, not just our loved ones, but the caregivers around us.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition during National Foster Family Week to pay tribute to Yukon caregivers who play a crucial role in ensuring our communities thrive day in and day out.

Foster families open their homes and their lives to children in order to provide them with the stability and care that they may not have had the opportunity to experience otherwise. The role that foster parents play in our community is instrumental to raising our next generation of Yukoners. Some foster families offer respite care, looking after children for a short

period of time; others foster children full-time, and all are devoted to the kids who they share their homes with.

If you're interested in becoming part of the foster family program, your assistance and dedication are always needed and always appreciated. Whether you're available for short- or long-term assistance, there's always an opportunity to help Yukon children and families, and we encourage you to learn more and get involved.

Of course, we are cognizant of the fact that Yukon caregivers are not limited to those providing foster care, and therefore we would also like to recognize those who may provide care to children in other ways. Thank you to all those who step up to take care of young family members due to a variety of situations. Keeping children in the care of extended families is always a wonderful thing, so thank you for what you do.

Thank you to those who care for children in group care settings. It's not an easy job that you do and your work is appreciated. Thank you to those who provide respite care outside of foster care and who provide respite for families of children or adults with disabilities, seniors, or in other special circumstances. Thank you to all of you in communities across the Yukon who open their homes, hearts, families, and lives to children and others in need of a stable and caring environment.

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

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. Hanson: I have for tabling a document, entitled *Preventing Wildlife Injuries From Right-of-Way Brushing*, prepared by the Yukon Department of Environment in cooperation with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and the Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Adel: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to adopt immigration initiatives that:

(1) ensure that employers have access to workers; and

(2) help attract skilled workers to the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse and local community associations to address traffic concerns, including:

(1) providing support and funding for the installation of crosswalks and other traffic-calming measures; and

(2) providing the necessary infrastructure funding to support upgrades to roads.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Justice to recognize the importance of the RCMP auxiliary constable program, including the key role those volunteers could play in keeping roads safe following the legalization of cannabis, by immediately supporting the implementation of all three tiers of the RCMP auxiliary constable program.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to improve Burma Road.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to make improvements to Horse Creek Road and the roads at Jackfish Bay.

I also give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Liberal government to provide any evidence it may have to back up its assertion that legal cannabis sales have displaced black market sales.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to start the work necessary to provide for and proceed with the installation of highway lighting on the Robert Campbell Highway from the junction of Ravenhill Drive and the Robert Campbell Highway to the subdivision of Two and One-Half Mile to ensure the safety of the travelling public, including pedestrians and people in motor vehicles.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to reconsider its decision to not support the establishment of the Canadian Autism Partnership, which supports families and individuals with autism through improved treatment, diagnosis, detection, and research.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop an action plan to recruit and retain nurses in our communities, while supporting them so they can live there long-term.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ask the federal government to reverse their cuts to health care for members of the Armed Forces.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with community partners to improve health care delivery in all Yukon communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase opportunities for tourism in the Kluane region by:

(1) meeting with Parks Canada, the Village of Haines Junction, local First Nations, businesses, the St. Elias Chamber of Commerce, local advisory councils, and residents to discuss shared priorities in promoting the Kluane region; and

(2) allocating a portion of the \$1.8 million received from the Government of Canada to ensure that all Yukon regions and communities are promoted in future Yukon Now commercials, including having a specific commercial focused on the Kluane region and Kluane National Park.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Government of Canada, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kluane First Nation, local communities, chambers of commerce, businesses, organizations, and community members to increase access to the front ranges of Kluane National Park and Reserve of Canada along the Haines Road and Alaska Highway for the purpose of creating more land- and air-based tourism and business opportunities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct and make public an analysis of economic impacts of the carbon tax scheme that it has agreed to with the Government of Canada on Yukon's outfitting industry.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to initiate consultations with Yukon residents about the elimination of daylight saving time in the Yukon and report back the results of that consultation to this House before the conclusion of the 2020 Spring Sitting.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a more collaborative approach with Yukon municipalities.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Implementation of the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*

Hon. Ms. Frost: It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak about the Peel watershed land use plan. On August 22 of this year, the Yukon government, with our four Yukon First Nation partners — Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the First Nations of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Vuntut Gwitchin, and the Gwich'in Tribal

Council — concluded a land use planning process that started 15 years ago.

Over the past year, we collaborated closely to find consensus on the final plan consistent with the direction from the Supreme Court of Canada, the final agreements, and the wishes of Yukoners.

Former Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Chief Eddie Taylor described the importance of the Peel watershed to the four First Nations who call it home — and I quote: “As our elders say, the Peel Watershed is our church, our university and our breadbasket. It sustains our spirit, our minds and our bodies. It is as sacred to us as it was to our ancestors, and as it will be to our grandchildren.”

Now for the benefit of current and future generations, we have a plan that provides essential direction for sustaining the watershed over the long term and balances economic interests with environmental stewardship. Yukon government officials are now working with our partners on implementing the final approved plan. An implementation plan will be developed by the end of the year.

Priorities include: designating and creating management plans for special management areas and wilderness areas; assisting the establishment of national historic sites for two areas along the Peel River that are of high cultural importance to the Tetlit Gwich'in — Tshuu tr'adaojiich'uu and Teetl'it njik; recommending the prohibition of mineral staking and other resource dispositions for special management areas and renewing existing prohibition on an interim basis in the wilderness areas; designating off-road vehicle management areas through regulation; and developing a plan review process and timeline.

Finishing this plan was an accomplishment and a commitment of our Liberal government, and we are proud to deliver on what we said we would do. There is much work ahead of us, both in implementing this regional land use plan but also in continuing positive partnerships for more regional land use plans.

Let's keep moving forward together.

Mahsi'.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to rise to speak to this ministerial statement today.

As the minister indicated, Yukon government officials are now working with partners to implement the final approved plan, and we would like to thank those individuals for their ongoing efforts. There is much hard work ahead, as this is the beginning of the implementation process.

Regarding the implementation of the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* and the priorities that the minister listed, we do have a few questions. Is the minister able to provide a timeline and budget for when full implementation will be completed? The minister referenced the designating and creating of management plans for special management areas and wilderness areas. Is she able to provide us an update on what that process entails — whether or not there will be public consultation on those specific management plans?

I'm curious: Does the minister believe that land use planning is the primary tool for creating protected areas? Regarding the creation of national historic sites that was referenced — what exactly does that entail? What is Parks Canada's role in that and who will be paying for the costs associated with those sites? The minister referenced a prohibition of mineral staking and other resource dispositions as well as renewals of existing prohibitions.

As we all know, there are third-party interests in the Peel watershed, with significant costs associated with those parties if their claims are expropriated, either directly or indirectly. Just to quote from an August 26 *Whitehorse Star* article: "... the Yukon Chamber of Mines has suggested it's quite likely exploration and mining companies will be seeking financial compensation because the plan essentially expropriates their existing mineral claims in the Peel region."

That same article went on to say — and I'll quote again: "The premier, however, said in a press conference following the signing ceremony the Yukon government is not contemplating compensation." I am sure the Premier knows what will happen to our reputation as a safe place to invest if mineral claims are expropriated, especially without compensation.

Our question is about whether the government has done any analysis on the value of the claims that the industry would be seeking compensation for. What would the impacts of such compensation be on the government's bottom line? Have they done any legal analysis on the possibility of a lawsuit if they do not proceed with compensation?

A final question for the government is: Will the minister extend the relief from assessments for claimholders in this region until the question of compensation is settled?

The minister's statement also referenced the designation of off-road vehicle management areas through regulation. Is this contemplated as part of the current review of ORV management that the government is conducting, or is this a separate process entirely? The minister also referenced continuing work for more regional land use plans.

Can she provide us with an update on the planning for the Dawson region? We know that a total of six more plans need to be completed. Does the minister have a schedule for which ones will proceed, and when, following the Dawson plan that is currently underway?

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for updating us on the implementation of the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*. We're hoping that she can answer some of these questions when she returns to her feet today, or perhaps she can respond to us in writing to those outstanding as soon as possible.

Ms. Hanson: The Yukon New Democratic Party absolutely agrees that the importance of signing, finalizing, and approving of the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* cannot be overstated. It has been a long — some would say torturous — road to get to the point where the conversation has finally shifted from "If the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* would ever be implemented..." to "How the *Peel*

Watershed Regional Land Use Plan will be implemented and when."

The Yukon New Democratic Party has supported the Peel watershed planning process since it began back in 2004. We were supportive of the final recommended plan and we stood with First Nation parties to the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* when they, along with CPAWS and YCS, worked to garner public support. We stood here as drums of support pounded outside this Legislative Assembly, and we were proud to table a petition in this Assembly containing over 8,000 names in support of the final recommended *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*. We were there when the Yukon Supreme Court and the Yukon Court of Appeal heard the historic court case that led to the Supreme Court of Canada's upholding the tenets of the land use planning as set out in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

Mr. Speaker, we agree that there is much work ahead of us. We are mindful that three of the 14 Yukon First Nations do not have final agreements, and as such, we have stated before in this House that there are means to achieving land use plans in the absence of final agreements. We can look to the Kaska engagement with British Columbia to complete the Muskwa-Kechika land use plan in Kaska traditional territory in British Columbia as an example.

The future economic and social prosperity of Yukon is inextricably connected to our commitment to move forward together without further delays to complete the remaining land use plans called for in Yukon First Nation final agreements.

We urge the Government of Yukon to work with the Yukon Land Use Planning Council, who wrote to the governments of Yukon and Na-Cho Nyäk Dun in October 2017, stating — and I quote: "Finally, the Council has been seeking a means of bringing a common understanding to the interpretation of Chapter 11, including the need for a detailed process to create Sub-regional plans. The Council believes that there is a considerable merit in the development of a *Yukon Land Use Planning Strategy*, that would build on the terms of the Yukon First Nation Final Agreements and represent a common interpretation of the agreements and associated implementation work. The *Yukon Land Use Planning Strategy* would incorporate the concepts associated with the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling regarding the Peel court case and the lesson's learned from earlier regional planning exercises..."

We look forward to hearing what follow-up this government has done with the Land Use Planning Council's suggestion for Yukon's land use planning strategy and how that strategy will lead to completion of land use plans throughout Yukon.

Hon. Ms. Frost: In August of 2018, the parties signed a letter of understanding outlining the expectations for a collaborative consultation and approval process specific to the obligations under the final agreement section 11.6.3.2, and that came directly from the Yukon Supreme Court of Canada. The decision was that no longer would we venture into our communities and be told, with hands up, "it's not to be discussed." Well, we're here as government to engage with

Yukoners to discuss what will go down in history — the signing on August 22, 2019. As the Premier said, “Finalizing the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* is an historic moment for Yukon that reflects respectful collaboration between First Nations and the Government of Yukon.” Our Liberal “... government committed to accepting the final recommended plan and we are honoured to deliver on that commitment for the benefit of all Yukoners.”

As Yukoners know, the former Yukon Party government went out of their way to avoid collaboration with First Nations and had to be told by the highest court in the land that it was not an acceptable approach. Fifteen years after the Peel land use plan process began, after five governments found common ground and agreed on a plan, it remains unclear whether the Yukon Party supports the watershed land use plan.

We will be bringing forward to debate and try to get clarity on that matter. In light of the Supreme Court decision, the Official Opposition admitted that mistakes were made by the former Yukon Party government, but they have not yet elaborated on which mistakes were made and what they learned while making these mistakes. In light of the questions today, I would suggest that they have some ideas.

Our Liberal team certainly learned by observing the mistakes of the Yukon Party, and we committed to Yukoners to chart a new course based on reconciliation. The Yukon government, together with the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, the First Nations of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Vuntut Gwitchin, and the Gwich’in Tribal Council, collaboratively worked to find consensus on the final plan consistent with the direction from the Supreme Court of Canada in the final agreement and the wishes of Yukoners. This reflects our Liberal government’s commitment to respectful government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations. We prefer negotiation to litigation, and we will continue to work in partnership with First Nations for the benefit of all Yukoners.

The *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* will be used to guide future use and development within the Peel region. The parties will collaborate on implementation of the plan, including consideration for addressing existing mineral and oil and gas interests. The approved plan does not call for cancellation or expropriation of any existing mineral claims.

Land use policies in the approved plan provide direction with respect to access or use of those claims. Yukon government officials are currently working with our partners on implementing the final plan, and we look forward to moving an implementation plan forward by the end of this year, in collaboration with our partners. We endeavour to continue that relationship as we collaborate.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Challenge housing project

Ms. Van Bibber: In the spring, the Liberals said that they were giving \$4 million to the Challenge Disability Resource Group toward the construction of their housing project in Whitehorse. On April 11, 2019, the minister claimed

that this investment would address the affordable housing crisis. As we indicated last week, however, this fall supplementary budget cuts that \$4-million investment in affordable housing entirely. We asked the minister why, instead of cutting the money, she didn’t have other housing projects to invest in. The Premier responded that he wouldn’t commit to a new project on the spot. That wasn’t what we were asking. We were asking the Liberals to take this issue seriously. We are in a housing crisis and the government should have spent the last several months working to find other viable projects.

Why did the Liberals not try to find any other projects to reinvest this funding in?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We are pleased with the partnership that we have with the Challenge Disability Resource Group to ensure the successful construction of their Cornerstone Housing project. In the 2019-20 budget, we allocated \$4 million to support the project’s construction based on the Disability Resource Group’s timelines. This summer, Challenge Disability Resource Group decided to delay issuing the tender. We have adjusted our funding schedule to allow their construction timeline to support a spring 2020 construction start.

We are committed to supporting the development of the Cornerstone project, and capital funding will be released to support the actual construction schedule that they have set out for themselves.

Ms. Van Bibber: Availability of affordable housing is a major issue in Yukon. This spring, the Liberals bragged about the \$4-million investment in a project to help address this issue. Now they are cutting that \$4-million investment in the supplementary budget and claiming that they can’t spend it on something else this year.

Last week, the Premier claimed that you can’t just reinvest that money in other projects, but yesterday, the minister contradicted the Premier and stated — and I quote: “... I want to just make note that we have the flexibility within our budget to move resources around. That was something that we’ve taken into consideration as we looked at the budget.” So why, in the middle of a housing crisis, is the government not moving these resources around in other housing projects like the minister of housing claimed was possible yesterday?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think the fundamental theory from the Yukon Party is flawed. The member opposite keeps on saying that we have cut this funding. That is absolutely and fundamentally untrue. We have not cut this funding. It is still in our financial framework. It is still there for the Challenge project, and we will still be moving forward on this project. Yukoners heard the Challenge project coordinator speaking in the media about this particular project and about getting the best bang for the buck, and that is the reason why this has not been cut, Mr. Speaker, but extended into the next year.

We are working in partnership with the private sector, other governments, and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of a housing action plan for Yukoners and a Safe at Home plan. Over the past two years, we have invested in housing programs and commitments to housing development supporting over 400 homes. The member opposite can try to

paint a picture of us cutting money toward housing, but I would counter that by saying that the evidence is clearly the opposite. We are increasing our abilities to get housing to Yukoners who need it.

Ms. Van Bibber: On the issue of whether it is cuts or reinvestment, I will read the statement made by the minister of housing again: "... I want to just make note that we have the flexibility within our budget to move resources around. That was something that we've taken into consideration as we looked at the budget." Since the minister says that this is something that they have taken into consideration as they looked at this supplementary budget, can she tell us what other projects she considered for this \$4-million investment?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am very pleased with the work of the Yukon Housing Corporation. I am pleased with the work of the Challenge Disability Resource Group. I know that they are working specifically with the timelines that have been set for them. We are not going to pull the rug out from under one of our housing partners, as they have secured federal funding that is going to be augmented and supported with the resources that we have. We are doing what we can to align with the timelines of the Challenge Disability Resource Group.

The readiness of those projects — we have already provided support for the purchase of their land. We have \$500,000 under the municipal matching rental construction, and of course with the housing initiative fund, we have provided a contribution there as well and further resources under the victims of violence program. We are very excited about the work that we are doing with Yukoners.

There are many projects. We are not cutting anyone from any funding for projects. What we are doing is looking at enhancing the programs that we have available — Housing First, looking at converting some of our units in Yukon Housing Corporation to make more units available. We are looking at rent supplements, we are looking at municipal matching grants, and we are looking within our budgets to provide the flexibility where it is needed.

Question re: Hospital staffing

Ms. McLeod: The Liberal government is having difficulty ensuring that we have an appropriate number of nurses. Yesterday we indicated that the Watson Lake hospital is supposed to employ nine full-time nursing positions. At the end of August, there were four vacant nursing positions, so we asked the minister what she is doing to address this staffing shortage at the Watson Lake hospital. She did not answer but did address it with the media after Question Period.

CBC this morning is quoted as saying that the minister said the territory's health centres are appropriately staffed, but as of this morning, the Hospital Corporation has four job postings for registered nurses at the Watson Lake hospital. So it appears that they still have not filled four of nine positions.

Can the minister provide us with a timeline for when the Watson Lake hospital will be fully staffed?

Hon. Ms. Frost: It is a very interesting line of questioning given that the members opposite have been, in effect, managing this very specific program for many years and

are fully aware that nursing challenges and recruitment and retention strategies are very difficult in the Yukon and across the country. We are taking innovative approaches here in the Yukon. We are working in collaboration with the Hospital Corporation. We recognize the important role that nurses play in delivering health care to Yukoners, no matter which community they live in. We have a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy that includes regular national advertising that we work in collaboration with the hospital on.

We have many health care professionals within Health and Social Services, be it through our home care program, through long-term care facilities, or through the health centres for that matter. Currently, community nursing only has two vacancies for float primary health care nurses and two part-time vacancies in the communities.

With the question around the Hospital Corporation, I will certainly speak to the hospital about that and endeavour to get more information.

Ms. McLeod: I want to remind the minister that she is about to enter her fourth year of being in government. Yesterday, I asked the minister what actions her government is taking to attract and support nurses to move to, stay in, and live in our community so that our communities are fully staffed. The minister refused to provide any specifics beyond buzzwords like "creative solutions" and "innovative approaches". Well, the staffing shortages will negatively impact Yukoners, so we need more than buzzwords.

Can the minister please tell us what, if any, specific action she has taken to ensure that we can recruit and retain nurses in our communities?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I want to say thank you to the member opposite. It has been three years and a bit. I'm very proud of the work that this government is doing in providing supports to Yukoners. We are endeavouring to take innovative approaches to provide the necessary supports through a collaborative model — through a collaborative health care model for all Yukoners, ensuring that the services we bring, we bring to them in rural Yukon communities. That had not been considered historically, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to do that in partnership with the Hospital Corporation.

We are also looking at recruitment strategies, recognizing that we were given a project — the Whistle Bend continuing care facility — without consideration, Mr. Speaker, for how that facility was going to be staffed — 250 positions. Considering that and where we are, I'm very happy and pleased to say to Yukoners that we and the department have done an exceptional job in getting and filling all of the positions that we have and looking at a collaborative care model and expanding the scope of care and practice for Yukoners.

Ms. McLeod: Entering the fourth year of government, I remind them: Yesterday, we discussed the staffing shortages at the maternity unit in Whitehorse over the past summer. The Liberal government resorted to flying in nurses from outside of Yukon on a rotational basis and compensating them with a paid premium above the rates provided to nurses who live in Whitehorse. These benefits included paid travel,

accommodations, and a weekly bonus — benefits that were not provided to local Yukon nurses.

Yesterday, I asked the minister how many Outside nurses were rotated in this summer, and she did not answer. I also asked her what specific action she is taking to ensure that we do not end up in the situation again — she did not answer.

The problem has gotten worse under this Liberal government. Could the minister please tell us how many Outside nurses were rotated in this summer, and what are the Liberals doing to ensure we don't have to resort to this again?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We will work with the Hospital Corporation, as I expressed earlier, and will continue to work with the health care professionals to ensure that we have all vacancies filled within health. As I indicated in my previous answer, we don't have a lot of vacancies; however, the hospital, as I recollect, had some challenges and they negotiated that into their collective agreement to a letter of understanding. The member opposite referred to that letter yesterday. That was a negotiated agreement, something that we do not have control over. It was a reminder that was negotiated into the agreement.

We will ensure that Yukon and Yukon health centres that we are responsible for are fully staffed. I can assure Yukoners that we have all of our health centres fully staffed, and we have in fact created a nurse practitioner position in the community of Mayo. We will use that model in other Yukon communities and increase the scope of care and practice for Yukoners so we can bring the supports to them, rather than having them travel outside their communities.

Question re: Roadside brush-clearing

Ms. Hanson: Last spring, Highways and Public Works announced a new roadside brushing strategy. This summer, the government began expanded roadside brushing along the south Klondike Highway and extending along the Tagish Road. The roadside clearing saw an expansion of cleared right-of-way from 10 metres to 20 metres from the centreline — 65 feet.

The Crag Lake subdivision along the Tagish Road was established over 50 years ago. The trees that form a natural buffer between businesses, homes, and the highway are slated for clearing. Highways and Public Works has indicated that the expanded roadway clearing is for safety reasons; however, requests from area residents to post a reduced speed limit along stretches of the Tagish Road have been dismissed.

The arbitrary application of standardized clear-cutting will have recreational, environmental, and tourism impacts on the area. Why has the minister resisted any of the reasonable options that have been proposed by Tagish Road residents?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As the member opposite has noted, the Government of Yukon and Highways and Public Works takes the safety of travellers using the territory's highways very seriously. The member opposite is correct: We have implemented a new modernization program that will improve the quality and frequency of highway and roadside maintenance through greater brush-clearing, line-painting, clear zone safety, and roadside barriers and delineation. The new roadway maintenance improvement program will enhance highway safety throughout the Yukon.

This year, under the new program, three kilometres of new barriers have been installed, more than 1,000 kilometres of highway will be brushed, and approximately 1,600 kilometres of lanes will be painted.

The member has mentioned the Crag Lake subdivision. My colleague, the MLA for the region, and I went out and visited with residents. I have done this on several occasions and heard their concerns. I have spoken with the highway maintenance engineers and they have come up with some compromises in those areas. I'm very happy they were able to maintain the safety and still address the concerns of the residents in the area.

Ms. Hanson: The minister refers to clearing on the south Klondike and Tagish roads as brushing, but in some areas, the large trees will be cleared right to the edge of the property line, exposing homes and tourism operations. Residents are concerned that drivers will speed because of the wider shoulders. In addition, the highway clearing plan poses a danger to wildlife and residents as a result of poor execution of the roadside brushing.

Recent clearing along the south Klondike and Tagish Road has left behind many splintered tree stumps that are now obscured under a fresh blanket of snow. In 2008, the Department of Environment highlighted the hazards associated with this incomplete approach to brushing. The report stated that moose, caribou, and elk can be injured by splintered tree stumps left behind and that the debris could also pose a danger to snowmobilers.

The Tagish Road shoulder is used extensively for recreational purposes. Poorly executed clearing poses a risk. What steps is the minister taking to ensure that clearing is carried out —

Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon, I'm hearing from the member opposite something that I don't agree with, actually. Brushing improves sightlines, drainage, and visibility of wildlife on roadways and decreases snow accumulation. Included in the program we have undertaken is roadside vegetation management — also known as "brushing work".

Mr. Speaker, the roadside brushing we're conducting across the territory — for the first time, doing the entire 5,000 kilometres of roadway in a methodical manner over the next five years — is being lauded by many across the territory because people who drive our roads know the merits of being able to see oncoming trucks and wildlife and see around corners. They see the benefits of the concrete barriers and the line painting we're doing. There is a clear safety benefit — a clear improvement to our roads through this work. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, we have one of the worst traffic accident statistics in the country and we are working very hard to reduce that so our roads that carry us between our communities are safer.

Ms. Hanson: The minister just echoed exactly what he said: One size fits all. That's why the Tagish Road residents are concerned. Highways and Public Works is responsible for roads, but other departments are affected. The Crag Lake subdivision and Tagish bridge area hosts several bed and breakfast and cabin rentals that are popular tourist attractions. Business owners have raised concerns that the expanded

clearing will remove the buffer along the road that makes the properties a quiet getaway. As well, Tagish residents have highlighted concerns about the potential environmental impact that this clearing may have on erosion in an ecologically sensitive area.

The government says it puts an emphasis on whole of government, yet it appears that Highways and Public Works is calling the shots with no word from the Department of Environment or the Department of Tourism and Culture.

Did the Minister of Highways and Public Works seek input from the ministers of Environment and Tourism and Culture prior to starting this planned work? If so, were they supportive of the work, despite the potential impact on tourism operations, sensitive ecological areas, and wildlife?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I might remind the member opposite that we're actually talking about work being done in a right-of-way. Mr. Speaker, the right-of-way is a stretch of land on the side of each of the highways that's taken into account in zoning and everything else — that gives Highways and Public Works the right to manage the roadway in a way that makes it safer and facilitates the management of our road network. The road network has rights-of-way. We are simply working in the right-of-way in which we are allowed to work.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to residents in the Tagish and Crag Lake area on several occasions. I have heard their concerns and I have worked with the department to come up with ways to mitigate some of the concerns in the right-of-way that she has mentioned.

Now, the member opposite has mentioned the work with environment and tourism. Of course, this government does work very closely on a number of files, I will say, respecting her comments about caribou and critical wildlife habitat. I will also note that we've been asked to actually brush-clear on the Alaska Highway south of town to facilitate and actually save the caribou. So, we have been asked to do more roadwork and brushing in that area to protect the caribou habitat.

Question re: Vimy housing project

Ms. Van Bibber: Last week, I asked the minister a question about the Vimy project and she did not answer. We have seen the social and senior housing wait-list skyrocket from 105 in 2016 to 280 by the end of last year. Another major project to help address housing issues that the government has talked about in the past is the Vimy Heritage Housing project, but there is no reference to this project in this throne speech.

Can the minister explain why the Vimy project is no longer a priority?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that from the start of engagement with the Vimy society we've always tried to ensure that they had the appropriate supports to come up with an accurate plan and a plan that can be successful. That has not changed in our commitment, so I would say that the preamble for the question was not accurate.

We appreciate the work that has been done by the Vimy Heritage Housing Society in developing its vision for independent housing with its support of seniors. Seniors housing is important to this government and we are exploring a

variety of options with respect to meeting housing needs while keeping sound financial principles in mind. The key — and I would like to commend the minister in charge of housing — is the work that the minister and her team have done to support the Vimy society as they engage bilaterally with CMHC.

Of course, we're working with Vimy Heritage Housing Society to explore sources of funding that support a financially viable project, including the national co-investment fund. Most recently, we have provided Vimy with financial support to assist with developing their applications for CMHC's co-investment and seed funding. It has really been an effort that has been led by both — or not led, but a collaborative effort that was put in place by both the Housing Corporation and Energy, Mines and Resources. I thank the staff in our lands branch who have worked — and also with Economic Development.

I look forward to your question number 2.

Ms. Van Bibber: Can the minister tell us how much the government is investing in the Vimy project this year? What has the government done over the past 12 months to facilitate getting the Vimy project to construction?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I apologize for that — of course, CMHC is the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. That's who we've assisted the Vimy Heritage Housing Society to work with in looking for the appropriate funding.

Really, the financial commitment moving forward will of course be dependent upon the success that they would have in their application. Then of course you would take a look at what model works for them. I think what has been key is to ensure that the prospectus that they have provided and built for potential clients has all of the appropriate information. That's really from every year we have attended their AGM and have watched the interest.

What we've tried to do through the Department of Economic Development is to ensure that they have a sound business plan, and we've supported them in going out to get third-party support to do that. We do that because our government believes that the best Yukon is one that balances many different needs of our territory, from economy to environment to ensuring that the proper foundation of housing for our elders is in place, so that's what we're going to continue to do.

Once again, to answer that question, pending what success they see in their application process, that would define our financial commitment going forward.

Question re: Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board membership

Mr. Istchenko: The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board was established as a primary instrument of fish and wildlife management in the Yukon to act in the public interests, and serve the objectives of chapter 16 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. The Board is made up of 12 members, six of which are appointed by the Yukon government.

At the end of April, the majority of Yukon's appointments expired. In March, I asked the minister about those upcoming vacancies. She claimed she had to wait until the end of the independent review of the board was completed first. Her exact

words were: “So I will wait for the conclusion of the review before identifying the Government of Yukon nominees going forward.”

So the review was submitted to the government on May 7, and according to the government’s website, there are still four vacancies among the spots available for the Yukon government. Can the minister tell us when she intends on filling these positions?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would be happy to get that response for the member opposite. I would of course have to check with the boards and committees secretariat to find out where they are with the application process. I know that what we are tasked with, as discussed at the Yukon Forum, was to have a comprehensive look at the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and have a board of chapter 16 deliverables. There were specific recommendations that were brought forward by that working group, and we are working with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board now to complete the recommendations and, as well, look at next steps. The next steps would be the implementation and also looking at ensuring that we have a full complement of board members.

Mr. Istchenko: I asked if the minister could tell us when she intends to fill these positions. It is the minister’s responsibility, not the board’s responsibility. It is the minister’s responsibility to fill these positions.

Even though there are four vacancies on the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the government website does not have the board listed as one that one can currently apply to. Those positions, as I stated in my earlier question, have been vacant for quite a long time. This is as of when I checked this morning.

Will there be a public callout for applications for the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board to fill those four vacancies?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you for the question. I would just like to note that the Fish and Wildlife Management Board currently has a quorum to function, so there is no disruption in the service and the work that they are doing. Yukoners can be assured that we will look at filling all the vacancies. As the member noted, there are four positions vacant, and that is coming before Management Board, but it has to go through its process. The process is established through the boards and committees process.

Mr. Istchenko: My questions are clear. The government website does not have the board listed as one that one can currently apply to. That is current as of this morning. I think I hear this from across the way — that sounds very open and transparent.

Regarding the recommendations included in the final report on the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board — and this is very, very important — can the minister tell us if the government is intending to support all the recommendations — there are lots of them — and will she will be working with all of the partners, including the board and — very, very important in our communities — the renewable resources councils? What is the timeline for this implementation?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The member opposite would well know that the specifics of chapter 16, the deliverables under chapter 16, and the relationship with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board is one that we certainly want to ensure is transparent and that it is not influenced by politics, politicians, or me. I will not endeavour to do that. I will endeavour to ensure that Yukoners are given an opportunity to effectively manage the very important resources that we are obligated to manage, which is the fish, wildlife, and the land.

The third-party review has been completed. There are 27 recommendations and there is a working group. The working group will give us some indication of what we can deliver on this. As the member knows, this is a three-party agreement. That means that we need to have some further discussions and deliberations. We will continue to do that in the most transparent fashion possible, which is to ensure that we respect public interests. As we evolve as a government, we always consider reconciliation and land and resource management in collaboration with the partners who signed off on the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, the self-government agreements, and the plans in good faith, and we will continue to do that.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Government House Leader’s report on length of Sitting

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to Standing Order 75(4) to inform the House that the House Leaders have met for the purpose of achieving agreement on the maximum number of sitting days for the current Sitting. The House Leaders have agreed that the current Sitting should be a maximum of 30 sitting days, with the 30th sitting day being Wednesday, November 27, 2019.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare that the current Sitting shall be a maximum of 30 sitting days, with the 30th sitting day being Wednesday, November 27, 2019.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 31

Clerk: Motion No. 31, standing in the name of Mr. Hutton.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun: THAT this House supports the recent \$157-million investment to upgrade the north Klondike Highway.

Mr. Hutton: It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to Motion No. 31. This summer, our government, along with our Member of Parliament, Larry Bagnell — on behalf of Canada’s Minister of Transport, the Hon. Marc Garneau — announced the \$157-million investment to upgrade the north Klondike Highway.

This is wonderful news for residents in our rural communities all along this route, as well as for tourists.

Yukon's road system is essential for connecting our communities and building our economy. It is a lifeline to the communities in Mayo-Tatchun.

The north Klondike Highway is one of the busiest in the territory, with tourist traffic to Dawson and Mayo, Victoria Gold's vehicle fleet, and everyday residents using it on a daily basis. These upgrades will increase safety, improve road conditions, and connect Yukoners with an increasing number of economic opportunities.

Over the years, this highway has really seen the effects of thawing permafrost, and I can certainly attest to that, Mr. Speaker. I have driven it now, in my life, I calculate around 950 times, and the permafrost, believe me, is getting worse out there.

The repaving project will greatly increase safety and will give folks peace of mind while travelling. This highway is an incredibly important link for my constituents. Many of my constituents travel this highway every weekend, whether it's to get to work, to come to Whitehorse to purchase groceries, to bring their children or grandchildren to a hockey tournament or soccer tournament, or to visit their children who are attending school in Whitehorse. For those of us who do a lot of highway travel, there are many things that contribute to safety, and I would like to talk a bit about that.

Something I'm really pleased with is all the brush-clearing work along our major roadways — not just on the north Klondike Highway, but throughout the Yukon. This brush-clearing, which I understand will now become routine and scheduled, will improve sightlines, increase wildlife visibility, and assist with drainage.

Another thing that's great to see along this highway is the increase in roadside barriers. I have heard from many constituents over the years who wanted to see improvements made to the roadside barriers along the highway. They are very happy to see that our government has been responsive to these requests.

We have also seen great improvements with line painting throughout the territory. At this time of year, I really do appreciate being able to see the lines on the highway, especially on those narrow sections of the north Klondike. Historically, there has been no scheduled roadside maintenance for line painting, brush control, or barrier maintenance. Service was reactive, addressing areas only when they became problematic.

I'll give you an example of that: We have a corner about 10 kilometres out of Stewart Crossing on the way to Mayo that is called Commissioner's Bend. We got a guardrail on there after a former commissioner went off the corner there, so that's the reactive kind of building that was done in the past. So I'm very pleased that the Minister of Highways and Public Works is implementing a modernized approach that will improve the quality, quantity, and frequency of highway and roadside maintenance and upkeep.

Speaking of safety, I would like to recognize and thank all the hard-working folks who work in our grader stations in the communities and help to maintain our roadways, including the north Klondike Highway. These maintenance crews work

incredibly hard to maintain our roads, particularly through the winter months.

Over the years, we have begun to see increased regularity of freeze-thaw cycles through the winter maintenance season, which has created frequent icy road conditions. I understand the department has purchased a range of new equipment for the 2019-20 season to help improve our highway maintenance throughout the territory.

These upgrades to the north Klondike Highway will make road maintenance significantly easier for our road maintenance crews and will make our roads safer for all the residents of Mayo-Tatchun.

Mr. Cathers: I'm pleased to rise today to debate this motion. It is notable, though, that the motion brought forward by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — that being Motion No. 31 — it is a motion that is about a re-announcement. When one looks to the entire list of motions brought forward by Liberal members for debate today, they are all re-announcements. That is a concern of ours, especially when debate on other matters, such as the Department of Health and Social Services and Education, is not allowed when debating motions such as Motion No. 31 here in front of us today.

While we will provide our comments and our thoughts about this motion — both the benefit of it and what it misses — as proposed by the member, I do have to point out again that we saw, during the Spring Sitting, a real shortage of time to debate departments that comprise a significant portion of the Yukon government budget. At the time, the Liberal government turned down our request to extend the Sitting by a couple of days to allow more fulsome debate. Those were particularly the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education.

The Department of Health and Social Services budget, as included in the spring, was \$443 million — almost 30 percent of the government's entire budget — with a current staff total of over 1,400 full-time equivalent positions. The Department of Education budget is \$214 million. A combined total for these two departments is \$657.9 million — some 45.8 percent of the government's total projected expenditures for this year based on the budget in the spring.

So when we see a motion in here that is talking about a valuable investment and a worthwhile investment in the north Klondike Highway and in our highway system — and while we agree that highways are important — the Liberal government consistently seems to look for excuses not to talk about the territory's finances and not to debate departments such as Health and Social Services where they have had, as Yukoners know, a poor record in the Department of Health and Social Services with issues such as a shortage of nursing, the failure to properly fund the hospital and, of course, the debacle that used to be the Centre of Hope, which has been profoundly mismanaged under the Liberal government's watch, and instead we see motions like this rather than debate on the more substantive items contained within the government's budget.

I note as well that debate on this motion would be somewhat different, perhaps, if the outcome was not as clear as

it is. We see that the government has already — along with the federal government, back in July — made an announcement about this very matter. So we see a motion from the Member of Mayo-Tatchun and a Liberal backbencher that urges the government to do something that they announced a few months ago and are doing. Some ordinary Yukoners might look at this and wonder what the point of debate is on a motion today if the decision was made a few months ago.

When we are talking about the use of the House's time, the government, in the Spring Sitting, used 18 ministerial statements — in re-announcements, mostly — that used up 3.5 percent of the Legislature's time, which is more on its own than Health and Social Services and Education each received themselves.

I do have to point out to Yukoners that the amount of time spent debating motions — such as this one brought forward by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — or ministerial statements, which are typically re-announcements of things that the government has already issued in press releases — there is a lot of time being spent in this Legislative Assembly on debating matters that the Liberal government has brought forward and that effectively are re-announcements and talk about fluff and frippery.

The motion itself — I do note that we support the general concept of it, but the announcement itself was made on July 24, 2019.

Back in July — and I am just going to quote from the press release, which — lest members ask me to table a copy of it, I would point out that it is available online. If members would like, I can read out the URL address for that link, if they are not able to find it on the federal government website — but the announcement itself is entitled “Government of Canada invests in transportation infrastructure for the North Klondike Highway in the Yukon”. It is a news release dated July 24, 2019. I will just quote from parts of that release: “The Government of Canada supports infrastructure projects that create quality middle-class jobs and boost economic growth. Enhancing the northern transportation system supports and promotes economic growth and social development, offers job opportunities, ensures greater connectivity for Northerners, increases its resilience to a changing climate, and ensures that it can adapt to innovative technologies.”

Then it goes on to reference that the Member of Parliament, on behalf of the federal Minister of Transport, “... announced a major investment of \$118.2 million for a project that will improve the safety, reliability and efficiency of one of the major transportation arteries in Yukon.

“A 100-kilometre section of the North Klondike Highway, which connects Whitehorse to Dawson City, will be rebuilt to accommodate increased truck traffic and be more resilient to the effects of changing climate. This project will significantly reduce ongoing maintenance costs on this section of the highway.”

It goes on to state: “The work includes: upgrading seven segments of the highway, reducing the length of highway that requires seasonal load restrictions, and improving climate

change resilience; rebuilding McCabe Creek Bridge and Moose Creek Bridge; and replacing Crooked Creek Bridge.

“These investments, from the Government of Canada's National Trade Corridors Fund, are expected to have important economic and employment benefits for the region.

“Projects in the North receiving funding are supporting transportation infrastructure such as ports, airports, all-season roads and bridges and will enhance safety, security, and economic and social development in Canada's three territories.

“The projects are also addressing the unique and urgent transportation needs in Canada's territorial North, such as access to markets, economic opportunities, communities and essential services despite difficult terrain and severe climate conditions and the high cost of construction along Canada's northern trade corridors.

“Territorial and municipal governments, Indigenous groups, not-for-profit and for-profit private-sector organizations, and federal Crown Corporations and Agencies are all eligible for funding under the National Trade Corridors Fund.”

In looking at this — as members will have noticed in listening to this — there are a whole lot of buzzwords contained in this press release mixed in with a healthy dose of platitudes and one condescending reference to Canada's territorial north — which the phrasing of that suggests — it seems to be a bit of a patronizing reference, in my view, but I'm sure that the current government — I'm sure the Member for Mayo-Tachun had no involvement in the wordsmithing of the federal press release about it.

But again, in mentioning this fact, those details — this announcement — were all announced back in July. Today, the motion being called for debate — just as in fact with the other two motions called for later this sitting day by the Liberal government's private members — are all re-announcements and attempts to talk again about matters that government has already issued announcements on and has already made up its mind about what it wishes to do. It's not really talking about anything new, nor is it talking about some of the other areas and priorities that are not included within this motion — the other needs of Yukoners — such as, for example, while it has made reference in the announcement to rebuilding the McCabe Creek bridge and the Moose Creek bridge as well as replacing the Crooked Creek bridge, nowhere do I see any mention of the Takhini River bridge on the Mayo Road.

I would remind members that is, of course, on that very highway and is an important part of the operation of that highway. Due to both the approach to the bridge not being ideal — especially on the northern side of it — and the hill that comes down to it, which ices up on days like this and it becomes a very slippery, treacherous approach at times, the Takhini River bridge is something that, as the Liberal government well knows, has been a priority that I have raised on behalf of constituents multiple times. In fact, the very first letter that I wrote to the Premier after they took office — in taking up the Premier's invitation that he had indicated publicly that they would welcome ideas and requests that came from members of all parties — in an attempt to work constructively with them, I

sent a letter to the Premier — again, the very first letter I sent to this Liberal government upon their taking office almost three years ago — asking him about Takhini River bridge and emphasizing the importance to my constituents of the government moving forward with adding a walkway to the bridge for pedestrians, equestrians, cyclists, ATV users, and others, which had been in the planning stages with money allocated to that project by the previous government — ourselves — when in office.

I was asking about that project, as well as urging the government to move forward with planning to replace the bridge with a wider one, including looking at what options exist for doing that. Unfortunately, the letter that I got back contained platitudes, but still now, about three years into this Liberal government — about to start the fourth year — we are still waiting for an answer. My constituents are still waiting for an answer from this Liberal government about whether they will move forward with the walkway that we had planned and designed and whether they will take other steps aimed at eventually replacing that narrow bridge, because the bridge itself is one that there have been accidents on and there has been a much greater number of close calls.

In fact, the safety of the bridge is not just raised by my constituents, but with the Yukon local trucking organization — whose proper name is escaping me at the moment. At one of its regular monthly meetings, I had the opportunity to sit down with them and to join them when they were talking about this matter with officials from the Yukon government, as well as RCMP and others. I know that, for truckers as well, the safety at this bridge is a concern.

We are looking in both the press release and the motion brought forward by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, and we don't see any reference of it and we don't see any indication in the speech by the member in introducing his motion about whether they plan to make that improvement.

We, again, are urging the government to go beyond the specific wording in this motion, which refers to a very specific announcement made in July, and recognize that there are other bridges — other than the three that they have listed — which need work and other sections of highway on the north Klondike Highway, commonly known as the Mayo Road, that do need work and improvement. It is not just the narrow list of items — or I should say, the narrow reference to the \$157-million investment — that is included within the member's motion.

I am hopeful that the government will be a little more receptive than they have been in the past to considering changes brought forward by other members and to realizing where, in fact, improvements could be made. Again, I would note that the specific announcement that they made is one that we do support, but there is more work that needs to be done.

Again, in the list — the quick facts included with the press release that was tabled that relates to this — we do see that there is reference to: "All-season highways and winter ice roads in the North handle more than one million tonnes of freight traffic each year. This project, which connects Whitehorse to Dawson City, will improve the safety, reliability and efficiency of one of the major transportation highways in Yukon.

"Infrastructure development is more costly in the territorial North than in southern Canada due to severe climate, difficult terrain, vast distances, limited access to materials and expertise, and a much shorter construction season.

"To improve and expand infrastructure in the northern regions of Canada, Budget 2019 increased the allocation of the National Trade Corridors Fund to Arctic and northern regions by up to \$400 million over eight years, starting in 2020-21, bringing the total allocation to these regions to \$800 million.

"Through the *Investing in Canada* infrastructure plan, the Government of Canada is investing more than \$180 billion over 12 years in public transit projects, green infrastructure, social infrastructure, trade and transportation routes, and Canada's rural and northern communities."

In wrapping up my quotes on that section, I would note, first of all — for anybody listening to those numbers — it's important to note that the first number sounds impressive, but when you hear how many years it's spread over, that number becomes substantially less impressive per year. We do see the rushed pre-election spending by the federal Liberal government, which the Yukon Liberal government has gone along for the ride on, like a good little brother, but we do see the fact that, after that initial rushed spending, those amounts typically dwindle under funding for the federal government until the last year, where typically some of the money that hasn't been expended is addressed. Through all of those funds, there are references to \$400 million, to \$800 million, and \$180 billion across the country. Those amounts, when actually spread out over the number of years that they're talking about, become much less impressive.

On a small editorial note, I would just draw the attention of the Minister of Highways and Public Works to the fact that, if they're involved in joint announcements with the federal government and if they have any input into the federal government's wording in the future, in my humble opinion, language such as "Canada's territorial north" and the reference elsewhere in the press release to the "territorial north" seem to be fairly condescending in nature and don't seem to recognize that we have responsible government in all three territories. They are not just possessions of the federal government. The language that is coming out of the federal government is a little bit patronizing in reference to these three proud territories.

Mr. Speaker, I note in reference to the matter covered within the motion and the press release related to the motion which I made reference to also relates specifically to the federal government's national trade corridors fund and an application under it. The national trade corridors fund was announced awhile ago. In the past, we have asked the government for clarification about what they are doing as far as applying to this fund for other projects. As I will note in a moment, this shows a weakness of the motion, where it doesn't recognize some of the other infrastructure funding needs or other projects that the government should be trying to get funding from the federal government for under the national trade corridors fund.

Last year, for example — in the context of this — the Official Opposition called on the Yukon Liberal government to provide a status update on seven infrastructure funding

applications totalling approximately \$470 million, which have been submitted to the federal government as part of the national trade corridors fund — which, as I understand it, is the fund from which the \$157 million referenced in this motion is related to.

“Last week...” — this is from May 2018. In May 2018, “... it was announced that 5 out of 6 federal funding applications from Nunavut to the National Trade Corridors fund were rejected. It was originally revealed...” — and I make reference to the applications for this funding — “... in March...” — 2018 — “... that the Liberal government had submitted these 7 applications...” — under the national trade corridors fund after — “... questioning in the Legislature by the Official Opposition. As follow-up...” at that time “... the Official Opposition called a motion asking for key details about the funding applications, such as what exactly the infrastructure projects are, what year construction is anticipated to begin, and what year construction is anticipated to end. Unfortunately instead of being open and accountable with Yukoners...” — and the Official Opposition — “... the government at the time used their majority to defeat the motion.” They refused to be open and transparent about the details of what applications they had made under the national trade corridors fund. Again, this is the fund that is providing the money referenced in the motion by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

While we are glad to see the commitment made toward the north Klondike Highway, we are compelled to ask the question on behalf of other Yukoners who depend on other highways: What about the other important applications that were talked about at that time, including the other six applications that were referred to? As well, beyond this specific fund, we believed there were a number of infrastructure priorities, including road projects, that have been ignored by the government.

So again, we didn't receive the information we requested at that time. Applications from the Yukon totalled \$407 million of taxpayers' dollars, and despite requesting an update on the status of the details, the Liberal government did not see fit to provide that or to provide a good reason why they chose not to share this information with the public.

As the Leader of the Official Opposition noted at that time — when we made reference to the applications, including this one which is referenced in the motion — the successful one, I should say, that was referenced in the motion — the Leader of the Official Opposition noted that “These very well could be good infrastructure projects that will benefit Yukon, but without the details on over half a billion dollars' worth of projects — including how they will be paid for — how are we supposed to hold the government to account for this spending?” He went on to say that “We want to see this government provide certainty to industry and accountability to all Yukoners.”

Going back again to the wording in this motion and the reference to the funding that has been approved, I would note — while recognizing at this point that planning and design work would need to be done on the Takhini River bridge before government would be in a position to actually spend construction money on it — that as the truck traffic, which is referenced in the Government of Canada press release, occurs

— that increased truck traffic referenced in it was in part no doubt a reference to the increased truck traffic associated with the operation of Victoria Gold and Brewery Creek. While those mines and the activity associated with them certainly provides economic benefit to the territory, it does put more wear and tear on the infrastructure.

As I noted, considering the fact that it's already a concern for my constituents and other members of the public about the safety on the Takhini River bridge and it's already a concern of the Yukon's trucking sector — the safety of passing on the bridge there, the safety of travelling across the bridge, and the potential conflicts which occur with other traffic — the fact that the government has not apparently done anything on this area or even answered the questions contained in the letter that I wrote to the Premier back in the first few months of this Liberal government's time in office is concerning to my constituents. It's no doubt concerning to the Yukon private sector, particularly those in the trucking industry, and it does also create a significant potential impact if that bridge were to be shut down.

The Liberal government seems to forget the fact that — though the Hot Springs Road area and the Mayo Road area are not incorporated communities — collectively, based on the voters list from the last election, there are over 900 adults who are eligible to vote in that area as of three years ago. It has grown since that time. That number does not take account children. The fact is that the north Klondike Highway, including the Takhini River bridge, is an area that is in need of planning work in that area to recognize the demands that occur on that infrastructure.

I should also note that another project that the government failed to mention in the motion brought forward by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, as well as the news release issued in July, is the work that has already gone through YESAB and been planned to improve the intersection of the Mayo Road and the Alaska Highway — the planning work that identified a two-kilometre stretch to be widened and to have turning lanes and a through-lane added. That intersection is used not only by the 900 adults and children who I mentioned who live in the Hot Springs Road area and the Mayo Road area, but also of course for the hundreds of people living in Ibex Valley and out toward Mendenhall and Haines Junction and is also the point where all of that traffic comes into the Whitehorse area and meets each other. It is absolutely a vital piece of infrastructure and a vital intersection for this territory. Unfortunately, the project was supposed to proceed a couple years ago, but government has not yet moved forward with it.

I do acknowledge and I appreciate the Minister of Highways and Public Works — in response to a letter that I wrote about it — did indicate that the government was considering including that in their next capital budget, and I would strongly encourage them to do that because, though it doesn't appear to be part of the \$157-million investment made in this announcement referenced in the Member for Mayo-Tatchun's motion, it is work that does need to be done to improve safety and to improve the flow of traffic as well.

Mr. Speaker, the announcement made July 24 that relates to this very specific amount — back in July, when the federal announcement was made, the Official Opposition released a press release, entitled “Liberal Track Record Calls into Question North Klondike Highway Funding”. In that press release, it was noted: “On the eve of the federal election campaign the Liberals have made an announcement regarding improvements for the North Klondike Highway. However, their track record with respect to highways funding calls into question both their commitment and their ability to deliver on road infrastructure projects.

“On September 2, 2017, the Yukon Liberals participated in a photo-op announcing a \$458 million investment in roads through the Resource Gateway Project.

“However, since that time the Liberals have missed key milestones for this project. According to Infrastructure Canada’s website, the Yukon Liberal government told Canada that construction of the project was forecasted to begin June 1, 2018. As this deadline is over a year overdue with no start of construction in sight, it is clear that the Liberals’ ability to actually deliver on major funding announcements is questionable.

“The Liberals are very good...” — pardon me, I should note that this is a quote from my colleague, the Official Opposition critic for mining, who noted: “The Liberals are very good at making announcements but they don’t seem to realize that governing doesn’t stop at the photo-op.” An additional quote is: “While today’s announcement is a good one, the Liberals have a very poor track record when it comes to actually delivering. The Resource Gateway Project is a year overdue and we have even seen evidence of the Deputy Premier politically interfering in responses to media in order to hide his government’s inability to get infrastructure money flowing.”

Further, the press release goes on to note: “The Liberals have also refused to seek federal funding to support maintenance and upgrades to the Shakwak portion of the Alaska Highway. This is an important corridor not only for Yukoners who rely on it but also for Yukon’s economy.”

There is another quote from my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South: “During the election, the Liberals told Yukoners all communities matter but since that time we have seen a very different approach.”

An additional quote: “When we asked the Liberals to seek funding for Shakwak in addition to the North Klondike the minister claimed that the road does not benefit Yukoners. The Liberals need to place a higher priority on supporting highways throughout all of Yukon, not just in Liberal held ridings.”

Again, in specific reference to this motion, we are pointing out the failings in this motion and the fact that there are other roads and other communities that do matter. Even more specifically, with the federal fund that was applied to, we were concerned and remain disappointed that when my colleague, the Member for Kluane, brought forward on behalf of his constituents — on multiple occasions — the importance of seeking renewed Shakwak funding and concerns about the road, some of the comments from government ministers, including from the Minister of Highways and Public Works,

were dismissive of that concern and suggested that perhaps a decline in road maintenance or even going back to gravel in some areas might be an option. It did not, in our view, reflect the importance of the Yukon communities along that section of the Alaska Highway. It reflected what seems to be a fairly Whitehorse-centred approach of this Yukon Liberal government, where they seem to be forgetting that there are Yukon communities on the north Alaska Highway. The north Alaska Highway is not just used by the Americans. Despite the fact that a significant amount of traffic originates from the United States on that section of the highway, it is also a vital transportation link for the Yukon and it is vital to the communities served by my colleague, the Member for Kluane.

I would again acknowledge his work in bringing forward this issue in writing to American lawmakers as well with regard to its importance and in championing this project on behalf of his constituents.

Mr. Speaker, moving on as well to talking about what is missed in this motion in its specific reference to the north Klondike Highway, I would note as well that there is a long list of other road projects. In fact, the government itself acknowledged at the time — when this application was made to the national trade corridors fund — after repeatedly being pressed in this Assembly on it — that there were seven federal infrastructure funding submissions. We are left asking the question: What about those other projects? Are all of those simply dead in the water? Is the government considering moving forward with them through other funding, or are they simply not planning on moving forward at all?

Additional matters that were referenced in the budget — we were pleased that the press release noted that the investment is expected to — and I quote: “... significantly reduce ongoing maintenance costs on this section of the highway.” What we were not pleased to see this year was — in advance of any investment —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Quorum count

Speaker: The Member for Mayo-Tatchun, on a point of order.

Mr. Hutton: It appears that we don’t have a quorum in the House.

Speaker: I am doing a quick count of the members present, and we do not appear to have quorum. The Speaker shall ring the bells for four minutes to see whether or not we can re-establish quorum.

Bells

Speaker: There are now 11 members present, including me. A quorum is present.

We will now continue debate.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to continue in this area. I would note as well that, while we were pleased with the announcement in the press release that they expected to see reduced highway maintenance costs, we were not pleased to see a cut to the maintenance budget for highways and secondary

roads earlier this year, which the government made prior to seeing any investments that actually reduce those costs.

So we did see — as called on out on April 10, 2019 — according to the 2019-20 budget documents, the Yukon Liberal government has cut the territory's highway maintenance budget by \$2.5 million this fiscal year. In the 2018-19 budget, \$44.2 million was budgeted for highway maintenance. In the 2019-20 budget, \$41.7 million was budgeted for highway maintenance. So this reflects a cut of some \$2.5 million.

As noted by one my colleagues in the release, budgeting is about priorities, and while the Liberals have found money to give the Premier a raise and increase the budget for the Liberal political office, they have unfortunately cut funding for highway maintenance and safety. At the time, my colleague went on to note that the Yukon Party Official Opposition was concerned about these Liberal cuts and we were calling on government to immediately reverse them.

So again, while we do support the investment that is referenced in this motion, we are concerned about what's missing from the motion brought forward by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — particularly in light of the fact that this announcement that is referenced in the motion — the announcement was made in July. The motion itself is an attempt to re-debate — and it would seem to us — an attempt to try to pat itself on the back for an announcement that was made months ago. So I will be making some constructive suggestions for how to improve the motion a little later in my remarks, because we do think that there is an opportunity to do more than is contained within the motion here and that there are other important infrastructure priorities that should have been in the motion but are not.

They include, as I mentioned, the importance of maintaining adequate maintenance budgets for the highways we have. Everyone on the Liberal side seems to like the photo ops and the announcements of a major project, but as great as the announcements are of capital funding, if they don't have the adequate maintenance to ensure that those roads and highways are properly kept, then we have a very expensive project that is not being adequately cared for, and eventually that portion of our infrastructure — whether it be roads or some other piece of infrastructure — simply declines and is not functional or usable.

For example, last night and this morning when driving on the north Klondike Highway or on the section that is in my riding — as those of us who have been around for awhile in the area refer to it, the Mayo Road — that section of road was quite slippery. I do want to acknowledge and appreciate the work that is done by all of the highway maintenance staff and recognize the challenge they face after a snowfall or after what the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, in his remarks, referred to as freeze-thaws. As he referred to, the increase of that — he connected it to climate change, and it has certainly seemed to be an increase in recent years of the number of times where it is freezing and thawing, and as a result, either due to precipitation or icing, highways have become slippery and treacherous. Those issues need to be addressed, and part of addressing them is not just the capital announcement such as

the one contained within this motion and the July press release, but ensuring that there is appropriate maintenance. In some cases, that is going to require spending more money on highway maintenance, especially due to the increased truck traffic that we have — whether it's related to mines that we're discussing or the new highway to Tuktoyaktuk or due to the large volume of goods that come into the Yukon. We are dependent upon that truck traffic. We are dependent upon the people who drive those trucks and their ability to drive safely.

We do need to ensure that their safety is kept in mind, in terms of maintenance. The lack of mention in this motion of the maintenance budget is concerning. The fact is that we have seen that funding reduced, and it should be a priority.

I would make reference to a specific example that I heard from a constituent of mine who is concerned about his job — he is a trucker and he travels the roads often in the middle of the night due to the demands placed on his schedule, as well as other truck drivers who face similar requirements because of their employment. That means they are often driving in the middle of the night when regular maintenance is not always being done.

After a freeze-thaw — as the Member for Mayo-Tatchun referred to it — or snowfall or freezing rain, there isn't always, in all sections of the highway, a quick response — getting highway maintenance out there to ensure the roads are safe. While I recognize — and I know my colleagues in the Official Opposition all recognize — there is a cost to increasing road maintenance, it is important that we ensure the safety of our highways, not just for the travelling public, but also for the people who are hauling the goods that we all depend on in our daily lives. While I believe we have great potential to continue to increase our production of local food, at the moment, the majority of the food consumed in Whitehorse or Dawson City or any community in the territory — a substantial portion of it, if not the majority — certainly the majority, in most cases — is brought in by road.

Recognizing — I should rephrase my last statement — I just meant to acknowledge that, for some families, they may — through hunting or growing their own food — provide for a substantial portion of their own family's food needs locally.

That is not the case for most Yukoners. Most Yukoners do depend on the supply of food to our grocery stores. Whether it is up the Klondike Highway, as referenced in the motion from the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, or in Whitehorse on the Alaska Highway or in Burwash Landing or Destruction Bay via the Alaska Highway or in Ross River, there is a need to ensure that we invest in our highways and that we maintain them appropriately. As well, we need to ensure that the budget for our road maintenance is appropriate because — especially within the Whitehorse periphery — there are a great many people — many of them are my constituents — who are themselves not directly on a highway, but depend on both the highways and the secondary roads that access them to get to work in the morning, to get their kids to school, to ensure that they are able to drive into town to buy food and other necessities. The roads are a vital part of the territorial economy,

as well as important to ensuring that people are able to continue to have food and other life necessities.

Mr. Speaker, again, as I mentioned, I will later on in my remarks bring forward a constructive amendment aimed at improving the weaknesses in this motion and some of the things that the Liberal government appears to have forgotten in bringing forward this motion.

I would note that, as I have made reference to before, the Liberal government ran on — one of its slogans was “All Communities Matter,” but unfortunately, what we have seen in terms of action, as well as through motions brought forward today, it seems that some communities matter a lot more to the Liberal government than others, and we do see the needs of areas — such as the needs of my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, the concerns of her constituents about safety on the Robert Campbell Highway — are not addressed anywhere in this motion, as it is currently worded. The concerns of constituents of my colleague, the Member for Klwane, about the need for continued capital maintenance on the north Alaska Highway, especially dealing with issues around permafrost that cause that road to need substantially more repairs than most sections of highway in the Yukon — those concerns, as the motion is currently worded, are not reflected and they seem to have fallen off the Liberal government’s list of priorities, if they ever made it on the list in the first place.

Another example that is not addressed through this current motion are concerns brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, regarding turning lanes on the highway that have been requested by her constituents, as well as my constituents, that, again, they seem to have forgotten in drafting this motion. That is unfortunate, but we will do our job as the Official Opposition and as individual Members of the Legislative Assembly in bringing forward the issues and concerns that we hear from constituents. We will bring forward constructive suggestions, whether those suggestions are welcomed by the government or not, and we will do our level best to ensure that the needs of all Yukoners are considered by the government. If the Liberal government is not addressing or responding to the needs of our constituents appropriately, we will do our best to bring those concerns forward constructively but as assertively as necessary on behalf of our constituents, in the hopes that those issues will be addressed.

Another item that we have seen as well is that we have seen promises by the government in the past that they seem to have forgotten — and have certainly forgotten in this motion — about the Robert Campbell Highway. We refer to a news story related earlier this year to it — and again, the relevance to the motion is the fact that the motion missed the Robert Campbell Highway. In just focusing on the road to the Premier’s riding, it is not recognizing the needs of other Yukoners. It is glossing over the fact that some commitments have been made in the past by the Liberal government which they seem to have forgotten.

We see that the throne speech — which some would call “throne speech 3.0” and some refer to as the “second throne speech do-over” of this Liberal government — either way, it is effectively pressing a reset button, clearing the decks in terms

of commitments, and we have noticed that some commitments made in the first two throne speeches have been quickly brushed aside and conveniently forgotten, as if they were never made in the first place.

With reference to the motion and the specific gap in it of any reference to the Campbell Highway, I would just quote from an article on the CBC website entitled “Yukon’s Campbell highway still in rough shape, after gov’t promised to fix it up”. For the reference of Hansard, that article is from May 24, 2019.

The first line of that article is: “I think if these promises are being made, then they should really seek to see it happen’... People in Ross River, Yukon, say they’re still waiting for repairs to the Robert Campbell highway, a year after the Yukon government pledged to do major reconstruction on the section that connects Ross River to Faro.” I will just pause from the article for a moment and note that this is early 2019, and it is a year after the current government pledged to do major reconstruction and people were still waiting for any indication that all communities actually do matter to the Liberal government.

The Highways and Public Works minister — and, of course, I can’t read his name in the Assembly, although it states it in the article — “... promised to rebuild the road, even pave it.” The name of the minister — “... told the Yukon Legislature in early 2018 that work was getting underway.

“‘The stretch of road from Faro to Ross River is of utmost importance, and I’m happy to announce to the House today that work on that stretch of road is proceeding in fine order,’ he said at the time.”

The name of the Minister of Highways and Public Works again — “... said then that the government had committed \$500,000 for engineering design work to prepare for the reconstruction.

“More than a year later, that reconstruction hasn’t started yet — a fact that isn’t unnoticed by people in Ross River.

“The 67 kilometres of the Campbell between Ross River and Faro is heavily travelled and in bad shape, says Dylan Loblaw, a councillor with the Ross River Dena Council.

“Loblaw and the rest of the Dena Council met with...” — name of the Minister of Highways and Public Works — “... recently, and asked about the road. According to Loblaw, they didn’t get the answer they were looking for.

“‘He said the Campbell highway from Ross River to Faro was on top of his list, but the main issue with paving this stretch of the Campbell highway is lack of resources — there’s no money for it,’ Loblaw said.”

Going on to quote again from the same gentleman: “‘It doesn’t satisfy me at all. I think if these promises are being made, then they should really seek to see it happen... not only for the First Nation, but for everybody else that uses this part of the highway — mining companies, hunters, tourists.’

“Loblaw says another concern is that the road is used by ambulances, taking people to be medevaced from Faro when planes can’t land at Ross River.”

My point regarding this is that this is a flaw in this motion as it is currently worded. Despite the fact that the Minister of

Highways and Public Works was paying lip service to this and told a council member of the Ross River Dena Council that the Robert Campbell Highway was “top of his list”, on this motion, the Robert Campbell Highway didn’t make the list. It could have and it should. As the members will see, we will be bringing forward proposals to help them fix the problem in their motion and the communities and the roads that they have forgotten.

Again referencing the same article as it relates to this motion: “Ground heaves, potholes and ribbons”.

“Franklin Charlie, director of capital and housing with the Ross River Dena Council, says the Campbell highway is also in bad shape on the other side of Ross River, toward Watson Lake. He says many people travel between those communities, and the road is made worse by climate change and melting permafrost.

“‘There’s a lot of ground heaves, some places you can see the culverts pushing out through the top of the road. You know, so if you come around the corner, you get airborne for a few seconds, hitting those things,’ Charlie said.

“Charlie says the highway is full of potholes, and lined with flagging, or ribbons, that mark problem areas.

“‘There’s enough ribbon there to stretch across the Yukon... instead of fixing up the roads, they put ribbons there.’

“Charlie recalls...” — name of the Minister of Highways and Public Works’ — “... promise in 2018 to fix the highway, at least between Ross River and Faro.

“‘All they’re doing is just grading the road and putting calcium on it. And I guess chipsealing will probably happen in another 100 years,’ he said.

“Yukon Party MLA...” — name of the Leader of the Official Opposition and Member for Pelly-Nisutlin — “... who represents Ross River, is also asking what happened to the money budgeted last year. He says he hasn’t seen any tenders for engineering design work on the highway.

“‘If they won’t commit to their promises, it’s pretty cold comfort for the community”, the Leader of the Official Opposition said.

Moving on to quotes from another community member, the Chief of the Ross River Dena Council: “Chief Jack Caesar is also exasperated with the chronic issue of the Campbell. ‘You know the pavement stops at Faro. We’ve asked time and time and time again to get this road paved from the turnoff up here, to make it safe,’ he said. ‘I think they should give us some answers. They should be decisive.’ Caesar says...” — naming the Minister of Highways and Public Works — “... told the First Nation that he was ‘... thinking about putting engineers on it.’

“‘I don’t know exactly what that means,’ Caesar said.”

We have seen that what it means today is that certainly, despite the minister and the Liberal government telling the First Nation that the Robert Campbell Highway was a priority, it wasn’t enough of a priority to be mentioned in the motion the Liberal government chose to bring forward as its top motion today. Again, we plan to help them with that.

The article goes on to state that the Minister of Highways and Public Works “... declined an interview with CBC. Cabinet

communications instead sent a short statement attributed to the minister. ‘The government is doing preliminary work on the highway this summer to guide future upgrades to the section of the Robert Campbell from Faro to Ross River,’ the statement reads. CBC asked the department specifically how much money was being spent this year on that work. No numbers were provided, and the statement said ‘future work will be done as budget is available.’”

Again, I am attempting to highlight, prior to proposing a specific suggestion for this area, some of the areas where the government is lacking in choosing not to outline other projects in this motion and why the Official Opposition plans to propose an amendment to strengthen this motion and include some of the communities and some of the roads this Liberal government has forgotten, including forgetting specific commitments that they have made to people.

We note that in the past as well that there hasn’t been a continuation of investment in the Robert Campbell Highway that had previously occurred. I would just make a reference to an announcement from March of 2016 by the then-Minister of Highways and Public Works, the current Member for Copperbelt South. At the time — March 31, 2016 — the minister issued a press release, entitled “Improvements to Robert Campbell Highway to continue”, stating: “The Government of Yukon will invest close to \$10.7 million over the next two years to improve sections of the Robert Campbell Highway, subject to legislative approval.

“‘Ongoing upgrades for this important section of highway benefit all Yukoners who depend on this road,’ Minister of Highways and Public Works...” — the name of the Member for Copperbelt South — “said. ‘Restoring the highway and making it safer is important for local highway users as well as for commercial traffic, Yukon residents and tourists who use the highway.’

“‘In 2016/17, the Yukon government will award a contract for almost \$6 million for a two-year project reconstructing km 79 to 88 of the highway.

“‘Work will also continue on the second year of a two-year reconstruction project that began last year from km 88 to 97. This contract will be worth \$4.7 million.

“‘Both projects are located between Watson Lake and the Tuchitua Highway Maintenance Camp. The highway will be rebuilt to a higher standard, making it safer for users. The improvements will also facilitate future development of the region.

“‘Expenditures on these two projects will potentially provide 45 jobs over the course of the year.

“‘Earlier this year, cabinet ministers hosted meetings throughout the territory to gather input from First Nation and municipal governments, as well as the general public, on their priorities for the 2016/17 budget. Residents from southeast Yukon said that an improved highway would benefit the region’s economy.

“‘Yukon government continues to invest in road infrastructure to maintain vital year-round access across the territory and to ensure that the groundwork is in place to foster

prosperity and economic development opportunities for the future.

“The Robert Campbell Highway is 582 km long and connects Watson Lake with Carmacks.” That is the end of the quote from the press release, but again —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Quorum count

Speaker: The Member for Mayo-Tatchun, on a point of order.

Mr. Hutton: It appears that we have lost quorum again.

Speaker: Yes, it does appear that we have lost quorum.

According to Standing Order 3(2), “... the Speaker shall cause the bells to ring for four minutes and then do a count.” I will ring the bells for four minutes or less, but it will likely be four minutes.

Bells

Speaker: We will now do a count. By my estimation, there are 13 members, including me, present. A quorum is present.

We will now continue debate.

Mr. Cathers: I’m pleased to see members here.

It’s unfortunate, really, that we see the Liberal government bringing forward a private member’s motion and then members apparently not being very interested in debating it — though it is understandable, considering this is really a re-announcement of something that was announced months ago.

With members’ patience, I will be happy to do my part, as a member of the Official Opposition, and bring forward constructive suggestions about how they can improve this motion so that it actually refers to something that isn’t old news from July.

In speaking about highway safety, I would just note some of the work that has been done in the past by my colleagues. I made mention of the fact that my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, has mentioned items that, again, I believe should have been referenced in this motion, including the need for a turning lane in front of Porter Creek Super A. I have also made that request on behalf of constituents.

The Leader of the Official Opposition, as our critic for Highways and Public Works, brought forward on March 25, 2019 — he asked a question about highway safety in this Assembly and noted in part that: “The Official Opposition has been asking the Liberal government to take action to improve highway safety for the last two and a half years. Last week, the minister finally stood in this House to announce his plan to improve highway safety. The problem is he didn’t actually announce any actions he was going to take. Instead, he told us he will make a Facebook post and launch a survey. That just doesn’t cut it. There are issues that we have raised for over two and a half years that do not require any legislative change that the minister could take action on today if only road safety was a priority for him.

“For example, in 2017, we asked the minister to add a turning lane to the busy section of the Alaska Highway in front

of Porter Creek Super A. The minister has taken no action on that request. Since he is now coming around to the idea of improving road safety, will he support this request now?”

Again, I just would note that was a reminder in March of this year on the issue but in fact follows more than two years of work by members of the Official Opposition in bringing forward the importance of adding a turning lane on the highway in front of Porter Creek Super A to the attention of the minister and this Liberal government and yet, unfortunately, in the motion brought forward today, they didn’t choose to mention this project on the Alaska Highway in Porter Creek which is important to a great number of people who drive that road every day.

My colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, went on to note: “... it appears that this government is incapable of making decisions and taking actions. Some may say ‘paralysis by analysis’”. In May 2018, I wrote to the minister asking him to consider “slow down, move over” legislation. This legislation would protect RCMP emergency workers and others by making it a requirement to slow down and move over when an official vehicle with flashing lights is pulled over on the side of the highway.

“This request came directly to us from people working in the profession, and we relayed it to the minister on their behalf. In his response, the minister said no.

“Instead, he will maybe consider it in some future legislative changes that Yukoners may or may not see on the eve of the election. If he takes this seriously, the minister can commit today to take action to protect RCMP and emergency workers who are pulled over on the side of the road.

“So will the minister agree to bring forward ‘slow down, move over’ legislation before the end of the year?”

With that, Mr. Speaker, I’m not going to reference the rest of that debate that occurred. It did begin to get into other legislative matters beyond capital improvements that were specifically calling for — and I believe this motion would be more useful if it made reference to priorities such as the need for turning lanes by Porter Creek Super A.

I would also note, as I mentioned before — I made reference to the Robert Campbell Highway. That issue was an example of some of the work my colleagues have done on this. The MLA for the area — the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin and Leader of the Official Opposition — raised this issue on March 6, 2018. I should note that my previous quotes — just for the reference of Hansard — the previous exchange I made mention of was from March 25, 2019, beginning in Hansard page 4040, and the current one begins at March 6, 2018, on page 1902. I just am noting in reading them the fact that not only should these specific projects have been mentioned in the motion, in our view — but I’m attempting to provide the background related to it as well as the evidence for the government and others — a reminder of the fact that it’s not for a lack of effort on the part of the Official Opposition that government has failed to recognize these items as priorities. Members of the Official Opposition have been bringing forward these priorities on behalf of our constituents.

Moving to March 6, 2018, page 1902 of Hansard — just briefly quoting from it — my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, said: “Mr. Speaker, I have some questions regarding highways in the Ross River area. We’ve read in the news recently that the Liberal government is seeking a significant amount of money from the federal government to upgrade roads in the Premier’s riding; however, we have not heard of anything similar for roads in the Ross River area. We do know that the functional plan for the Campbell Highway is finished, but we don’t see anything in the government’s five-year capital plan.

“Could the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us today if there is any money allocated to upgrade the Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River in this year’s budget? Can he let us know if there are any plans to invest in this road in future years as well?”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is again a reference to — it appears to be the same pot of federal money that was used for this \$157-million investment in the north Klondike Highway, referenced by the member who moved the motion — another project that, at the time, we understood was under consideration but did not make the list here in the motion. We believe it should, and we will bring forward an amendment in a little bit here to help correct that oversight.

I would also note that in the response to my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, from the Minister of Highways and Public Works — and this is about a year and a half ago now, March 6, 2018, the minister said — and I quote: “Reconstruction of the Campbell Highway is currently focused between the Watson Lake Airport access, kilometre 10, and the Tuchtua highway maintenance camp at kilometre 114. However, I will tell the member opposite that, as I said last year, the stretch of road from Faro to Ross River is of utmost importance and I am happy to announce to the House today that work on that stretch of road is proceeding in fine order.”

We don’t know what “fine order” means in the minds of Liberal ministers, but a project proceeding in fine order so far doesn’t seem to entail the project actually proceeding, because we’re still waiting for the promised work on that section of highway. My colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, has raised this numerous times with the Minister of Highways and Public Works, and we believe that this motion will be strengthened by the amendment that we intend to propose to it, which would add some of the missed projects, including the Robert Campbell Highway.

I’m also going to make reference, in speaking to the other items that we believe should be referenced in this motion — another one, as I talked about briefly before, was the need for continued work on the north Alaska Highway in the riding of my colleague, the Member for Kluane, to not only provide that vital transportation link, but to serve the communities of Haines Junction, Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing, and Beaver Creek — some of the background related to this of where work has been done by my colleague on this issue. Again, I believe this should have given the government enough notice about this that they could have included it in the motion here today.

On March 28, 2017, my colleague, the Member for Kluane, wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding the Shakwak project. In his letter, he wrote: “Dear Minister Freeland, I am writing today to make you aware of the Alaska Highway Shakwak Project, a critical piece of infrastructure connecting Canada and the United States, and to ask that you work with the U.S. to have funding reinstated for the reconstruction of this corridor.

“By way of background, the Shakwak Agreement has been in place since 1977, for the reconstruction and maintenance of the Shakwak portion of the Alaska Highway from Haines Junction, Yukon to the Alaska Border and extending down the Haines Road. As per the agreement, the U.S. agreed to pay the cost of reconstruction, while Canada would manage the reconstruction, provide land and granular resources, and provide maintenance.

“Unfortunately, the previous U.S. administration stopped including funding for this project in late 2012. This means that the funding available for reconstruction of this corridor is almost completely exhausted. However, there are major capital improvements required for this part of the Alaska Highway and the lack of secured funding for reconstruction places the future of the Shakwak corridor, Yukon’s largest trade route, in jeopardy.”

I would just note again, in quoting from my colleague’s March 28 letter from the Member for Kluane to the federal minister regarding this, that was some two and a half years ago. The importance of the Shakwak project, we believe, should have caused the Liberal government to see it as important enough to mention in this motion, and I look forward to proposing an amendment that corrects what we see as an oversight on their part.

Returning to the letter from my colleague, the Member for Kluane, to the federal Minister of Foreign Affairs: “Unfortunately, the previous U.S. administration stopped including funding for this project in late 2012.” Pardon me, I read that section already, Mr. Speaker.

I will move to the next section of the letter that I intended to read: “The Shakwak portion of the Alaska Highway is an integral transportation link to the North and a key component to Yukon’s economic infrastructure. Additionally the highway serves as a supply route for oil and gas development in Alaska as well as a strategic asset to security and sovereignty in Canada and the U.S. An improved highway system through the commitment of funds to this project would provide safer travel to the thousands of vehicles that travel the highway daily during the summer months, the majority of which is American traffic.

“I am appreciative of the good working relationship between Canada and the U.S in past years and hope that it can continue. Given that the new U.S. administration has demonstrated interest in supporting capital projects of national importance to both of our countries, such as Keystone XL, there may be an opportunity to bring forward this critical matter for review. By raising this with your counterparts we may once again see the U.S. contribute much needed funding for this critical piece of infrastructure.

“Thank you for your attention to this inquiry, and I look forward to your response.

“Sincerely” — signed by my colleague, the Member for Kluane.

Again, despite this matter being flagged back then, unfortunately it didn't seem to make the cut for the Liberal government in drafting this motion here today.

I would note, as well, that the work by my colleague on that specific issue also included writing to the federal Minister of Finance in February 2019 regarding that and noting in part: “However, there are still major capital improvements required for...” — sorry, I should have read the preceding sentence as well.

“In 2017, Yukon's Official Opposition wrote to your colleague Minister Freeland to ask that she work with the U.S. to have funding reinstated for the reconstruction of this corridor but it appears that these efforts were unsuccessful.

“However, there are still major capital improvements required for this part of the Alaska Highway and the lack of secured funding for reconstruction places the future of the Shakwak corridor, Yukon's largest trade route, in jeopardy. This will have negative effects on remote Yukon communities and the Yukoners that live there.

“The Shakwak portion of the Alaska Highway is an integral transportation link to the North and a key component to Yukon's economic infrastructure.”

Then my colleague went on after a bit of an interlude to note: “By committing long-term funding to this trade corridor the Government of Canada will be supporting northern communities by ensuring they have continued reliable and safe road access. Further, such an investment would provide much needed economic benefits to the Yukon while allowing the Government of Yukon to conduct long-term planning on to ensure this road is in acceptable condition.

“Thank you for your consideration, and I am hopeful to see this important investment in Budget 2019.”

That was signed by the Leader of the Official Opposition — again, an issue that he raised and has been raised repeatedly by the Member for Kluane as a champion for his constituents and their needs.

It does also include the response regarding this project that came from the federal government and was sent by the Minister of Transport, who is the same minister who was quoted in the July 24 press release by the federal government regarding specific project funding outlined in the motion we're debating here today — Motion No. 31. There was also specific reference by the federal Minister of Transport to the fund from which this project — the money for the north Klondike Highway — is coming.

To my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, the letter from the Minister of Transport noted, in part:

“As the Minister responsible for the \$2-billion National Trade Corridors Fund (NTCF) program, I am pleased to note that it includes up to \$400 million to address the transportation needs of northern communities. To date, I have approved \$145 million of the \$400 million for projects located in the territorial north. This includes \$6.9 million to the Government

of Yukon to modernize infrastructure within seven components of the Yukon Intelligent Transportation Systems architecture. The remaining funding of \$255 million will be considered during project evaluation and selection under the northern call for proposals launched last fall.” Then it goes on to mention additional allocations.

Another quote from the letter is: “Programs like the NTCF are intended to relieve the financial burden borne by the territories in managing capital infrastructure. However, it is important to note that the NTCF is an applicant-driven funding program; therefore, it would be up to the Government of Yukon to identify the Alaska Highway as a construction priority and make the appropriate funding application.”

What is concerning about that letter and concerning about the motion here today is that it appears from the wording in that letter sent by the federal Minister of Transport to the Leader of the Official Opposition in July of this year, from the specific mention in the letter — again I quote: “... it is important to note the NTCF is an applicant-driven funding program; therefore, it would be up to the Government of Yukon to identify the Alaska Highway as a construction priority and make the appropriate funding application.”

It sounds like the Yukon Liberal government didn't actually apply for funding for Shakwak under this fund. Clearly, supporting the upgrade that goes to the Premier's riding was a priority, but it does appear that the other one of our two major highways, as it goes through the Member for Kluane's riding, has been forgotten because it appears, based on that — when other members have an opportunity to speak, if indeed an application has been made contrary to what the letter from the federal minister would suggest, then we would be happy to hear that information — but it appears that applying for funding for the north Alaska Highway and the Shakwak project was not a priority for this Liberal government, just as it was not a priority here today in a motion that they have proposed. That is disappointing.

Mr. Speaker, I would note as well that we had a ministerial statement in the spring talking about the new and modern roadway maintenance improvement program. While we do appreciate the plan — not the use of a ministerial statement to announce what could have been made through a press release — and we do appreciate the new program and the values to it, ultimately, if the government doesn't provide enough financial resources to do the maintenance, the programming and the way that the Department of Highways and Public Works assesses the roadway network are all for naught if the government doesn't provide adequate resources in terms of both capital and operation and maintenance.

An example of this — and again, another failing in the motion as currently worded — is that earlier this year, there were concerns brought forward by us as well as by the Third Party regarding funding for the Dempster Highway. I would note that, during the Spring Sitting, some of the debate noted — in this case, a reference to questions from the Member for Whitehorse Centre — that: “In response to questions asking why funding for the Dempster Highway has decreased from \$3.1 million last year to \$50,000 this year, the Minister of

Highways and Public Works said the decision was based on road usage and socio-economic factors. The \$50,000 budgeted for the Dempster Highway represents a 98-percent cut. The Minister of Highways and Public Works somehow anticipates that the combination of road uses and socio-economic benefit from the Dempster Highway will be 62 times lower this year than last. However, the Yukon tourism website encourages visits to the Dempster, Tombstone Park, Eagle Plains, the Arctic Circle and more.

“Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Tourism and Culture believe that the socio-economic benefit from tourism on the Dempster Highway warrants meaningful investment in highway infrastructure?”

That quote, for the reference of Hansard, is March 26, 2019, beginning on page 4067.

Again, another failing in this motion is that we don't see any reference to funding that the government has cut, and that includes funding for rural road maintenance as well as funding for the Dempster Highway.

It is unfortunate that those projects are apparently such low priorities for the Liberal government that they didn't see fit to even mention them in this motion and list other investments, rather than just re-announcing an investment that has already been announced.

They could have committed to new investments reflecting the priorities that have been brought forward by Members of the Legislative Assembly from all sides and from all caucuses, and they could have made a reference to what they intend to do. Much as with the throne speech, we see that there are a lot of platitudes and very little content. Much of what content there is, in the case of the throne speech — as we know, the throne speech do-over number two — was borrowed from suggestions that have been brought forward by other political parties in this Legislative Assembly. The government still seems to be a government in search of a vision. Just investing in the road in the Premier's riding is not what we would expect from a government that is at the three-year mark in terms of their term in office. The clock is ticking. It seems, at this point, that the government is about to enter their fourth year in office. Yukoners are disappointed at the lack of vision and the lack of priorities that they brought forward to government and that we, the Official Opposition, have brought forward on behalf of our constituents and other Yukoners.

As mentioned, I will be bringing forward an amendment to this motion. We have mentioned, as well, in the past that the references that we have seen in the past to projects such as the Shakwak funding have not seemed to be a priority for the Liberal government. The minister even made some mention of large sections of the road potentially becoming gravel. We are concerned that the government seems to have forgotten things that should be part of this motion and should be on the list.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned — noting, as we propose the amendment that I'm going to bring forward on behalf of our caucus, that it is certainly not a full list of every single project in the territory that is worth funding or every highway and road priority that we've heard from constituents, but it is a reflection of some of the more common ones that we hear about from

citizens and the ones that are based on economic or other needs and appear to be high priority, as well as ones that would improve safety.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in the interest of helping improve this motion by adding in the forgotten projects and the forgotten communities that don't seem to be on the Liberal government's priority list, I am pleased to propose this constructive amendment.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Cathers: I move

THAT Motion No. 31 be amended by deleting the phrase “supports the recent \$157-million investment to upgrade the north Klondike Highway” and inserting in its place “urges the Government of Yukon to take the following actions:

“(1) go forward with the recently announced \$157-million investment to upgrade the north Klondike Highway;

“(2) invest in improvements to the Alaska Highway in the Whitehorse corridor such as turning and through lanes at the intersection of the Mayo Road, a turning lane by Porter Creek Super A, and acceleration lanes by Alusru Way;

“(3) seek continued Shakwak funding;

“(4) pave the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River;

“(5) improve safety on the Robert Campbell Highway in Watson Lake by adding streetlights;

“(6) upgrade Takhini River Road, including building a proper roadbed, resurfacing the road, and improving the ditches;

“(7) seek funding under the national trade corridors fund for the Alaska Highway, Robert Campbell Highway, and airports;

“(8) increase funding for the rural road upgrade program;

“(9) reverse cuts made to funding for rural road maintenance;

“(10) reverse cuts made to the Dempster Highway capital budget for road maintenance; and

“(11) plan the replacement of the Takhini River bridge on the north Klondike Highway.”

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge has proposed an amendment to Motion No. 31. The page will distribute copies to the members to take a brief opportunity to review the proposed amendment. I will report back to the House as soon as possible.

I've had an opportunity to review the proposed amendment to Motion No. 31. I can advise that it's procedurally in order.

Therefore, it has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT Motion No. 31 be amended by deleting the phrase “supports the recent \$157-million investment to upgrade the north Klondike Highway” and inserting in its place “urges the Government of Yukon to take the following actions:

“(1) go forward with the recently announced \$157-million investment to upgrade the north Klondike Highway;

“(2) invest in improvements to the Alaska Highway in the Whitehorse corridor such as turning and through lanes at the

intersection of the Mayo Road, a turning lane by Porter Creek Super A, and acceleration lanes by Alusru Way;

“(3) seek continued Shakwak funding;

“(4) pave the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River;

“(5) improve safety on the Robert Campbell Highway in Watson Lake by adding streetlights;

“(6) upgrade Takhini River Road, including building a proper roadbed, resurfacing the road, and improving the ditches;

“(7) seek funding under the national trade corridors fund for the Alaska Highway, Robert Campbell Highway, and airports;

“(8) increase funding for the rural road upgrade program;

“(9) reverse cuts made to funding for rural road maintenance;

“(10) reverse cuts made to the Dempster Highway capital budget for road maintenance; and

“(11) plan the replacement of the Takhini River bridge on the north Klondike Highway.”

The Member for Lake Laberge, on the proposed amendment — you have 20 minutes.

Mr. Cathers: In speaking to the amendment, of course I did briefly discuss some elements in my earlier remarks, but I would just note with all the items we’ve listed here — as I’ve mentioned, it is certainly not a complete list of every priority we’ve heard from Yukoners across the territory, but it is an attempt to identify some of the ones that are highest on the priority list based on issues including their economic importance, the importance of the need to improve safety in those areas, the condition of the roads, as well as what we hear from the constituents and other Yukoners across this great territory.

I would note that, as I mentioned, we do support the investment in upgrading the north Klondike Highway referenced in the motion brought forward by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and have we have included that as the first bullet in what the motion would look like if the amendment passes.

I would also note that as the Liberal government considers how to respond to these suggestions — I know they are often reluctant to take ideas from across the floor unless it’s part of one of their throne speech do-overs, where they can try to pretend it was their idea in the first place — but we have outlined in here things that we have heard from people — in some cases, many people — across the territory. These priorities, these projects — if the government — lest they vote against them — I would encourage them to remember the people who are asking for these projects and remember that if the government believes at all — even a little bit — in its commitment that “All Communities Matter”, that they should recognize that all communities, and indeed all roads which are used by Yukoners, do matter and that the government needs to try to address all of them in a reasonable fashion, not simply have tunnel vision and focus on specific priorities that they have heard which may be on their list.

These projects, as included in the proposed amendment to the motion — we are proposing that the motion be strengthened by making reference to the need to invest in improvements to the Alaska Highway and the Whitehorse corridor, such as turning and through lanes at the intersection with the Mayo Road, a turning lane by Porter Creek Super A, and acceleration lanes by Alusru Way. I would note that the Porter Creek Super A turning lane is something that I know my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, has heard from constituents and brought this forward on their behalf. I have done the same, and the Leader of the Official Opposition has, on behalf of us and our constituents, raised this as a priority in Question Period.

I would note that Alusru Way acceleration lanes were brought forward as a priority by my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, on behalf of constituents who he has heard from.

The reference to continuing to seek Shakwak funding — which we’re proposing adding to the motion to strengthen it — is one that my colleague, the Member for Kluane, deserves credit for, for his continued work on behalf of his constituents in championing this project, including writing to the federal government and raising it to the attention of the State of Alaska. So that is reflecting something that he has been a champion of on behalf of constituents.

Paving the Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River again reflects a specific commitment this Liberal government made, and improving that road is something my colleague — the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and the Leader of the Official Opposition — has raised on a number of occasions, asking government to make those improvements.

The reference to improving safety on the Robert Campbell Highway in Watson Lake by adding streetlights is something that my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, has worked on, on behalf of constituents and she has championed that on their behalf, including raising it through letters and questions, as well as tabling a petition, if memory serves — based on her nod, I see that it does. She tabled a petition on behalf of her constituents, requesting these improvements. Unfortunately, so far, not only did it not make the government’s list for this motion today, but the response to that request has been no, so far. It is something that I know is important to my colleague and to her constituents.

The reference to upgrading the Takhini River Road, as the Minister of Highways and Public Works will know — and some of his colleagues may as well — is something that I have raised repeatedly on behalf of constituents. As members may know, and certainly some of those listening and reading this in Hansard will know, Takhini River Road was never properly built. It was basically put in as a Cat trail, and then, after being privately maintained by people living on it for years, government started maintaining it, but government, throughout the years — going back before my time as a member — and I’m not sure exactly how many years before that — the date when it was plowed — but it has certainly been for decades that road has been in existence — government has patched it; government has added gravel; government has improved the ditches; government has done a number of things to Takhini

River Road to improve drainage, improve the surface, and so on. But a core problem with the road is it was never a properly built roadbed.

I do recognize that the conditions in the area, due to the silt that is common in that area and in that roadbed, it would no doubt require a substantial amount of gravel to make a proper road base, but the population down that road has increased significantly, both in terms of the number of families living down there, as well as people who are operating businesses down there, including farming and wilderness tourism. All of those uses require the ability to travel down the road to access their homes and to get into Whitehorse.

Considering the population down the road and the properties there — it would be roughly 50 families down that road. When that road is deteriorating due to rain, snow, or other inclement conditions — which tend to cause the road base to start to fall apart and develop a lot of potholes — it's important to remember that, for emergency services, if my constituents on Takhini River Road need to call an ambulance or need to call a fire truck or the police, and if the road is impassable or creates a problem or safety issue, especially for ambulances or fire trucks going down that road, it could create a situation where either an emergency vehicle is stuck or is not able to get to someone in a reasonable amount of time. That does create an increased risk for my constituents if they need to call an ambulance to respond to a medical emergency or if they need to call a fire truck if their home or a neighbour's home is on fire.

Investing in that road — doing the engineering that is necessary, building a proper roadbed, resurfacing the road, and improving the ditches — is a project that should be on the government's priority list. We would hope that they would take this suggestion and recognize that it is time to spend the money on doing the engineering work to plan the project and understand its scope and then start spending money on making those capital improvements.

We have also made reference in the proposed amendment to the national trade corridors fund, where we asked the government to apply under that fund for the Alaska Highway, Robert Campbell Highway, and airports, which we understand, based on previous statements, are all eligible for that program. Based on a letter from Minister Garneau to the Leader of the Official Opposition, it certainly seems that the Liberal government has not actually applied for funding for the Alaska Highway under it.

Next on the list, we have asked for increased funding for the rural road upgrade program. This is important to my constituents and many others in rural Yukon who depend on the roads to their property — whether they are currently maintained by the government or not or whether or not they wish to have them maintained and need work done to improve it to a maintainable standard. The rural road upgrade program is an important part of helping provide services to all Yukoners and is an important part of ensuring that, especially in the case of emergency services, roads with a large number of users are supported in their maintenance needs, supported in terms of the work that needs to be done on them, and that there is the ability

to improve these roads, especially for the purpose of emergency services. While people do choose to move into the areas they do, as more neighbours arrive on a road and its usage increases, it often becomes harder on that road and beyond the resources of the original developer of that road to continue to maintain it.

Also, for fire trucks especially, to reach someone's house — they do require a certain standard of road so that they can get in safely and get out safely. The ability to save people's homes and potentially even their lives in case of a fire should be a priority for a government of any stripe in this territory, and it should be as well something that we recognize the fact that when our volunteer firefighters and municipal fire departments — those people, when they do respond to a fire at someone's home, are going to try to provide for their own safety and that of their fellow firefighters, but they are also going to be inclined to push the envelope and try to get to someone's home so they can save it and potentially save someone whose life is being threatened by the fire.

So ensuring that the rural road upgrade program meets the demands placed on it provides for the continued annual development and improvement of rural roads across the territory, and allowing those roads to be improved as they deteriorate due to wear and tear as well as upgrading ones that are seeing increased volume of usage on them is an important part of what government should be doing. It is unfortunate — if we look across the territory at either the miles and miles of road ripped up on the way to Dawson — a fraction of that funding invested into other roads would provide significant benefits. We have not seen the investments in the rural road upgrade program so far from this Liberal government that we believe are necessary, and we hope that they will be prepared to take this suggestion and recognize the need to increase funding for that program to meet the needs of Yukoners living in rural areas.

As well, we have made reference to the cuts that have been made to funding for rural road maintenance, and again, as I mentioned earlier during budget debate with the Premier, I have received more complaints this year from constituents about the condition of secondary roads than I have received in any other year during my time as an MLA. That is reflective of the cut that government made to the funding for maintenance of those roads.

The reference in the motion to reversing cuts made to the Dempster Highway capital budget — we have raised the issue and the Third Party has raised the issue — that the funding in comparison to historical levels of funding — clearly the amount that is in the Dempster Highway capital budget is simply not enough for road maintenance.

Last but not least on the list — planning the replacement of the Takhini River bridge on the north Klondike Highway. For the sake of simplicity, I haven't mentioned in the amendment to the motion the addition of a pedestrian walkway for equestrians, cyclists, ATV users, pedestrians, and others, but I would encourage government to consider that.

In reference to the main action in the motion, which is: "... plan the replacement of the Takhini River bridge on the north Klondike Highway" — that is certainly what would be

the main priority for my constituents — and, as I mentioned, the trucking industry is concerned with the safety of this bridge as well. In that area, I would leave it to government to take a look at how long it would take to replace the bridge and what the options are for it. I would urge them to add a walkway if it's going to take awhile to move forward with the actual replacement of the bridge. I would hope in fact to see that the bridge replacement would be a high enough priority that it could move forward sooner rather than later.

Step number one — and the main action of this motion — is to plan the replacement of that bridge. I would also add to what is laid out in the motion — and, in doing so, I would hope and request that the government provide the opportunity for public input on the options to replace that bridge, including issues dealing with the approach to it and also ensure that members of the private sector and Yukon's trucking community have the opportunity for input on it so that their input — especially from a technical perspective about highway safety and usage — is part of that process of determining what the options are for replacing that bridge.

As the minister will know, there were a number of options that were considered at a bit of a higher level before the detailed planning work during the last term of the Yukon Party government. There are several options there, which I won't spend a great amount of time here this afternoon considering — but whether it is relocating the bridge, realigning it, or widening it, et cetera, I would encourage the government to move forward on the planning of it as well as giving very serious consideration as to how you manage the challenge of replacing the bridge without impeding the traffic that is flowing over that bridge every day — in fact, probably every hour of every day, there's someone crossing that bridge.

So determining what the best options are to minimize disruption to traffic when the bridge is being replaced has to be a vital part of that project, including of course recognizing that emergency services may need to go across that area for fire, ambulance, police, et cetera. So determining an option that keeps traffic flow going while the bridge is being replaced is an important part of the work necessary in that area.

With that, Mr. Speaker, having spoken regarding a number of our concerns related to what we believe are inadequacies in the main motion and outlining a substantial list of additional actions that we believe would strengthen the motion — all of which I would hope any Member of the Legislative Assembly, regardless of where they sit, would recognize are worthy projects and worthy proposals — I will close my remarks and commend our proposed amendment to the House and urge the Liberal government to find it in their hearts to support these priorities that are coming forward on behalf of Yukon citizens across the territory.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the proposed amendment?

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, I will keep my remarks very brief.

I will not be supporting this amendment. It is nothing more than the Yukon Party's "couldn't get 'er done" list from the last 15 years.

Mr. Istchenko: I am going to rise in support of this amendment that was put forward by my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge. I am disappointed that the members opposite have little regard for a number of our rural roads in Yukon.

Let me start by saying that I do want to thank my colleague across the way for Mayo-Tatchun. His original motion was to support the recently announced project for the Klondike Highway. It's a good project and we do support that project. But as my colleague has highlighted, there are a lot of other good projects as well. I am glad that we now have the opportunity to discuss those projects here today. So thank you to my colleague for bringing forward this important topic of highway projects. Of course, as the MLA for the riding that relies very heavily on the Alaska Highway and all the traffic it brings to our communities, I am very excited to speak on this today.

Firstly, I support this amendment, as it seems that the purpose of the original motion was simply for the government members to congratulate themselves for investing in one specific project in the Premier's riding. I would also like to thank my colleague for Lake Laberge for bringing forward this amendment. We worked very hard on this amendment, and as I look at it, I just think that this is a much bigger improvement to the original motion. There is a lot in this amendment that I really like. I think he also raised a lot of good points here this afternoon on the importance of this amendment and the weakness in the original motion. Thank you again for bringing this amendment forward this afternoon.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, we support the upgrade of roads and highways in the territory. We think it is very important to support these projects for a number of reasons. These projects support jobs. These projects grow the economy. The jobs and the growth of the economy that are expected to come with these projects and the increase to safety for Yukoners when the roads are repaired and maintained are very important. I know the residents of the riding of Kluane really understand and appreciate these important highway projects, but we need to remember that the north Klondike is not the only road that needs care and attention in the territory, Mr. Speaker.

As I just referenced, I am the MLA for Kluane and we have a pretty big highway going through the riding called the Alaska Highway. All members of this House have stood numerous times to raise concerns from Yukoners on the state of other stretches of highway as well — many of which were listed by my colleague for Lake Laberge earlier this afternoon.

But let's not forget that one of the biggest issues that the original motion ignored was the Shakwak corridor in the north Alaska Highway. This is a very important part of the territory's highway system and one that I don't think we can afford to have overlooked.

Mr. Speaker, by way of background for the Minister of Highways and Public Works, the Alaska Highway is part of the national highway system and it is one of the most — if not the

most — important trade corridors we have in the entire north. As anyone who lives along the highway can attest to, when you see those semi-trucks and RVs ripping up and down the highway, you might as well be looking at dollar signs. That's quite literally a good chunk of the economy in action.

Just for some more background — the work that has been done to date on this stretch of the Alaska Highway through the Shakwak project is the result of an international treaty between Canada and the United States, the treaty that was signed in 1977. The US agreed to fund and reconstruct 325 miles of the Haines Road and the Alaska Highway within Canada. The Government of Yukon agreed to manage the construction and maintain the highway going forward to ensure year-round access for both Yukon and Alaska. That funding for both countries has been spent. We've had this discussion before. It has been made clear that this stretch of highway still requires a lot of work. I think the most recent estimates from the Government of Yukon is that there is about \$340 million worth of work that still needs to be done on this stretch of road to maintain it. Maybe if the minister gets back up, he can correct me if I'm wrong on my numbers on that. But let's just say that's going to take more than a couple of bucks and it is badly needed.

For such an important stretch of road, we can't just let it fall into disrepair. We can't just let it revert to gravel road — like the minister said he wants — and we need to keep it up to safety standards. We can't let it fall apart. So I hope the minister does realize this and comes around on this topic. Maintaining this portion of the highway is extremely important for my constituents, and we have been advocating for renewing funding for Shakwak since the beginning of our mandate.

I think — just to give a broader lens on it — this road is extremely important to all of the Yukon. It is important to Yukon's economy. It is important for safety reasons as well. This stretch of road is particularly important for a number of other reasons — one of the first things is national security. The Shakwak provides the only year-round land-based link between the Lower 48 states, Canada, and the American Arctic, which we all know to be a region of significant military, economic, and environmental importance.

Secondly, as I mentioned a little bit earlier — economic development. This corridor is a key economic enabler for the entire north Alaska and Kluane region, as it connects marine ports in Alaska and Canada with domestic and international markets, which moves our commodities, our goods, our services, and our workers. I know that this is something that is very important to Yukoners — growing our economy, making sure that Yukoners have well-paying jobs so that they can afford houses and they can afford the essentials to raise their families here. I think that could be a great legacy for us in this House — building a better Yukon — making sure that the conditions exist so that the next generation of Yukoners can live and work here. That is a great reason to support the Shakwak portion of this highway.

Another great reason to support the amendment — highlighting the importance of the Shakwak — which I was in the business of for years — is tourism. Tourism is a major

economic driver in the Yukon. I read some motions in the House today about tourism and the Alaska Highway brings a lot of tourists here. So many jobs in this territory depend on tourism and the RV traffic that comes up here on the Alaska Highway from southern Canada.

We know that the Yukon and Alaska have incredible potential and are already highly established tourism destinations. The Alaska Highway is a highly recognized brand with our tourism industry and the Shakwak has existed to provide a base to continue growth in this sector, particularly for the communities of Haines Junction, Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing, and Beaver Creek and those businesses in between. We can't let this road go into disrepair. Otherwise it may negatively impact our tourism traffic. Simply put, a worse quality road will prevent people from wanting to drive all the way up here. Tourism is a very competitive industry and people will just look somewhere else if we do not provide the necessary infrastructure. That is another great reason to support this amendment to the original motion.

All of these points considered, it is important for all of us to recognize that this highway provides mutual benefits to both the Yukon and Alaska, and it is important to recognize that it is not a highway that can be left to its own devices. There needs to be sustainable funding to ensure that the road is maintained properly for the continued benefit of Yukoners — Yukon communities that depend on the road and of course Alaska.

Now unfortunately, as indicated in the original motion — and, again, why I support this amendment — the Liberals seem to be more interested in simply re-announcing the same major investments on the north Klondike Highway in the Premier's riding than they are in recognizing many other highways that need attention. Again, we think the north Klondike Highway project is a good project, but why ignore the rest of the Yukon? I don't think that is appropriate.

This government has happily rushed to spend new funding for projects with federal dollars this fall to help their Liberal counterparts in Ottawa, yet their eagerness to find federal or territorial dollars for the maintenance of the Shakwak seems non-existent. In fact, the Liberal government refused to write Ottawa to ask them to chip in some cash to support this road. Again, it is unfortunate that this government refuses to stand up for this section of road.

Just to remind you, Mr. Speaker, here is what they said at the time — the minister said he was refusing to ask Canada to chip in money because the north Alaska Highway does not benefit Yukoners. So I am sort of wondering if the minister spent a little too much time in one of the stores that this government created, because there is a bunch of Yukon communities along that section of the Alaska Highway — Destruction Bay, Burwash, Beaver Creek, and a bunch of businesses in between. It is sort of unfortunate that he forgot about them.

The Official Opposition has raised the state and future of this stretch of highway with the territorial government numerous times. We have raised it in departmental debate, in Question Period, in motion debate, and in briefings with officials. Outside the Legislature, we have written a number of

letters to ministers of government, ministers of federal government, and to members of the United States House of Representatives, as well as the Governor of Alaska — all with respect to requests for renewed financial investment to maintain this integral stretch of highway. I will explain a bit of what we have said in these letters.

In March 2017, I wrote a letter addressed to the Alaska members of the United States senate — Lisa Murkowski, Dan Sullivan, and Bill Walker, the governor at the time — and I will read you an excerpt: I just want to “... bring to your attention the critical importance of the reinstatement of the Shakwak Project funding into the transportation bill. This integral infrastructure is not only a key component to our northern economy, tourism, transportation and recreational capacity. It is also a strategic asset for security and sovereignty for the United States...” between the Lower 48 and Alaska.

Then I went on a little later to say, “... the lack of secured funding for reconstruction and maintenance places the future of the Shakwak corridor, the only highway to Alaska and the Yukon’s largest trade route, in jeopardy.”

The same month, I wrote a letter addressed to the Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, asking her to advocate. Three things I put in there that are super important — I wanted to make her aware of the Alaska Highway Shakwak project. It’s a critical piece of infrastructure connecting Canada and the United States. I wanted to let her know that, unfortunately, the previous US administration had stopped funding this project in late 2012, and this meant the funding available for reconstruction of this corridor was almost completely exhausted.

The Shakwak portion of the Alaska Highway — like I said in other letters — it’s an integral transportation link to the north and a key component to the Yukon’s economic infrastructure.

I also want to read that into the record a little bit. I followed up then of course, indicating to the Premier — he and a delegation had met with Senator Murkowski and Congressman Young from the House of Representatives. I wrote a letter addressed to both elected members. I will read into the record a couple of spots in there that are of utmost importance. They bode well with this amendment.

I wrote in there about being the MLA for the riding and how I’ve been an advocate for the past many years, when we were in government before and now in the opposition. I mentioned a lot of the previous correspondence and how critical it is to the travelling public. I mention in there — and the minister can correct me if he wants — approximately 85 percent of the traffic is American tourists.

I also put in there that I wanted to thank them — because I had conversations — for their support for the project and making it a priority for Alaska. You can see, Mr. Speaker, how important this is.

Then my fellow colleague — the Member for Lake Laberge — mentioned it earlier, but the Leader of the Official Opposition wrote a letter to Minister Morneau. At that time, he was asking that funding to the Shakwak project be included in the federal budget. One of the things that stands out in this letter is what the Leader of the Official Opposition put in there:

“... there are still major capital improvements required for this part of the Alaska Highway and the lack of secured funding for reconstruction places the future of the Shakwak corridor, Yukon’s largest trade route, in jeopardy.” That’s a pretty common theme.

It was unfortunate that the Government of Canada did not think this stretch of road was important enough to invest in, but I hope that whoever forms the government in October does see the importance in the highway and consider dedicating some long-term funding.

That said, Alaska has recently shown a lot more interest in supporting the future of funding for Shakwak. As a result of our continued advocacy for this project, our office was briefed by the staff from the US Senate and the Government of Alaska to discuss the north Alaska Highway. This was in relation to the US transportation bill that passed through the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works — that’s the name of the committee — one which includes a line item for the north Alaska Highway. This bill still needs to pass through the US Senate itself, as well as the House of Representatives, but it is encouraging because it wasn’t there before. It’s encouraging to see Alaska indicate their support for this stretch of highway and to see that back in the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

So why aren’t we stepping up to do the same? We should be. I really wish the government would. The point I am making is that, over the course of the Yukon Liberal government’s mandate, we have repeatedly spoken up on behalf of my constituents and all Yukoners who use this highway, but we have received a pretty lacklustre response from the Liberals. The fact that they are putting this motion forward to support only one very specific project in the Premier’s riding is a pretty good indication of where their priorities lie.

This is why I support the amendment with the inclusion of other important infrastructure projects, such as Shakwak. As I mentioned earlier, last Sitting, we asked the Yukon Liberals to also submit an infrastructure request for Canada, asking them to provide money to help maintain and improve Shakwak. In the response, which can be found in Hansard, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said he fundamentally disagreed with the opposition for calling on our federal government to fund this stretch of road. That was made further evident by his response we received via letter from the former federal Minister of Transportation, dated July 30, 2019.

I’ll read a short clip from the letter — two things that pertain to this. Programs, such as the national trade corridors fund “... are intended to relieve the financial burden borne by the territories in managing capital infrastructure.” Interesting. Later in there, it says: “However, it...” — is — “... important to note that the NTCF is an applicant-driven funding program; therefore, it would be up the Government of Yukon to identify the Alaska Highway as a construction priority and make the appropriate funding application.”

So this means that as of July 30, 2019, the federal government has yet to see any sort of requests from the Yukon Liberals to see funding allocated toward the Shakwak highway. So to be honest, I was a little shocked and very much

disappointed to hear that. When we entered into debate in the House about highway funding that seems to favour Liberal ridings and their clear lack of attention to other areas such as the north Alaska Highway and the Shakwak corridor, the Minister of Highways and Public Works stated, “I’m not going to fund a road, sink enormous amounts of money, and ask the federal government to fund a road that basically benefits the constituents of Alaska.” You would not believe the conversation I had up and down the highway throughout the summer talking about this. People heard it through the grapevine over and over. I had to clarify and show them in Hansard — this is what he said.

So considering everything that we’ve spoken about so far on the importance of the Shakwak corridor for Yukoners, it was pretty unfortunate that the minister needed reminding that communities such as — like I said earlier — Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing, and Beaver Creek are actually in fact located in the Yukon, which is in Canada, and that they greatly benefit from trade and road safety that comes with ongoing maintenance on the north Alaska Highway.

One key point I actually want to make before I wrap up is the safety that comes with maintaining highways. Right now, without sustainable funding for maintenance on the Shakwak portion of the Alaska Highway, the Yukoners living along it are faced with the risk of it becoming unsafe. The Liberals have noted on many occasions that safety of our roads and highways is their utmost priority. If safety is their priority, then the Minister of Highways and Public Works probably wouldn’t be openly stating that he would allow this portion of highway to revert to gravel. If safety was their priority, the same minister also wouldn’t have famously told Yukoners that they had better get used to a lower standard for highway safety under this government. It has been made really clear that the government’s priorities are what they are, and the Shakwak doesn’t appear to be included in that.

So, of course I’m going to support this motion, if amended. I don’t think we’re going to get it amended, but I am going to support it because it would be a clear indication from the government that, along with support for the north Klondike upgrades, they have not forgotten about many other highways in the territory such as Shakwak and many of the other highways that are mentioned. I’m sure we’ll get up and talk about the other ones today too.

So I do think that — before I finish my remarks — I should just highlight a few other reasons why this amendment is so important. Of course, obviously I said earlier there are other roads throughout a number of communities in the territory — the Robert Campbell.

You know, I think about BMC’s project. I know I don’t have much time left, Mr. Speaker, but that sounds like some economic development and a way to unlock some economic potential, grow the economy, and create some jobs. That sounds like a good thing to me and it sounds like a good thing that maybe my kids or my grandkids could probably stay in the Yukon and work. I think I’ve heard the ministers across the way talk about that.

In closing, I sure hope the government supports this and remember that it’s the highway circle of life — all highways — all 5,000.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I’m happy to rise this afternoon to speak to this amendment. It has been an extraordinary afternoon, I must say.

I want to thank the Member for Lake Laberge for his words this afternoon — and good lord, there have been many of them — and for the amendment that he put on the floor of the House this afternoon. There are an awful lot of really good actions contained in the amendment, though I really think it breaks the spirit of the debate this afternoon. But that said, there are an awful lot of really important actions that Yukoners certainly value and appreciate in the motion that he has brought — the amendment to the motion that he has brought this afternoon — the amendment to Motion No. 31. I’m going to address many of them because I think it’s worth doing — and I have some great news for the members opposite when I address this. But as I said, it sort of breaks the spirit of the motion itself.

The motion urges the Liberal government to take the following actions: to go forward with the recently announced \$157-million investment to upgrade the north Klondike Highway. That sort of cuts to the heart of the initial motion this afternoon, and I’m glad to see the support for that project because that’s really what we want to get to this afternoon is support for that project.

We want support for that project because recently — just on Friday last, as a matter of fact — we heard some really disturbing news on the federal campaign trail that one of the parties was going to cut infrastructure funding across the country as part of a \$58-million cut to services and projects — a profoundly huge cut to infrastructure across the country — infrastructure funding that is driving the Yukon economy and is key to our territory’s improvement in Internet infrastructure, in land development, in green energy moves, in affordable housing, in sewer and water upgrades, in bridge upgrades, in road upgrades — the list is long and the benefits to the territory are tremendous. The thought that we might lose that infrastructure funding is certainly deeply disturbing to me and, I’m sure, many others in the territory, which is why we were so shocked last Friday to hear that.

To hear the member opposite’s support of the \$157-million infrastructure investment to the north Klondike Highway is certainly reassuring to me. I am glad to have that because it will be important for us to go unitedly to Ottawa, depending on how the election goes in a week.

So, “(2) invest in improvements to the Alaska Highway in the Whitehorse corridor...” — well, we are doing that and I am happy to report that we have undertaken about \$18 million worth of work in the Whitehorse corridor to improve safety in this stretch of road, which is one of the busiest anywhere in northern Canada. That roadwork is certainly important, and we have started that work. It was work that had been talked about for years but not acted upon. I’m happy that we have actually managed to undertake the work there — again, supported by some of the federal infrastructure dollars — to make sure that

the roads through Whitehorse are safer — certainly the road from the top of Two Mile Hill to about the Beringia centre specifically, which is a very constricted, dangerous, and busy stretch of road. That will be a lot safer for residents. It will provide access to people crossing the street from Hillcrest and Valleyview to the bike trails on the far side to get downtown. We have been working very hard on that with the community. I am very happy with the progress that we have made and how those projects are going.

Yes, (2) — we are investing in improvements to the Alaska Highway in the Whitehorse corridor. Those projects are going ahead. We will see, as we get into budget processes, whether any of these other projects that they have mentioned — they are a ways down the road — no pun intended. We will see if there are any we can act on in the near future. Rest assured, we are making improvements to the Alaska Highway in the Whitehorse corridor, and that has, as I said, been long talked about, but we are actually putting those words to action and getting them done.

The Member for Kluane talked at length about Shakwak. I was happy to hear the support that he has done — his letter-writing campaign that he has undertaken as MLA for the region. This morning, in conversation with the Alaska transportation commissioner, John MacKinnon — we had a very good discussion this morning. He commended me on my support of the project and said that it was useful and that support from any quarter is welcome. I will extend that to the Member for Kluane. I am glad that he is supporting our government's actions to get Shakwak funding. It echoes the sentiment from Commissioner MacKinnon this morning in the conversation we had about Shakwak.

We are in regular communication with our Alaskan counterparts, and they are very supportive of the work we are doing in Highways and Public Works to support their applications to things like the build fund and to the recent transportation bill where, for the first time in 10 years, we have seen a Shakwak line item show up in a budget. That's a tremendous step forward. I think, personally, that it is because of the work of my good friend, the Member for Porter Creek Centre, and of the Minister of Economic Development and the Premier and of the good work that I am doing, working with my Alaskan counterparts and with PNWER — as we all are — in getting this issue before all of the provincial premiers, provincial counterparts, our counterparts in the northwestern United States and the Pacific Northwest region. They are understanding now at a much deeper level how important this strategic asset is that the Member for Kluane was talking about. I am sure that his few letters have added to that support. I'm sure it has helped bolster our case as well.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we have been successful as a government getting Shakwak to a new stage and a new level of understanding in the United States mainland — in the Lower 48. The strategic importance of this road is filtering out through the political realms and has led to some progress. Whether or not we get money allocated to that line item — that still has to be determined, and Mr. MacKinnon wasn't sure this morning how that will go. When you get into Washington politics, it's a

pretty tricky business, but we will see. We will continue to put the pressure on, which was why I was talking to him this morning and why we continue to support — through Highways and Public Works — the Alaskan applications to the build project and why, in the end, I think we have been successful.

The member is completely accurate when he says we have a different approach — we do. I am not going to roll over to the Americans and fund a project that is really of critical strategic importance to them. The members opposite have made it perfectly clear that they want to step into that role, but from my point of view and negotiating position, it doesn't make any sense to do that. The road is maintained to a standard to which Alaska demands. That standard is much higher than we need or want in the territory. Frankly, if they want that standard, they can pay for it. I don't think that it is up to a small jurisdiction like us to step into that breach.

I will continue to lobby, advocate, help, assist, and push for more funding from our Alaskan neighbours and from the federal government in Washington, but I'm not going to fund their road standard out of our tiny budget. The members opposite are correct when they say we differ on that. We absolutely do.

On paving the Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River — again, this is a very important project. When I was last in Ross River speaking to Chief Caesar and the community, I spoke again about this important road. There is a lot of work happening now in Ross River. Their development corporation is doing a lot of work in Faro. This road is getting to be exceedingly important and we are going to have more to say about that in the near future.

Improving safety on the Robert Campbell Highway — I have already spoken to the Member for Watson Lake about this. We are looking at gathering information about that road — about that lighting — what would be involved, how many people actually use the road in winter — and I will report back to her when we have that information. But I have spoken to the community about that and they have made it known how important it is to get that done. It is a very costly project, so we'll have to see how we can come up with the money for that, if that's what the community wishes. There are a lot of priorities and a lot of things happening in Watson Lake. We want to make sure we put the money to the most important priorities first.

The Takhini River Road — of course I have been working with the Member for Lake Laberge on this. I have his many letters on that road. The highways department has stepped up and graded that road on several occasions.

To "... seek funding under the national trade corridors fund..." — we are talking about a project right now for \$157 million from the national trade corridors fund. I will certainly seek any funding I can, but I think, on that fund, we pretty well have most of the applications. The federal government has been very generous with its other funding pots and we will see what we can do. We are, of course, upgrading the Alaska Highway — I've spoken to that already — the Robert Campbell Highway — we are doing that as well.

Airports — of course we have increased spending on airports — almost \$40 million this year. That is up from about

\$5 million in previous years. We have done a lot more work on that. There is a lot more to do because there has been a lot of neglect on that for several years. We are making up for lost time, but we will get there and that investment is happening. So I'm happy it's in here.

Increasing funding for the rural road upgrade program — we have been working with the Yukon Klondike Placer Miners' Association on that. We have some really good work happening up in the Klondike area, fixing roads under that program. I have just been talking to placer miners and they want us to continue support of that program. We are looking at that at the moment. It is fairly popular, though, and I am happy to continue it.

Then we are talking about reversing cuts. Well, there is so much going on here. In terms of road maintenance — we spoke about brushing earlier today. There is an awful lot of maintenance work going on across the territory with a very thoughtful and methodical approach that hasn't been seen in the territory for a long time. We are happy to continue that. It is almost \$30 million actually, Mr. Speaker, over the next five years on the maintenance of our highways across the territory. This is new funding that hasn't been seen before. We're more than happy to continue that to make sure our roads are safer. That is certainly a key priority for this government.

Then "... plan the replacement of Takhini River bridge..." — we have done assessments of all our bridges in the territory. The Takhini River bridge is not one that is slated for replacement anytime in the near future, but I have heard the Member for Lake Laberge's continual letters and entreaties on that project. When it makes the triage list, we'll certainly tackle that one, but there are a lot of bridges in the territory to deal with, including — because all communities matter — the Nisutlin Bay bridge, which is in the Leader of the Official Opposition's riding. That's a \$65-million project that we're happy to proceed with because, as I said, all communities matter.

Again, Robert Campbell — again, in the Leader of the Official Opposition's riding — more than happy to do it, because we don't look at things from who sits there. We look at the priorities and what needs to be done and take it from that approach. As a matter of fact, looking at it from a political lens, we don't do that. It sort of betrays — it's really a tell for the opposition members and where their heads are at. It's not where we come from, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I'm afraid, although the motion has a lot of meat in it and a lot of things I'm happy to address and support, I won't actually support the motion itself, because — or the amendment, rather — because it doesn't really capture the spirit of the motion itself, which is the improvements the federal government — the federal infrastructure funding — has made possible on the north Klondike Highway.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my chair and let the debate continue.

Ms. McLeod: I would first like to thank the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for bringing forward this motion today so we can talk about the importance of the Klondike Highway. It's always great to have the opportunity to speak about matters of

importance such as this. Obviously, highways are the corridors to our communities. They directly support our economy. They help us get to and from other communities for medical care, and for those of you who just enjoyed the last long weekend, they help us visit and see our loved ones. So it is absolutely important that we, as elected officials, show support for our important roadways.

However, the original motion only mentioned one roadway, the Klondike Highway. It's important to remember that there are a lot of important roadways in this territory, and that's where the original motion perhaps lacked vision. That's where it lacked treating all Yukoners equally. So I would like to thank my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, for bringing forward this amendment. I think it's good to be more inclusive. I think it's important that we don't just put partisan blinders on and only support infrastructure projects that support Liberal ridings.

We need to look at doing as much as we can to support the entire territory, so the amendment, I think, does a good job of that. It adds a number of other important roadways from our territory and will allow us to discuss those today, and hopefully the Liberals will find it in their hearts to finally support these roads.

One element of this amended motion that I was really drawn to were the portions about the Robert Campbell Highway. Specifically, the motion urges the Government of Yukon to improve safety on the Robert Campbell Highway in Watson Lake by adding streetlights.

Mr. Speaker, you will remember that this is an area of discussion we have spent some time on previously in the House. The amendment to the motion also asks the Liberal government to live up to its previous commitment to pave the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River. Mr. Speaker, you may remember that one as well. That is the promise the Liberal government made some time ago. I believe it was already supposed to be completed, and yet they have taken no action on it. Of all the broken promises of this Liberal government, that has certainly been an interesting one to watch.

In speaking about the Robert Campbell Highway, over the years, this important highway has seen major investments and upgrades from the previous government. Users of this highway will tell you that they appreciate the improvements that make it a much safer drive. There is still much work to be done for this highway to ensure the safety of the travelling public.

The current Minister of Highways and Public Works has told us in this House that he sees that as a waste of money. Given that it's an important corridor for Yukoners, tourists, and the resource sector of our economy, that came as quite a surprise. He said he would not be making further investments on this highway. Well, Mr. Speaker, he has been true to his word in that regard. I can tell you that the Yukoners who rely on this road have been very disappointed in the Liberals' lack of attention to this road.

There are growing safety concerns and the road is at a point where it could damage vehicles as well, I might add.

That's why, last year, when the minister announced that he was going to pave the road between Faro and Ross River, we

were very interested to hear that. He said he would pave it. Since then, what has happened? Well, there's no pavement. Have they begun preparing for pavement? When we ask the minister, he can't answer, and to be honest, Mr. Speaker, at the time when we were initially discussing this, I wasn't sure if the minister knew the difference between pavement and our usual BST — but maybe he misspoke and never actually intended on paving this road like he said. We don't know. All we do know is that the Minister of Highways and Public Works said he would pave the road between Ross River and Faro and, so far, there has been no pavement done since he made that commitment. I really hope that the minister values his words and lives up to them though.

The minister had also committed that he would spend \$500,000 on doing planning for the pavement of the road. In the spring, we tried to get the minister to explain where that \$500,000 went. He didn't know. Had he lost the \$500,000? Silence, Mr. Speaker.

So what happened to that planning money, Mr. Speaker? It's a fair question to wonder. We know this Liberal government doesn't really value taxpayers' money. In fact, they're known to quite literally spray \$120,000 into the air in Dawson City. So when you disrespect taxpayers' money that much, I guess not knowing where your \$500,000 went isn't out of the ordinary. Hopefully today the minister can get up and explain to us where that \$500,000 went.

There was huge support from southeast Yukon for the installation of highway lighting on the Robert Campbell Highway in Watson Lake. This would be essential to ensuring the safety of motorists and pedestrians who rely on this important highway. We asked the government to support this investment. What did the minister say? Well, he said no. We'll study it, the minister said. Time went by and nothing was done. When I asked again, I was met with the same answer: No — and then, "We'll study it." Well, Mr. Speaker, that went on three times, and I believe right now we're at the "we'll study it" portion of the conversation. But still, no street lights.

Well, call me a cynic, Mr. Speaker, but I'm starting to think the minister doesn't give two hoots about this important safety issue and is just using these studies as an excuse not to take action.

I need to remind the government of their election slogan: "All Communities Matter". That's what the government says, but it's one thing to say something and it's quite another to back it up. In this case, they haven't backed it up with action.

I would ask the Liberal government to ignore any urge they may have to perhaps punish the people in southeast Yukon for the way they voted in the last election. I hope that's not what's going on here — but, you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm getting suspicious.

The investments in southeast Yukon are needed now. They can't wait for the minister to come around to realizing that all communities do matter. On April 15 of this year, I actually tabled a petition in this House asking the minister to take action on this important issue. The petition read: "THAT the citizens of Watson Lake are concerned about the safety of the traveling public, including pedestrians and people in motor vehicles;

"THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Minister of Highways and Public Works to start the work necessary to provide for, and proceed with, the installation of highway lighting on the Robert Campbell Highway from the junction of Ravenhill Drive and the Robert Campbell Highway to the subdivision of 2 ½ Mile."

Now, this petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by 373 Yukoners — 373 Yukoners, Mr. Speaker. To put that into perspective, that's more Yukoners than the Liberals want to — or may — potentially disenfranchise with their new *Elections Act*. But Mr. Speaker, as I said, even though these 373 Yukoners took the time to put together and sign this petition asking for these important safety improvements, the minister shrugged his shoulders. He came back and said, "It doesn't matter if you guys think we need to improve the safety on this section of the highway. We'll do more studies." That's really too bad, Mr. Speaker.

Another important section of road that I feel was ignored in the original motion was the Alaska Highway. This, in many respects, is the main artery of Yukon. It's how our tourist traffic drives up the highway. It's how our food comes from the south. It's such an important highway, so that's why I was actually very surprised to see that the government was willing to ignore it in their original motion. But regardless of what ridings the highway falls in, the Alaska Highway south of Whitehorse is important, and I wish the government would make it a higher priority.

Several fatal accidents have occurred on this road in recent years partly due to the lack of maintenance. That's extremely unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, and our hearts go out to those negatively impacted by these events. But I think this is an indication of why we can and need to do more to support the safety on our highways. The government needs to do more maintenance. The government needs to do improvements to safety. But what do they do? The Minister of Highways and Public Works decided to cut the maintenance budget for our highways in some sort of weird way of fixing the maintenance issue. It is only going to make it worse, so I really urge the government to overturn these cuts. They simply need to, if they want to show that they actually care about our roads.

There are lots of safety issues that could be addressed in the Alaska Highway — issues that are being ignored by this Liberal government. My constituents have raised the matter of guardrails, or Jersey barriers, for parts of the Alaska Highway between Upper Liard and Watson Lake, so I asked the minister to take action on these issues as well. They would improve safety. They would improve the highway and they are good investments. But, again, what did the minister say? He said no. We are just going to study it again. More studies; no action — more excuses; no safety. "We will study it," the minister said. That was his gut reaction. His gut reaction is to ignore serious issues. His gut reaction is to gut highway maintenance funding. His gut reaction is to say no.

Sometime later, luckily, his department said, yes, there were segments that would benefit from the installation of such barriers. So I am happy that his department overruled him. They understood the importance of this investment. But the minister

wrote to me and told me that this part of the highway was not a priority for this government. But it is clear that this Liberal government won't take action on their own, and that is what we have seen here today. They have completely ignored these things until they get hammered in the media or in the Legislative Assembly. This type of fast-and-loose approach to governing is not responsible — just simply reacting to everything isn't a smart way to run things.

Why isn't this Minister of Highways and Public Works properly planning for the long term, and why is it that what little plans he does have seem to ignore these non-Liberal ridings?

I would like to hear from the minister as well on why he is neglecting our highway camps. Will the minister consider relocating lapsed highway funding into other projects throughout the territory? That would be a good way to address some of the urgent priorities throughout the territory. We have asked the minister to take these actions previously, but he said it was impossible. But then, yesterday, the Minister of Health and Social Services said that the great thing about their budgeting is that they can reallocate funding throughout government. I'm not sure why the Minister of Highways and Public Works doesn't want to do this for important projects like the Robert Campbell Highway. Why does he not want to support the south Klondike Highway? Why does he want to let the Shakwak portion of the Alaska Highway revert to a gravel road?

Mr. Speaker, I think now is a good time to remind the House that this minister famously told the media that Yukoners just need to get used to lower standards. That is too bad, Mr. Speaker. That is really too bad — that instead of wanting to improve the lives of Yukoners, the Liberals just want to tell Yukoners to lower their expectations. Now, unfortunately, I don't think we can lower our expectations far enough to be disappointed by the Liberal government.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will come to a close on my comments. I think this amendment to the motion improves it a lot. It takes the partisan blinders off the original motion that sends a message to all Yukoners that only one highway matters. Instead, it reflects the fact that we have a lot of important roads in this territory. These roads need investments too and we really encourage the government to start showing those priorities well. I think the government will come around to this. I don't think they want to send the message to Yukoners that they don't want to improve the rest of the roads in the territory. So I encourage the government to support this amendment, although they have indicated that they will not. I think it is a good amendment and I think it would be great to send a message to Yukoners that this House is coming together to indicate that all of these projects are priorities.

Don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker — the Klondike Highway project is a good project — we do support it. But we think, as Members of the Legislative Assembly, that we should show more vision than just supporting one project. We can walk and chew at the same time, so we should urge the Government of Yukon to support more projects — and let's get those projects done. Let's get some shovels in the ground. We have an opportunity here to get a lot of people working on these

projects — growing our economy and improving highway safety.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity. I will wrap up my remarks. We should support projects throughout the entire Yukon because all communities do matter.

Mr. Kent: I too — like others — have listened intently to the debate here this afternoon. I obviously want to thank the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for bringing forward this motion here today — a very important motion for him, obviously. It was the first opportunity for a government private member's motion this fall, and this was the one they chose, so obviously the fact that he wanted this House to support the recent \$157-million investment to upgrade the north Klondike Highway was something that was extremely important to him and, obviously, his colleagues across the floor.

When my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, introduced his amendment to this motion, I, like others on this side of the House, believed that it was a real opportunity for us to strengthen the motion and send the message out to Yukoners that there are other projects worthy of consideration for funding. As my colleague from Lake Laberge mentioned, while this list is extensive, it by no means represents the entire list that we have heard from Yukoners.

When the Member for Mayo-Tatchun stood up to speak to the amendment and give his very brief remarks that he will not be supporting this amendment, it was disappointing because we kept the intent of his original motion in our amendment but added some other projects that we have been hearing about from Yukoners throughout the summer and throughout the time that we have been in this Legislative Assembly since the last election.

One of the things that the Minister of Highways and Public Works said in his remarks was about cuts announced by one of the federal political parties. I believe he was referring to the infrastructure program that is currently at 12 years, which the party said they would extend to 15 years — essentially re-profiling that money. It is interesting that the minister would refer to that re-profiling as cuts when, earlier in Question Period today, when we asked about \$4 million for the Challenge housing project, the Premier referred to that as simply re-profiling and that it wasn't cuts. Again, there are some mixed messages coming from across the floor with respect to what is happening at the federal level, but also what is happening here on the ground in the territory. I guess that re-profiling is okay for the Liberals, but when another political party announces that they are going to extend or re-profile money over a longer period of time, that's a cut. It's just not a cut when it's a Liberal idea.

I wanted to walk through these 11 actions that were identified by my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, and really get a sense — hopefully if this motion comes back to the floor or if we get a chance later on today to talk further, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun will explain why he wasn't supportive or does not support these projects.

So the first one was to go forward with the recently announced \$157-million investment to upgrade the north Klondike Highway, which was similar to the original motion that was brought forward. Of course, at the time that this announcement was made, we issued a news release from the Office of the Official Opposition regarding this. As my colleagues have said, we support any investment in infrastructure. Anytime that the government is able to leverage money from the federal government to improve our infrastructure here in the north, we are of course supportive of it.

The one problem that we have had with this is that the Liberals don't have a very good track record when it comes to delivering on these major infrastructure projects. Again, just a little over two years ago, the Liberals participated in a photo op announcing the \$458-million investment in roads through the Resource Gateway project. It was a project that was started by our government and we went through two different federal governments, advocating for that project. I have to tell you that when I heard that the Prime Minister was coming up and when I heard that this was going to be the announcement — or when this announcement was put forward — I was excited. I thought that this is a great opportunity for contractors. Some of the contractors I have talked to recently say that, based on that announcement, they were looking to invest in additional equipment for their businesses to move forward with what was essentially going to be an opportunity for some road building in the territory.

Unfortunately, the Liberals made this announcement, but they haven't completed the work to get the money to start flowing. This year, I think we have some money going into geo-tech on the Carmacks bypass. I stand to be corrected and I look forward to further debate later on in this Fall Sitting during general debate on the supplementary budget. But that said, I would have expected that for the Prime Minister to come in and stand shoulder to shoulder with the Premier and make that announcement, all the i's would have been dotted and all the t's would have been crossed. Unfortunately, that was not the case, and there are outstanding agreements that are still under negotiation and need to be signed off with the affected First Nations.

As I said in that news release, the Liberals are very good at making announcements, but they don't seem to realize that governing doesn't stop at the photo op. With respect to this announcement on the north Klondike Highway, we were pleased but concerned about the poor track record the Liberals have when it comes to actually delivering on these types of projects.

You know what? We'll look to hold them to account over the last year or two of this current mandate when it comes to getting these jobs out the door.

During this year's construction season, we heard a number of concerns from contractors when it comes to this Liberal government's performance. Contracts went out late; some of the road-building contractors who I talked to — or one of the road-building contractors who I talked to — said that, while they were able to secure some work, they lost an awful lot of

their staff, because the contracts were so late in getting out that of course their staff weren't able to wait around and hope that a job was secured and they had to look for opportunities elsewhere. Some went down to the oil patch; some went to British Columbia — but they did lose many of their staff and had to recruit others when the contracts finally came out and they were successful in bidding on them.

When it comes to the second bullet in my colleague's amendment, which is to "... invest in improvements to the Alaska Highway and the Whitehorse corridor such as turning and through lanes at the intersection of the Mayo Road, a turning lane by Porter Creek Super A, and acceleration lanes by Alusru Way..." on the portion of the highway that is in my riding of Copperbelt South, I was concerned that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun said they would not support that. Essentially, by saying he would not support the amendment, he was saying he would not support that investment in those improvements.

Obviously, my colleagues from Porter Creek North and Lake Laberge can speak to, and have spoken to, the importance of the intersection of the Mayo Road and the turning road by Porter Creek Super A, but those acceleration lanes are something that come up on a consistent basis with constituents of mine.

I reach out to them on an annual basis, and I attend many of the community association meetings and ask for their input — what types of things they would like to see the government address in the capital budget. Of course, this is one of those issues that come up. Once people who are turning into town off of Alusru Way — and for people who don't know, that is the road that goes into Meadow Lakes golf course — are out into the lanes there, they are right in the main traffic lane. There is no opportunity for them to access an acceleration lane to get up to speed, so they are into traffic with a 90-kilometre-an-hour speed limit. Again, it's a safety concern that has been identified.

As we mentioned, this obviously doesn't represent all of the projects that we have heard about. One of the other ones that I have heard about from constituents is with respect to where Standard Bus has their shop right by Yukon Yamaha, just south of the intersection of Robert Service Way and the Alaska Highway, and the fact that there are no slip lanes or not even a sign saying that buses are turning. On many a morning coming into town, I have seen some close calls and people trying to pass buses on the right, and it's a dangerous spot. I think there is an opportunity for the government to look at some sort of signage or perhaps some slip lanes there as well when it comes to that particular portion of the highway.

Mr. Speaker, I was concerned that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun said he wouldn't support this House agreeing to seek continued Shakwak funding. As mentioned by the Member for Kluane, that is an extremely important stretch of highway and piece of infrastructure, not only in his riding but for all of the traffic — whether it is tourist or commercial, residents of the Yukon and of our neighbours in Alaska — travelling either from southeast Alaska or the Lower 48 or other portions of Canada into that territory.

Like my colleagues, I was disappointed when we were asking the minister about seeking assistance from the federal

government when it comes to that particular portion of the highway. Many members will know that the federal government is responsible for capital and maintenance of the Alaska Highway just north of Fort St. John to the Yukon border, so they certainly contribute funds to the Alaska Highway in British Columbia, so why wouldn't we ask them to contribute funds to the Alaska Highway in the Yukon? It was a head-scratcher when the minister seemed to indicate that stretch of the highway only benefited constituents and residents of Alaska when that simply is not the case.

When it comes to paving the Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River, as my colleague from Watson Lake said, I'm sure the minister misspoke when he said he was going to pave the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River. He did indicate to the Leader of the Official Opposition that he understood what the difference was between asphalt paving and BST, and I'm sure that's what he meant. I don't know that he has ever taken the opportunity to correct the record here in the Legislature, but that said, we'll give him the benefit of the doubt.

This is an important project for residents of Ross River, as well as tourists and other residents of the Yukon who use this particular stretch of highway. At the tail-end of our time in office, there was a functional plan completed for that stretch of the highway, and I'm assuming the minister was able to reference that when he made his remarks about paving. I'm not sure what the costs of that are now, but we look forward to the Liberal government delivering on that commitment to the people of Ross River and the people of the Yukon.

The streetlight issue — this is again something that has been raised by my colleague from Watson Lake during our time in opposition. When we were in government, we installed streetlights in the community of Upper Liard. By all indications, it has been something that has definitely improved safety for the residents walking along the highway, for pedestrians, as I mentioned, as well as the travelling public.

When it comes to item 6, I'm disappointed that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun has indicated that he won't support upgrades to the Takhini River Road. Granted, they're not in the riding of Mayo-Tatchun, but it's something that is extremely important to my colleague from Lake Laberge and his constituents who live on that stretch of the highway. Obviously, building a proper roadbed, resurfacing the road, and improving the ditches is something that needs to be done to that stretch of the road. There's an awful lot of agricultural properties down there, so it gets some heavy traffic that goes across that road, so these improvements would be something that the Liberal government would want to take a look at.

Famously, we had a picture of a fountain coming out of the middle of that road last spring or perhaps the spring before that the Member for Lake Laberge showed our caucus. It was a video, I think, of water seeping from the roadbed and up.

When it comes to the rural road upgrade program increase in funding — I'm not sure, but perhaps the Minister of Highways and Public Works was confusing this with the resource road upgrade program when he talked about working with the placer miners' association on it. Just for a little bit of

background for members of the Legislature, I had a constituent this summer who wanted some improvements to the public portions of one of the roads that accesses their tourism operation here in the Yukon. He applied for the rural road maintenance program, and he was told by the official who operated that program that the road didn't meet the standards and that he would need to apply to the rural road upgrade program. He filled out that application to the rural road upgrade program, and then he was told by another official in the minister's department that there was no funding for that program. It is an interesting take on the whole-of-government approach when the Minister of Highways and Public Works is telling constituents of mine to apply for a program that the government has not funded, but I'm sure we'll have a chance to get into that a little bit more as this session progresses.

Reversing cuts made to the Dempster Highway capital budget — \$50,000 is all that was in this current budget for capital on the Dempster Highway, and most of it was being used by the minister's department for design work, as we found out. We asked him why that wasn't capital and not O&M. Obviously, we are disappointed with the amount of expenditures on the Dempster Highway and we feel that those dollars could have been re-profiled or, as the Minister of Yukon Housing Corporation said, more resources could have been moved around so that more work could have been done on the Dempster Highway this year.

Mr. Speaker, finally, item 11 is about a plan for the replacement of the Takhini River bridge on the north Klondike Highway. Again, listening to stories from my colleague from —

Speaker's Statement

Speaker: Order, please. Before we finish for today, just a reminder to all members today — and I'm not going to single anyone out — but I heard during the course of debate this afternoon — and I know it's more intuitive for members to refer to yourself or to others as “the member from”. Just a good refresher to remember that we're not “the members from” anywhere, we are “the members for”. I suppose maybe the mnemonic, or the reminder, would be that we are for our constituents or for the people of the ridings we represent. I did hear that; that was slipping a bit today; I heard that a few times.

I understand it is more intuitive or logical to say “my colleague from” whichever riding, but we all know that we are the members for the 19 Yukon ridings we represent.

With that, the time is now at least 5:30 p.m., and the House is adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on Motion No. 31, and the amendment, accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.