

Question re: Airport improvements

Mr. Kent: I have a question for the minister about planning for the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. On May 4, 2017, a contract entitled “Master Plan 2040, Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport” was awarded to the MMM Group Ltd. from Ottawa for approximately \$210,000. Since it has been almost two years, can the minister provide us with an update on this work? Has it been completed? If so, where can we find this plan?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question and the opportunity to speak about the airport this afternoon.

The Department of Highways and Public Works has made significant investments in aviation over the past few years to upgrade equipment and facilities, and we will continue to advance the priority of Yukon aviation. A comprehensive multi-year investment plan will make sure that we are meeting Yukon’s current and future aviation system needs. Over the next year, Highways and Public Works will engage with stakeholders, airport users, and the public to gather input on what priorities, operations, and future investments in the Yukon aviation system should be. The stakeholder feedback will help to inform the investment plan that combines safety, efficiency, stakeholder needs, and operational requirements for Yukon aviation.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing this because we have heard concerns about the previous plan — the 2040 — that was hatched under the last government. There were shortfalls there, and we are taking the time to make sure that we get this right and reflect the needs of the aviation stakeholders in the territory. We are happy to do that work.

Mr. Kent: It appears that the minister grabbed the wrong briefing note, because he was talking about the Yukon’s Flight Path plan that closed earlier this month. I was actually asking about the Yukon Liberals’ 2040 master plan for Erik Nielsen airport.

When we were debating the *Public Airports Act* in the fall of 2017 — that was approximately 18 months ago — the minister mentioned that the important work would be accomplished in the regulations. One of many quotes from him during the debate came on October 17, 2017, during Question Period when he said — and I quote: “... the more important part of this process, the meat of this legislation, will come during the drafting of regulations. This is the first step.”

Can the minister let us know when we can expect that first step to be taken and when the regulations associated with this act will be drafted, consulted on, and implemented?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite has been out of government for several years now, and he seems to be losing his understanding of how this whole thing works.

The members opposite had a plan. There were all sorts of plans. They put together a master plan 2040. We heard about that plan, and that it wasn't very good. There was the Dawson airport functional plan and the Yukon aviation systems review, and there was a lot of confusion around that. What we are doing with Flight Path, Mr. Speaker, is going out to the stakeholders and finding out what their thoughts are on safety, efficiency, stakeholder needs, and operational requirements for Yukon aviation.

We are also about to finalize the lease issue up at the airport. That has been ongoing for years and years, after some bungling by the previous government on the lease issue. We are fixing that issue. We are investing in new snow-blowers and graders up at the airport that have been woefully missing and absent for many, many years. We are fixing the baggage-handling equipment, we are putting more tarmac on the Whitehorse runway apron, and we are paving the Dawson City runway.

We are doing an awful lot, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that this aviation infrastructure is a strategic investment for the territory.

Mr. Kent: Clearly the minister has been in government too long because he has forgotten which plans are actually his.

I mentioned that on May 4, 2017, the contract entitled "Master Plan 2040" closed and was awarded to a group from Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, when the minister talks about the system review — again, that is something that has been undertaken by his government. Then most recently, Yukon's Flight Path closed earlier this month. So we have three different studies that are underway.

Mr. Speaker, when will all these studies translate into action on developing regulations and getting airport lands in the hands of airport users?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am really pleased to see the members opposite finally taking an interest in airports and turning their eyes to it. That attention has been lacking for a very long time. As members opposite know, as we debated it

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at length, we have a *Public Airports Act* now that has been passed. We are currently in the process of getting the terms of reference before the public so that we can move ahead with the aviation advisory committee that was put in the legislation to make sure the minister had good feedback from the aviation stakeholders in the territory.

The reason why that is so important is because when we took office, the aviation community had websites up calling it a “war on aviation” in the territory. We are trying to make sure that we have the rules, the tools, the investments, and the understanding of this critical industry in the territory to move it forward so that it actually reaches the economic potential that it really should have.

So we are investing in the Dawson City Airport, we are investing in Whitehorse, and we are investing in Mayo — \$6 million going into Mayo this year to make sure that they have scheduled flights.

Mr. Speaker, the aviation industry is central to this government’s focus, and we are proud of that.