



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, May 19, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Patti McLeod

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake
DEPUTY SPEAKER — Darius Elias, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin

CABINET MINISTERS

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

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Yukon Party

Hon. Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Darius Elias	Vuntut Gwitchin

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

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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Independent

David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, May 19, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Dawson City International Gold Show

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the Yukon government to recognize the 30th annual Dawson City International Gold Show, which is taking place this weekend, May 20 and 21.

Mining has commanded a large role in Yukon's economic well-being for more than a century and the Klondike has long been the epicentre of the placer industry. By hosting northern Canada's largest placer mining and consumer trade show, the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce provides miners with the opportunity to get together and assess new products that could make a difference on their placer claims.

The Yukon Geological Survey also attends the gold show each year to share their expertise. Then, throughout the summer, YGS geologists meet with miners on their claims to provide expert guidance related to the sites' geology and potential. The geologists also document the work history of claims, which will provide a historical record that will assist the mineral industry in future years.

The Yukon government is proud to also have a supporting role in the Yukon placer industry, through the Yukon mineral exploration program. Earlier this month, 16 placer projects were granted more than \$460,000 to help locate, explore and develop their projects to an advanced exploration stage. These projects all have the potential to generate additional economic development and will also help to map Yukon's geology, which benefits the entire mineral industry.

I look forward to meeting with miners at the Klondike Placer Miners' Association while at the gold show. We will all continue our work for the benefit of the industry, our economy and all Yukoners. There is no doubt that gold mining has shaped the Yukon as we know it today. The Yukon history that most of us know starts with the discovery on Rabbit Creek in 1896. After the rush north by thousands of gold seekers, Dawson's population reached 30,000, which, of course, we know is more than Whitehorse today.

Madam Speaker, 120 years later, gold continues to shape our identity as Yukoners and to be a significant contributor to our present-day economic well-being. To all of you working in this important industry, the Yukon government thanks you

for your continued contribution to Yukon's economy as well as to its rich culture and history.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise on behalf of the NDP Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 2016 Dawson City International Gold Show and its 30th anniversary. Established in 1986, the annual event has continually brought local businesses together in Dawson City. Originally meant as a place for miners and suppliers to meet, it has transformed into a tradition that brings the territory together. It is hosted by the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce and Yukoners gather in Dawson City to celebrate our placer mining heritage. Not only is it a weekend of business, but it is a weekend of pleasure — a chance to learn new ideas, share enthusiasm and plan together for current and future mining projects. With over 30 local sponsors, the Dawson and the mining communities gather to support local businesses and economic growth throughout the Yukon.

The Dawson City Chamber of Commerce partners with the City of Dawson, the Klondike Placer Miners' Association and the Klondike Visitors Association. They have come together to recognize the importance of placer mining and to develop the trade show. I know many of my constituents in the Keno, Mayo, Pelly and Carmacks areas look forward to attending this annual event and, this year, for the first time, I will be able to attend. I look forward to it and encourage all listeners to join our mining community in Dawson City this weekend.

Mr. Silver: I rise on behalf of the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to the 2016 Dawson City International Gold Show.

Before I begin I would like to thank Monica Nordling for writing this tribute. Monica is the granddaughter of a placer miner, she is the daughter of a placer miner, a sister of a placer miner and she is a geologist. Monica just got accepted into the Colorado School of Mines, one of the most prestigious schools in North America — and she works in our office.

Madam Speaker, this weekend will mark the 30th annual gold show hosted by the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the City of Dawson, the Klondike Placer Miners' Association and the Klondike Visitors Association. It is a placer mining industry and consumer trade show that takes place this Friday and Saturday, May 20 and 21, in Dawson City.

This is an event that signifies the beginning of summer in Dawson and brings all aspects of the community together: placer miners and their employees come out from the creeks; the industry support companies from all across North America to come showcase their equipment and services; local vendors join the trade show; and Dawson residents come out to enjoy the festivities and learn about the happenings in their own backyard.

Robert Service School classrooms also participate, bringing students over to educate them on the placer mining industry and some of these students even get to showcase their

family members who work in the industry. Did I mention who wrote this tribute?

Madam Speaker, I have had the privilege of attending many gold shows in Dawson over the years. It has always been a fun and fantastic weekend. Now as a legislator, my experience is quite different from when I was a teacher. Over the years in both capacities, I have developed many positive relationships with miners and industry supporters and I plan to continue to foster those relationships this weekend as well.

The placer mining industry plays a vital role in Dawson City and Yukon, providing jobs and contributing significantly to our territory's economy. I hear the industry issues and concerns and support them wholeheartedly. The Yukon Liberals are extremely proud of this great industry.

The Dawson City gold show encompasses the diverse and interconnected sectors of our regional economy, with mining as its hub. Celebrating the gold show has become a springtime tradition — a great place to chat, to network and to share ideas with fellow miners and prospectors.

The Dawson City gold show is an international showcase created by locals, and it is an institution in the Klondike that I'm extremely proud of. I look forward to seeing all of you up there this weekend and catching up over the weekend.

In recognition of Haiku Week

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to pay tribute to the literary arts in the territory — in particular, the well-known poetry form known as haiku. Haiku Canada, a vibrant national organization, has chosen to host its annual conference here in Whitehorse this weekend, from May 20 to 22.

During the conference, attendees from across North America will participate in workshops, a book fair, an annual general meeting and poetry readings. Of course, they will explore our beautiful and natural environment for inspiration for their work.

I would like to thank Kathy Munro, a local haiku poet, for organizing the 2016 Haiku Canada weekend here in Whitehorse.

Haiku poetry involves a simple collection of a few words that provides a reader with concrete images and elicits further thought, reflection and discovery. What better place to convene than our Yukon in the early summer to provide inspiration and beauty for the poets who are visiting us this week?

Poetry can enrich the lives of Yukon people and, in recognition of the important contribution that Haiku Canada weekend will make to our community, our Commissioner of Yukon, Doug Phillips, has declared May 15 to May 22 to be Haiku Week. Yukoners will join other provinces and territories in recognizing the active haiku community in Yukon and the place of the haiku in Canadian culture. Yukon has a long history of poetry, and one poet of particular importance is Robert Service. Known as the "Bard of the Yukon", Robert Service wrote what he called "popular ballads", such as *The Shooting of Dan McGrew* and *The Cremation of Sam McGee*.

Today, Yukon can boast of its many poets who have achieved national and international success. These include: Michael Eden Reynolds, Erling Friis-Baastad, Clea Roberts and Joanne Lilley, to name but a few.

Madam Speaker, the Department of Tourism and Culture proudly supports literary arts in the territory through programs such as the arts fund. In addition, individual writers and poets can access the Advanced Artist Award to assist their work with editors or mentors, to attend writing residencies or simply to take the time needed to focus on creating new work. To coincide with Haiku Canada weekend, an exhibition by Yukon artist Helen O'Connor called "Words: Haiku on Paper", opens tonight at the Northern Front Studio. The show honours paper and the written word and includes some work from Haiku Canada members.

There will also be an unofficial Arts in the Park tomorrow at noon in LePage Park, weather permitting. Conference attendees will be sharing haikus with the audience. Everyone is welcome to attend the exhibition opening this evening and the event at LePage Park tomorrow. We are delighted and honoured that Haiku Canada has chosen Whitehorse as its conference location.

Before closing, I would like to leave you with this playful and perhaps seasonally appropriate haiku written by Kathy Munro, under the name KJ Munro:

Tailgated
All the way up the highway
Spring snow

On behalf of the Government of Yukon, a warm welcome to all of the attendees and best wishes for a stimulating conference.

Madam Speaker, I just wanted to extend also a warm welcome to a number of individuals from our Department of Tourism and Culture, starting with Laurel Parry, who has joined us here. She oversees our arts section within the Department of Tourism and Culture. Thank you for joining us. With Laurel is her own mom, Jan Ogilvy, who has joined us and is a long-time Yukoner and the face of the Yukon government, having worked at the information desk and many other responsibilities over the years. Welcome as well.

Also joining them is our own fund administrator for the Department of Tourism and Culture, Corrie Gallienne, who has also joined us. I just want to thank them for their ongoing work in support of the arts in our own Department of Tourism and Culture.

Applause

In recognition of National Road Safety Week

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise today on behalf of all members of the House to acknowledge National Road Safety Week. From May 17 to 23, people all across this vast country are reminded to take precautions while they are out and about and to commit to safe habits on our roads. This is a week to highlight the

importance of safe, sober and attentive driving for all drivers, passengers, cyclists and pedestrians.

Here in the Yukon and across Canada, we aspire to maintain the safest roads in the world. It's an enormous job, but through continued education, awareness, technology and enforcement, each year, we make tremendous progress in improving road safety, but we still have a long way to go.

There are four big contributors to accidents and deaths. Impaired operation by alcohol or drugs, failure or improper use of seatbelts, distracted driving and aggressive driving are areas where behaviour changes are required. Changing these behaviours can reduce the risks for drivers, passengers and other road users.

Unfortunately, it is still a reality today that too many lives are lost and individuals injured due to poor decisions made behind the wheel. Whether from impaired driving, distracted or aggressive driving, or not using the proper protection such as helmets or seatbelts, the results are the same and the impacts are long-lasting and often life-changing. What is even more unfortunate is that the majority of these tragedies are preventable.

National Road Safety Week is therefore a call to action, especially on the behavioural side, where we must all work together to curb these dangerous habits. It's no coincidence, Madam Speaker, that National Road Safety Week falls during Victoria Day long weekend — a weekend where our roads and highways across the territory experience higher traffic volumes, both from Yukoners as well as increasing numbers of visitors to our territory.

The long weekend also brings with it a rise in the number and severity of accidents due to impaired driving, which continues to be an issue for Yukon drivers. To that end, Yukon government and Highways and Public Works continues to work with Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the RCMP and other local stakeholders to address this troubling problem.

That's what National Road Safety Week is all about. Again, it is a call to action and an opportunity to work toward a safer, more responsible future on our roads.

As if tackling the challenges associated with impaired driving weren't enough, we are also having to deal with distracted driving. Distracted-driving fatalities have surpassed alcohol-impaired fatalities as the number one killer on Canadian roads. We all need to understand that talking on the phone or texting while driving is equally as dangerous as drinking and driving.

Together with the RCMP and the Highways and Public Works road safety team, I would like to remind all Yukon drivers that anything that takes your attention away from the road is a distraction, and distractions can and often do have life-altering consequences.

You know as well as I that we all live in an interconnected world, where it can be difficult, if not impossible, to put down the phone. But, as hard as it can be to not look at your screen or answer a phone call, I'm here today to ask all Yukoners, especially those young drivers, to leave

the phone alone and do your part to help make our roads as safe as they can be.

According to the Canada Safety Council, texting while driving makes a crash or near-crash 23 times more likely. I cannot stress enough how serious an issue this is and how severe the consequences are that accompany it. Your safety and the safety of others is the number one priority. Everything else is secondary.

Most importantly, we must model the behaviour we want to see from our young and inexperienced drivers, especially as we head into the summer season of longer days and longer road trips. Together, we can help put an end to so many needless tragedies.

It should also be noted that the RCMP in Yukon are out enforcing safe-driving practices and will be increasing enforcement for traffic violations, including distracted driving, to help reduce road incidents on Yukon roads. While law enforcement will always be part of the solution, alone, it is not enough — especially when it comes to the safety of our children.

Motor vehicle collisions remain the leading cause of death of children across Canada. Child carseats, when used correctly, can reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71 percent and reduce the risk of serious injury by 67 percent. By using a booster seat instead of a seat belt alone, you reduce the risk of injury to your child by 59 percent.

Highways and Public Works values the importance of carseat safety and is dedicated to ensuring parents are assisted in correctly installing and using their child's carseat. This summer, we continue to promote carseat safety through our child carseat safety program by providing free inspection clinics throughout the territory. Additionally, trained carseat technicians are available year-round for private carseat safety consultations. This free program is intended to assist both new and seasoned parents who want to make sure they are using the carseats as effectively as possible.

Safety in the commercial sector also continues to be a priority area for this government. To help promote the safety of commercial vehicles, the RCMP, along with National Safety Code enforcement officers and the carrier compliance branch of HPW, will be conducting the annual road check during National Transportation Week, which is the first week in June. There will also be increased enforcement across the territory in all compliance areas.

In closing, I would like to wish all Yukoners a safe and fun-filled summer. The hard work of crews with the Department of Highways and Public Works helps ensure your summer travels are safe so that you can enjoy an unparalleled experience in our beautiful territory. While enjoying all the north has to offer, please be mindful of construction zones, observe posted speed limits and be cautious of wildlife on the highway or in the highway right-of-way. While we are out enjoying the summer season with friends and family, please remember that it is up to each and every one of us to take responsibility and make safe driving habits a top priority, not just this week during road safety week, but each and every time we get behind the wheel.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming a constituent and friend to the gallery. We have with us today Campbell Malloch. Cam is a director on the Copper Ridge Neighbourhood Association, a member of the local engineering community and the general manager of the Slammin' Salmons softball team. As a fan of poetry, he is here for the haiku awareness week tribute.

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Silver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have for tabling Yukon snow survey statistics for May 1, 2016, showing upper Yukon River Basin/Southern Lakes snowpack conditions to be at 48 percent of normal conditions.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have for presentation the 22nd report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees?

Before proceeding with petitions, the Chair will make a statement.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Yesterday, at the conclusion of his oral response to Petition No. 28, the Minister of Health and Social Services made certain comments about the opposition caucuses.

The Chair will remind ministers that in responding to petitions, the ministers are responding to those persons who have petitioned this Assembly, not to the member who presented the petition or the opposition caucuses, generally.

A response to a petition is not an opportunity for making partisan or political statements, as the Standing Orders regarding petitions do not provide for debate at that time.

No member other than the minister has the opportunity to speak, meaning opposition members do not have the opportunity to reply to comments by a minister responding to a petition.

The Chair thanks members for their attention.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, notwithstanding the

provisions of Standing Order 74, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move that Bill No. 203, entitled *Child and Youth Advocate Staff Benefits Amendments Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Unanimous consent re introduction and first reading of Bill No. 203, *Child and Youth Advocate Staff Benefits Amendments Act*

Speaker: The minister responsible for the Public Service Commission has requested the unanimous consent of the House, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order 74, to move that Bill No. 203, entitled *Child and Youth Advocate Staff Benefits Amendments Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted. The minister may now move the motion.

Bill No. 203: *Child and Youth Advocate Staff Benefits Amendments Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that Bill No. 203, entitled *Child and Youth Advocate Staff Benefits Amendments Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission that Bill No. 203, entitled *Child and Youth Advocate Staff Benefits Amendments Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 203 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Elias: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to continue to help Yukoners install renewable energy systems in their homes and sell surplus power to the grid through measures such as:

(1) the \$5,000 rebate available through the good energy rebate program for installing renewable energy systems in homes; and

(2) the rural electrification and telecommunication program, which provided individual Yukoners with \$151,000 to install solar energy systems in their homes.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to fulfill its legal obligation to give the significant number of temporary Yukon teachers with two years of continuous employment the status of permanent employees.

Mr. Silver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to confirm teacher assignments for new and existing teachers for the 2016-17 school year as soon as possible.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Economic outlook

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As we reflect over the last five years of this version of Yukon Party government, it is relevant to revisit the Premier's priorities and his points of pride from his first budget. He bragged about Yukon's \$80-million surplus, becoming a net contributor to Canada and, of course, his singular reliance on the mining industry. Now nearly five years later, Yukon's surplus has all but evaporated, federal transfers make up even a greater proportion of our revenues and the last operating mine in Yukon is winding down its operations — yet whenever Yukon's worsening economy is mentioned, the Premier refuses to take responsibility and, instead, reverts to very tired talking points.

When will the Premier acknowledge that his government has done Yukon's economy no favours over the past five years?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This government is very proud of the investments we have made. I know that the opposition parties have their heads in the sand when it comes to realizing the impact of the global reduction in commodity prices, not only affecting this jurisdiction, but all other jurisdictions that rely on the resource industry to be a big part of their economy.

In spite of that, we continue to invest and to create jobs for Yukoners, and we're proud to say that, during this entire mandate, we have not tabled a single deficit. We continue to have money in the bank. Madam Speaker, this is the only jurisdiction in the country now that doesn't have to budget money within their budget to service debt — a very proud accomplishment and one that is the envy of the rest of the country.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker; I would remind the Premier that pride goes before the fall. Yukon's surplus has been all but eliminated by this government, from over \$80 million to just over \$1 million in 2015 — an astounding achievement when we consider that three-quarters of our revenue comes directly from the federal government, a revenue stream that has been increasing at a minimum of three percent a year. In fact, the only thing that this government can take credit for is spending other people's money.

This government has tried to run a stimulus budget for the last three years in a desperate attempt to prop up Yukon's economy, yet Yukon is the only jurisdiction in Canada to have three consecutive years of GDP decline. Mines have closed; the private sector in Yukon is suffering; ordinary people have lost work — all because this government did not understand

the importance of taking action to truly diversify Yukon's economy.

Can the Premier explain why Yukon is the only jurisdiction in Canada to see its economy shrink three years in a row?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, I know that it's difficult sometimes on the other side of the House to understand the economics. We do understand the importance of the mining industry and that's why we continue to say now, more than ever, that we must stand up for our resource industries.

Madam Speaker, mining jobs create six to eight additional jobs within our economy. As a result of the growth in that industry over the past decade, we've seen 6,000 new people move into this territory. As a result of that, we've seen diversification in our economy.

I will point out for the members opposite that the latest numbers for 2015 did see our GDP contract, primarily because of the mining industry; however, all other major sectors of the economy grew last year — construction, retail trade, professional, scientific and technical services, real estate, transportation and warehousing, health care, education, finance, insurance and utilities. Madam Speaker, we have a plan and the plan is working. We're confident in the future of this territory.

Ms. Hanson: Confidence alone — the Premier likes to say that Yukon is in an enviable position. Well, life might be enviable for the Premier, but everyday Yukoners trying to make ends meet don't see it that way.

Small businesses are struggling, there are more food bank users than ever, and affordable housing continues to be the challenge it was five years ago. When it comes to Yukon's economic woes, the Premier repeats his talking points like a broken record. If Yukoners could pay their bills with this Yukon Party's broken promises, household debt would be at an all-time low, but, much as he tries, the Premier's words cannot change the economic reality that ordinary Yukoners face every day.

When will the Premier demonstrate that he understands that the dwindling economy he has overseen has real impacts on everyday Yukon citizens?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: We're proud of the fact that since the Yukon Party came into power in late 2002, we have never raised taxes. In fact, last year we reduced the taxes for all Yukon taxpayers for 2015. In 2014, we reduced the Yukon small-business tax by 25 percent. Last year, beginning in July, we increased the Yukon child benefit by approximately 30 percent.

Madam Speaker, what do the chambers of commerce say about our budget? The Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce said — and I quote: "Premier Pasloski, you are committed to a balanced budget; you have presented a budget that predicts a surplus — it's good news." The chamber gives high marks for the support, training and development of key sectors of our economy — mining, tourism information, technology and the retail services sector. We also know that the Yukon Chamber of Commerce gave us a B-plus for our budget.

Of course, I would also like to talk about the recent announcement of the acquisition of the Kaminak project — the Coffee project — by Goldcorp. The work and the due diligence that this government has been doing over the last number of years is beginning to pay off. We are excited about the future of this territory under a Yukon Party government.

Question re: Renewable energy strategy

Ms. White: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yukon's energy future needs to be ground in renewable energy. The global transition away from fossil fuels is happening, and Yukoners are ahead of their government in this regard. Government already incentivizes green living through rebates on everyday things like Energy Star appliances and LED lights, but more can still be done.

A large portion of Yukon's emissions are caused by gas-powered vehicles. There is potential for electric vehicles in Yukon, especially for the many daily commuters who live along the Alaska Highway corridor and within the Whitehorse city limits. Other Canadian jurisdictions are beginning to plan rebates to reduce the financial burdens on citizens who buy an electric car to reduce their own carbon footprints.

Would the government consider providing financial support to Yukoners who want to take the initiative and reduce their emissions in the transportation sector, where Yukon still needs to be doing better?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There are two initiatives that our government is supporting when it comes to electric vehicles. The first is the procurement of a 2016 Chevy Spark electric vehicle by the Fleet Vehicle Agency for a cost comparison and operational effectiveness pilot project. The second activity that we're undertaking is in conjunction with the Transportation Museum, which is looking to purchase an electric vehicle and power it through solar power on the roof of the Transportation Museum — very innovative indeed. I would like to congratulate the board members and executive director from the Yukon Transportation Museum for coming forward to the government, the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon College and others with that idea.

These two initiatives will help to prove the effectiveness and the efficiency of electric vehicles in the territory. There are some challenges, obviously, being in a northern climate. The range of an electric vehicle can fall by up to 50 percent when temperatures drop below minus 25 degrees. This could place Yukoners or our government employees at risk during winter travel, so the pilot will involve only travel within Whitehorse city limits at this time. Again, we're looking for opportunities to prove up this technology to make sure that it works in the climate that we're faced with here in the territory.

Ms. White: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Citizens already own more electrical cars than the entire Yukon government. In Yukon, putting solar panels on your house is becoming more and more common. Citizens are showing their commitment to renewable resources and they're getting results.

Right now, there is a budding industry. With government support, Yukon's huge solar potential could play a strong role in supplying Yukon's domestic energy requirements. The Yukon Party could have put solar panels on the solar-rich south side of this building during the current renovations to show their commitment to renewable energy as an example for the rest of Yukon, but they chose not to.

Renewable energy jobs will only continue to grow. These jobs are not vulnerable to the world commodity prices, as are those in the extractive industries. Madam Speaker, will the government follow the lead of citizens in building Yukon's renewable energy future and use public infrastructure to help develop a renewable energy industry in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think it's useful to remind members and all Yukoners that a Yukon government press release dated February 27, 2009, entitled "Solar Panel Project Demonstrates New Technology", saw the installation of 24 solar modules on the existing roof of the main administration building, so there are solar panels on the roof already. Again, that's something that I think is worthwhile pointing out to Yukoners.

That said, Madam Speaker, there was a motion tabled earlier today by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin that referenced the microgeneration program and the rebate of up to \$5,000 that this government provides for Yukon residents who are interested in installing renewable energy systems and selling that excess energy back into the grid. There's also the work of the rural electrification program. I've talked specifically to one Yukoner who has accessed that program, and he can't say enough good things about the work of the various departments in government in assisting him in putting in that solar array at his home on the Tagish Road.

Again, there are a number of things that we're doing. We're always looking for new and innovative opportunities to help Yukoners invest in renewable energy. You'll see that through the biomass strategy; you'll see that through all of the other programs that we have through the Energy Solutions Centre, in encouraging Yukoners to purchase higher efficiency appliances and take advantage of other opportunities.

There are many great things that we're doing and there are many great things that we continue to seek opportunities to do.

Ms. White: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Not installing the solar panels along the south side of this building was a missed opportunity. Renewable energy applies to so many different parts of our communities. It just isn't about providing green electricity. What about the high number of Yukon homes that still rely on home heating oil? What about the staggering potential to introduce more biomass fuel to our home heating? What about the local economics of renewable energy as a heating source?

We all stood by and watched as the government refused geothermal heating for the new F.H. Collins building and Whistle Bend. Meanwhile, communities like Burwash Landing have implemented district biomass heating systems

to keep community buildings warm and make it greener in the process.

Madam Speaker, when will the government stop hiding their heads in the sand and admit that it has missed too many opportunities to build renewable heating and energy sources into major projects?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Let's pick one of the many initiatives that the member opposite identified in her question, and that's the biomass opportunities.

The biomass energy strategy was adopted by the Government of Yukon in February of this year. The intent of the strategy is to achieve more energy self-reliance by optimizing the use of Yukon-harvested wood to meet the territory's heating needs, thereby reducing that sector's greenhouse gas emissions and keeping more money in our territory.

Madam Speaker, there are currently, I believe, two government facilities in the Yukon — the Whitehorse Correctional Centre as well as the biomass heating facility that's located in Dawson City — that provide biomass heat to institutions. The Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources are partnering together to put out a request for qualifications to look to provide biomass heating in a number of our educational buildings — not only educational buildings here in Whitehorse but also in the communities of Haines Junction, Teslin and Watson Lake. There are opportunities emerging from the biomass strategy there.

Unlike the New Democrats and the Liberal Party that would like to impose a carbon tax and drive up prices on consumer goods for Yukoners — whether it's important aspects of home heating fuel or gasoline or the products that we have in our stores — we'll continue to focus on energy-efficiency initiatives such as re-skinning this building and the green jobs that creates.

Question re: Education reform

Mr. Silver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The final section of the budget speech for the spring 2015 outlined yet another attempt by the Yukon Party government to redesign our education system: "A New Vision: A Made-in-Yukon K to 12 Education Curriculum". This was the fourth try in the last 13 years of this government to redesign, make over or change the direction of the Department of Education. Fresh out of the gates, the new plan is now just called "A New Vision". A common complaint after years of these reviews is a lack of follow-up to measure whether any of the changes are producing better results. Without any goalposts in place, these exercises really become change for change's sake. A full year after work has begun on a new strategy where the questions of how to measure progress on the new vision's website come up, the answer simply says, "to be determined".

Madam Speaker, when does the government plan to fill in these very crucial blanks?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Working together with our partners, we will be able to come

up with measurable indicators to tell us whether or not the project is working. The one thing that we're attempting to do with this is to involve all partners in Education across the territory and to make sure that the things that we do are operational things that we can not only implement in the very near future, but also have a longer term impact as well. The member opposite talks about indicators and we already have some that are easily measured. One is graduation rates — as well as a number of other things.

We're working on that with our partners but we're also not going to rush into publishing things that we're not sure will work. Again, we will continue to work with our partners and come up with a viable plan.

Mr. Silver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This government has gone through several reviews and visioning exercises. It has a lot of vision but no necessary follow-through. I must add too that assessment should be up-front when designing new plans. For many years, it has been a case of reinventing the wheel with no impact on students or no measurables to indicate whether or not these actual plans have a better outcome for the students. I don't want to see this happen again. The exercise started last spring and was very similar to other initiatives that the government has been late on in this mandate — lots of talk and lots of meetings, but not necessarily a lot of product to date.

Another question on the minds of a lot of educators: Is the government contemplating changes to the *Education Act* as a part of this latest exercise?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Speaker, I am not aware of any changes to the *Education Act* that are being planned in the near future. If the member opposite is aware of some, I wish he would tell me.

The goal of this process is not to create another report or document. We are trying to build a new vision that adapts, that is a living — I hate to say "living document" — but is something that can adapt to the changing educational world. We are attempting to work with our First Nation partners to ensure that we have First Nation languages — that are truly effective and where children are actually learning their language. We are also working to introduce First Nation culture throughout the schools from grades 1 through 12. We have already done that in a number of areas. In fact, we have been recognized as one of the leaders in this area across Canada. So those are the kinds of things.

We are also making changes to the rural system. We have just had a number of tributes to the rural experiential model, something that is positive and keeping children in schools, and that is another indicator. We want to make sure that children don't have the high absenteeism that has happened in the past. These are very positive changes. The member opposite should have come with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and me to the REM in Watson Lake where students were very clear. This is something that —

Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Silver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If the minister wants to take me along to a trip, then he should give me a little more notice than a day beforehand to invite me.

To say that the results of the last several reviews that the Yukon Party has undertaken on our education have been mixed — that's an understatement. Yukoners are following with plenty of scepticism the latest plan from the Yukon Party. It is my view that education doesn't need another examination or masterplan reform; it needs to implement and assess the work that has already been done. We have gone through this four different times, and not once in those four attempts have we ever reached a stage to assess any of these plans — not the students, the plans. The government has said that an implementation plan will be released in June and that the government will be identifying educators to work with department staff on K to 12 curriculum changes.

Is the government now back to considering a full, made-in-Yukon, K to 12 curriculum rewrite or has this been scrapped in the new vision?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Speaker, once again the member opposite is obviously not listening to some of the things that have already transpired.

We are talking about multiple pathways to graduation. We are talking about things like experiential learning, which we have already implemented, thanks to two former ministers who are here with us today. Experiential learning, dual credit, rural experiential models — all of these things are helping students, especially in the rural communities, to improve not only their attendance at school, thereby improving their outputs — but also making school a much more exciting place to be for these students. That is part of what is very, very important to children. It is interesting — the member opposite referred to a new school here in Whitehorse, F.H. Collins Secondary School, as a “shiny project”, and, I guess, he would not even want to go ahead with that school and it's too bad that he doesn't really care about education — just about criticism here.

Question re: Sexual health promotion

Ms. Stick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yesterday afternoon, this government tabled the Yukon health status report for 2015. This report brings to light disturbingly high rates of sexually transmitted infections in the Yukon.

Rates of gonorrhoea in the territory increased fivefold from 2013 to 2014 and this outbreak has continued to escalate through 2015. The chlamydia rates in Yukon are much higher than in Canada as whole, actually occurring at two and a half times the national rate. Chlamydia causes serious permanent damage to a woman's reproductive system and can cause permanent infertility.

Madam Speaker, what action is this government taking to reduce the sexually transmitted infection rates in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the member opposite for her question.

Certainly I was looking forward to tabling the report here in the Legislative Assembly yesterday and I am pleased to see that members have taken the opportunity to peruse the document.

My department will be looking at the report from the chief medical officer of health in greater detail and

considering all of his recommendations carefully as we take our next steps. We appreciate the work that has gone into this report and I know that it will serve to increase awareness of the issues we face around many of the issues that he has outlined. I certainly would encourage everyone to have a look at this report, which is available on our Health and Social Services website.

Ms. Stick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Increased awareness is one thing, action is another. Five years ago, this government produced a report titled *Health and health-related behaviours among young people in Yukon*. The 2011 report clearly indicated a lack of effective sexual health education in the territory. Over 20 percent of students in grades 9 and 10 reported using no method of birth control the last time they had sexual intercourse. A 2015 report shows that the highest rates of chlamydia and gonorrhoea in the Yukon are among young people ages 15 to 24. This is outrageous. This government had the opportunity to take preventive action five years ago when this report was published. They did not and now our STI rates are rocketing.

Madam Speaker, what proactive steps is this government taking to teach young Yukon youth about safe sex —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, I thank the member opposite for her question.

Our Department of Health and Social Services, in partnership with the Department of Education and the Women's Directorate, have a number of sexual health campaigns, including free condoms. As discussed in the Assembly, the Department of Health and Social Services continues to work collaboratively with the Women's Directorate to provide appropriate and effective services for women's health in both rural and urban Yukon.

Madam Speaker, SHER is a comprehensive sexual health education resource for grades 4 to 7 designed by Yukon educators in the Health Promotion Unit within Health and Social Services. There are comprehensive sexual health education programs that are proven to reduce sexual abuse, sexual violence and gender-related discrimination.

Certainly the SHER resource differs from the Ontario curriculum in that it is specific to grades 4 to 7. We will continue down the path of providing these sexual health campaigns and we will work collaboratively between the departments.

Ms. Stick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The numbers tell a different story. The findings of the 2011 health study should have raised flags then that something more had to be done. The numbers continue to increase.

As a result of this government's inaction on the findings, we have youth as young as 15 reporting levels or being tested for chlamydia and gonorrhoea. Our rates are two and a half times the national average. That is huge. This is a big deal. It's not enough to encourage our youth to be tested. We need to take preventive action and educate them.

Madam Speaker, does this government have a proactive strategy to effectively reduce these high, sexually transmitted

infection rates in the Yukon? We're looking for measureable outcomes.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Despite what the member opposite believes, staff in this government takes the sexual health of our young people very seriously and we take our responsibility as one of the many partners involved in educating our young folks just as seriously. Sexually transmitted infections can have lifelong repercussions, as can teen pregnancy, and we're doing our part to give people the information to make a good choice.

We will continue down the path with the sexual health campaigns. We will continue to make those investments and we will continue to work collaboratively within the departments.

Question re: Dawson City Airport

Ms. Moorcroft: Madam Speaker, this government has been talking about paving the Dawson City runway, while ignoring the operational capacity of the airport and its inability to meet Transport Canada expectations. Transport Canada allows jet landings despite natural limitations because the Dawson City Airport is grandfathered under its regulations. Paving the runway will not change this.

Madam Speaker, can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell this house what, if any, guarantees he has from Transport Canada that paving the runway in its current location will be sufficient to allow full-capacity jet landings at the Dawson City Airport?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's important to note that for the past couple of seasons, Air North, Yukon's airline, has been transporting Holland America passengers via their 737 combi with a gravel kit from Fairbanks to the Dawson City Airport. I know that's a tremendous boon for the local tourism industry and the local hospitality industry and it's something that we have heard loud and clear from the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders in Dawson City, and it's important that it continues.

To that end, we have undertaken a number of actions over the past couple of years with respect to paving the Dawson runway. Of course, the approach path is something that is extremely important. I have mentioned a number of times on the floor during this Sitting that Transport Canada has provided us verbal assurances that the approach path is sufficient for jet service into Dawson. They have not provided us with written assurance — we are waiting for that. This came up with Minister Garneau, when I met with him in Ottawa in early February. It came up again when I met with the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce. It's my understanding at this time that Air North is working with Transport Canada on this issue. It has not been resolved yet, but when it is, we will be sure to let Yukoners and all interested stakeholders know.

Ms. Moorcroft: Yes, Madam Speaker, small jets with a gravel kit can land at the airport. Dawson City Airport is classified as an aerodrome, rather than a fully licensed airport because operable limitations do not provide the capacity to

handle larger aircraft. Even if it was a possibility, Transport Canada must approve the upgraded classification as an airport before any other jet service can be conducted at that location. They must approve the approach path. To date, Transport Canada is unwilling to land their own jets at the Dawson City Airport when they calibrate their equipment, so how far does a verbal assurance go?

Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Highways and Public Works confirm to this House that Transport Canada will only permit Dawson City Airport as an aerodrome because it does not have the capacity to handle larger jets?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Air North has been using 737 jets in there for the past two seasons. During the busy Christmas month this year, they also provided 737 service to Dawson and then on to Old Crow, I believe, for increased freight and baggage that needed to go there for the busy Christmas season.

Again, I've been very clear on this over the past couple of years with respect to paving the runway. There were a number of issues that we needed to look at. The price tag is approximately \$11 million for paving, as well as equipment that would need to be purchased and facilities to house that equipment. We're doing our due diligence. We have money in this year's budget to do a functional plan of the entire airport — not only the paving aspects and the equipment purchases required, but also to look at the overall airport operations and look to potentially design a new terminal building or other opportunities that exist in Dawson.

We recognize that the airport is as important to Dawson City as the Klondike Highway and the Top of the World Highway, so it's an important piece of transportation infrastructure that we don't take for granted. We'll continue to work with Air North, we'll continue to work with the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce, and we'll continue to work with Transport Canada toward paving the runway next year so the 737 jet service can continue to provide economic benefits to Dawson City.

Ms. Moorcroft: Madam Speaker, the minister has confirmed again that he does not know if larger jets would be able to land at Dawson City Airport, even if it was paved. The minister has also said that, until the functional planning process is complete, there will be no decision on whether or not to pave the runway.

The residents of Dawson are used to hearing Yukon Party pre-election promises that are forgotten once the election is over, just like the rec centre promised in 2011. Dawson residents deserve some clarity from the government.

One more time: Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works confirm that no actual decision will be made on paving the runway until the functional plan is completed and until this government has guarantees from Transport Canada that larger jets will be approved to land at Dawson airport?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think I have been very clear in my responses, not only here today but also in Highways and Public Works debate and when this issue has come up in previous Question Periods.

As I've mentioned, there have been a number of initiatives that we've undertaken over the past couple of years to determine whether or not it's viable to pave the Dawson City Airport runway. Of course, the functional planning will identify whether or not the permafrost on the runway has any significance.

Initial testing suggests that the permafrost will not be an issue for paving. Of course, the approach path is being discussed right now by Transport Canada and Air North, as I have mentioned before. We are not going to proceed with paving until the functional planning has finished. I have mentioned, as well, that we are in partnership with the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce on the functional planning. They did a business case analysis with the support of the Department of Economic Development for the business and did a cost estimate. We want to make sure that those costs are refined as well.

Madam Speaker, we are certainly doing our homework with respect to this issue so that we can make an informed decision on behalf of Yukoners and on behalf of Yukon taxpayers.

Madam Speaker, I am curious as to what size of jet the Member for Copperbelt South would like to see land at the Dawson City Airport. I have mentioned that the 737 has provided service. Perhaps she is thinking of a larger jet, but a 737 is sufficient for the passengers —

Speaker: Order, please. The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am going to invite all members to join me in welcoming a constituent of mine — a local business owner who went by the professional letters of chartered accountant, looking forward to changing that to Colin Young, CPA, in the near future. I would like to ask everybody to join me in welcoming him and, of course, his brother Chris Young as well.

Applause

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Speaker: We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon, in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to certain bills which have passed this House.

Commissioner Phillips enters the Chamber, announced by the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

Speaker: Mr. Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

Clerk: *Chartered Professional Accountants Act and Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Elias): Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*. Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Women's Directorate

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. It is my pleasure to present the Women's Directorate budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year. The work of this department — I cannot over-emphasize how important it is in its work to promote gender-equitable outcomes in government policy-making, legislation, program development and support other non-governmental organizations with the same goals.

The Women's Directorate has had an incredibly busy year, but a very productive one in many ways. It has blazed a trail and much of this year's budget will continue that momentum now that so many larger projects and initiatives are well on their way. Before I launch into the specifics within this year's budget, I want to share with members opposite and all members some of the highlights with respect to the Women's Directorate.

Part of the Women's Directorate's mandate is to provide funding support to groups and initiatives that enhance women's equality and security. Over the past number of years,

the Women's Directorate, through a transfer of funds, has supported numerous women's and equality-seeking organizations.

Over the past year, the Women's Directorate, through a transfer of funds, has supported the following: the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund provides funding of \$200,000 per year; the women's equality fund has funding of \$300,000 per year for women's organizations; and the women's community projects funding also provides \$10,000 per year for qualifying projects, with a gender-inclusive and diversity lens. Women's Directorate also provides funding for relevant positions and programs throughout the territory, including: the women's advocate position at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre; the women's legal advocate position at Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, a relatively new position; A Safe Place program, another new initiative that was introduced and that is being funded through the Women's Directorate, which is being provided by the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre; and it also includes dollars in support of the program coordination delivery at the Whitehorse affordable family-focused housing complex with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition.

With all of these programs, positions and transfer payments, the Women's Directorate contributes just shy of \$1 million to organizations working toward gender equality in the Yukon. This certainly has grown from where it was a number of years ago — when we first took office in 2002 — when transfer payments, I believe, were actually just shy of \$100,000.

In 2015-16, the Women's Directorate also had a full plate, so to speak, with internal projects — again, working throughout the Yukon government organization to promote and enhance equality and within the Government of Yukon and throughout the territory.

The Women's Directorate continues to co-lead the violence prevention steering committee, with a number of various departments, including Justice, Community Services, Health and Social Services, Education and the Public Service Commission. This group has been working on a number of important initiatives, including the development of training modules for staff, a domestic violence-in-the-workplace toolbox, and revisions to our communication style guide. Women's Directorate, together with the Department of Justice, also established and supported the implementation of a women's legal advocate three-year pilot project, which is now being run out of the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. Further to the theme of "Women in Justice", the Women's Directorate supports the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues and their annual forum. The latest one was the Women and Justice Forum, which was attended by well over 70 Yukon women last fall.

Of critical importance, the Women's Directorate with First Nation and municipal governments and women's organizations have been working together to address the critical issue of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. In consultation and collaboration with Yukon indigenous women's organizations, we went to work and we supported a

family gathering that was hosted last December. Following that family gathering, we then proceeded with co-hosting a Yukon regional roundtable on February 12, 2016.

The purpose of these two particular events was to ensure that Yukon families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls feel supported, their families honoured and their voices meaningfully integrated both at the territorial and the national levels.

The roundtable highlighted best practices and opportunities for collaborative initiatives to address gaps for families here in the territory. These two territorial initiatives helped us to provide a strong, northern perspective at the national roundtable in late February. Most recently, I wish to make reference to the new website: Shifting Territory — Indicators of Yukon Gender Equality. The website was created to provide qualitative and quantitative data that speaks to gender equality throughout the territory. The website was created to share data and stories from a wide range of areas, such as leadership and activism, violence and crime, childcare and parenting, and sports and physical activity.

Another important area of the Women's Directorate's mandate is to provide research and resources to enhance evidence-based decision-making on issues related to legal, social and economic equality for women. We feel that this website will certainly help us and those who work diligently throughout the organization to provide that information in a format that is readily accessible and is also easy to update, being web-based.

As a result of this work and our continued development of a gender inclusion and diversity action plan, a small delegation and I were invited by the Government of Canada to take part in the 60th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women as part of Canada's official delegation. It was at that time that we were invited to speak on behalf of Canada and to intervene on the topic of gender-data design, collection and analysis and on Yukon's innovative work on gender equality. It was an incredible opportunity for the Yukon, and it was a very meaningful experience to be highlighted as a leading jurisdiction in the country to undertake a data collection and sharing project of this format and magnitude. I am very honoured and very humbled to have taken part in this information exchange and to help highlight the great work that this department has done over the past year. We look forward to continuing that work in the year ahead.

Moving into this year's budget, I will begin where I left off, and that is with our continued support for the development of gender-inclusive diversity analysis within our policy, programming and legislation. As members will know, the Women's Directorate has been actively offering internal policy analysis services since the mid-1980s. We continue the development of a GIDA, which is the acronym for that action plan for 2015 moving forward into 2018, with the goal of strengthening the integration of gender-inclusive diversity analysis throughout the decision-making process in government. It will also be an important tool to address

potential gaps identified in the new gender equality indicators website.

The Women's Directorate is allocating just under \$35,000 to work toward this GIDA framework and to provide training to other employees within the Yukon government. This work has begun and is certainly well underway and will continue until the very end of this month.

I would like to take the opportunity to provide a further update on the violence prevention project, which I spoke about earlier. An intergovernmental working group has been leading a project to improve the ways we prevent violence against women and children. This group has been working together for almost two years and is using leading research to further the aim of changing attitudes and behaviours within government, as the largest employer in the Yukon.

The focus of this initiative is to create a cultural shift away from the acceptance of violence through our role as an employer, service provider and as an agent of social change. The working group has developed tools to respond more effectively to domestic violence and provide education and supports to staff and work units that are impacted by the effects of domestic violence.

In this regard, an additional \$20,000 for this initiative will be provided in this fiscal year for the completion and implementation of a number of deliverables, including a toolkit to help managers address domestic violence in the workplace, a style-guide insert for communicating about violence accurately and clearly and an online training module to introduce response-based practices to Government of Yukon professionals who work directly with clients.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society for the many years of work that Ann Maje Raider and her team have worked to implement response-based practices within their own organization and sharing that with the broader community at large. It is thanks to the work of the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues in highlighting this work with Dr. Allan Wade and the practices employed in research bylaws that we were able to take that information and be able to introduce that internally within the Yukon government, providing dignity to those individuals who are victims of this particular crime.

We are really fortunate to be able to be in a position to promote social change and I'm really proud that our government is leading this initiative, thanks to the leadership of a number of various women's organizations in our territory.

I also just want to elaborate a little bit more about our support for those organizations through the prevention of violence against aboriginal women's fund and through the women's equality fund and through the women's community projects fund and aboriginal women's initiatives. All these funds are supporting a variety of projects made by Yukoners, delivered by Yukoners, for Yukoners. We have budgeted enhancements for many of those, including an increase of \$8,000 for the legal advocacy services for women position; an increase of \$20,000 for a Safe Place project; an increase of \$9,000 for the Whitehorse affordable family housing program delivery coordination; and an increase of \$40,000 to the

Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre in large part to enhance the women's advocate salary, but also \$30,000 in support of public education campaigns — the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, along with Les EssentiElles, has really helped to co-lead a number of very progressive initiatives targeting violence against women and children over the years.

Finally, I also just wanted to say a couple of words on the ongoing work in support of the roundtable on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. As I mentioned previously, we have been working with First Nation governments, municipal governments and women's organizations and with our own government throughout the organization to address the critical issue of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. We know that this is a complex task, with violence against women in the territory at three times the national average and with the violence experienced by indigenous women even much higher than that. The work of our partners, our organizations, First Nation governments, police, municipalities and families, along with various departments within the Yukon government, led us to hosting the family gathering in December and the Regional Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls on February 12. As I mentioned earlier, this was really an historic event of its kind, with leadership represented by many territorial leaders around the table and by being able to hear first-hand experiences in terms of identifying the family needs, discussing and identifying system gaps and finding opportunities to work collaboratively side-by-side in terms of finding initiatives that are made here at home to address this serious issue.

A number of real successes of that event were obviously having everyone at the table listening first-hand to those voices of the families and making those commitments for further action coming out of the roundtable discussion.

Some of the commitments from that event include: the signing of a declaration to support the families to address the root cause of violence against indigenous women and to take collaborative action to address this important issue; holding another family gathering again in support of those families to keep the dialogue going, to promote healing and to learn from those closest to the issue; and also using the feedback received at the regional roundtable and from the family gathering that took place to draft a joint submission for the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We have, of course, been working to fulfill those commitments and we have also been working to fulfill the commitment of looking at all of the recommendations that have been made over the years and looking at where those gaps still reside.

In support of this ongoing work, we have budgeted an increase of \$150,000 for the aboriginal women's initiatives funding to support those aboriginal women's organizations in developing projects that respond to the recommendations made at the roundtable and to continue work on the recommendations coming out of the second Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summit that was held a number of years ago.

I'm confident that in fulfilling these commitments and by working side-by-side with our partners, we are heading in the

right direction. As long as we can keep up with the momentum we have created, I know that we can indeed make a difference in the lives of Yukon women.

With that, I will indeed just finish my remarks in order that members may proceed with further questions.

I would also like to welcome our director for the Women's Directorate, who has joined us in the Assembly here today, and to thank her and our team at the Women's Directorate for the very busy year they have dedicated themselves in support of these and many other initiatives that have been underway over the past year.

They have outdone themselves in terms of providing leadership and working with organizations and other governments from coast to coast to coast to address these many issues in support of furthering women's equality. I want to thank them for all that they do in a relatively smaller shop, but one that we appreciate — very effective at the jobs that they do, working throughout the government and finding those tools so we can make the work that we promote each and every day even more important and effective in the daily lives of Yukoners.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for her opening remarks. I too echo that I welcome the official to the House. It's a pleasure to have her back, as it has been every time that she visits us.

One of the big changes that happened within the Women's Directorate this year was the release of the Yukon gender-equality website. It was a long time in coming and it's great to see it's here. My first questions are about the website. The stated intention of this website is to promote gender equality and form public policy and highlight areas where further research is needed. If this website is meant to inform public policy, then the inclusion and the exclusion of certain statistical information are significant and telling.

Just before I dig in deeper, I would like to point out that it would be fantastic if there was a search function on this website because there is so much information, so that, for example, if I was looking for statistical information about women's access to abortion, I could just type in "abortion" to get there. I think that a search function on that website would be really helpful for people who are looking for specific information.

I would also like to point out that if I go to the Women's Directorate website, there is no clear prominent link to take us there. The first couple of times, the way I found the website was to go to the press release and then to click on the link from the press release, but it is not easily found on the drop-down menu in the Women's Directorate, so that would be fantastic to see.

Some of the concerns that I have about some of the information on the website — some of the actual information has been excluded from the website — so the first thing I find is that the site relies heavily on outdated data sources. We're taking stats from the 2006 StatsCan census, and then again from a 2011 national household survey. They're both referenced quite frequently. This isn't a criticism to the department, because I understand that the information might

not be available, but how regularly — now that we have the bones — will the data be updated?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to thank the member opposite for her questions. I guess I want to go back to this particular initiative. As the member opposite has alluded to, this is a really important, key trigger for us as an effective department within the organization. It is really fulfilling a key mandate of the Women's Directorate, and that is to conduct that research and to provide resources to further all of those important equality indicators of Yukon women.

I was just trying to think of a line that I saw on a Twitter feed not long ago about how the data information is key.

The very point of this is that we are only as effective as the information that we have readily available at our fingertips. What became readily apparent at the Women's Directorate — in putting this initiative forward that has taken the past couple of years to collect, we worked diligently and continue to work with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, and we worked with the national government — the member opposite alluded to a number of national reports. Even looking at our own organization here in all of the respective departments, we have provided over 141 indicators, covering the economy, the equality, empowerment, health, wellness, sports education — and the list goes on. We know that there are many other indicators out there, but we based our information on the information that was readily available by those departments.

I can say that the whole reason of going from a paper-based report to where we are now, with a web-based statistical guide — this website — is to provide that flexibility and to provide that opportunity to update that information as it becomes available. That work is actually underway right now. There was even a report on the Yukon health status report that was tabled yesterday by the Minister of Health and Social Services. Right away there is a reference to women and the status of their health, and that information, of course, will be collected through the Women's Directorate as well, and that will help inform the work going forward on our GIDA action plan, implementing the next steps forward to help further identify where those gaps exist within the departments. That is exactly what it is intended to be there for — to help inform the work of not only the Women's Directorate, but, really, the work within each of our departments. We cannot be everyone everywhere within our departments — that is not our role. Our role is to be able to illuminate the different issues, gaps or challenges that still exist, but also highlight the progress that we have been making on many different fronts. By being able to share that with the other departments, they will also look at this information — whether they are in policy or in communications, doing the day-to-day work within the Department of Health and Social Services, working with the Department of Education, Community Services, and the list goes on — to help showcase and to share with them how we can better understand where those gaps exist. This is really a work in progress.

We know that there are other gaps in information. We are readily available. One of the matters was that All Genders Yukon, for example, had written to us immediately after

having issued the news release and after having held an event to promote this website about the lack of data with respect to all genders. We readily identified that there are gaps in information and we have reached out to All Genders Yukon, for example, and have offered to sit down with them and to glean as much information as we can to be able to help build that into our website in terms of building the content — making that more robust.

The one interesting thing about this website that I want to draw to all members' attention is that, where there are gaps in terms of the quantitative data, the numbers and the actual detailed information, we have really built that in with timelines and stories — the qualitative data — to help build in that information to tell a more comprehensive and robust story about these different things. When one does go on to the website, they can see different storylines. Stephen Dunbar-Edge, for example, is showcased, as are Adeline Webber and Ann Maje-Raider. They are three who come readily to mind. Sally MacDonald is speaking to women on health. There are a number of different individuals who speak to that who can be readily made available online through e-mail, Facebook or Twitter and so forth. That information is readily downloaded. It's not meant to replace the need for that quantitative data, but really to build out that website to tell that information.

I do appreciate the amount of information that is available on the website and I certainly take the members' constructive input in terms of providing a search function on there as well — even playing more prominence on the website over the coming months. Now that we have a little bit more time to be able to focus on promoting this information to all, we will be able to get more information out the door as well through our service agencies, through the departments and throughout the organizations as well to be able to showcase that.

The interesting thing about this website is that, when I was in New York City speaking to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, it was very interesting to be surrounded by other countries and to hear their specific challenges. They were not unlike what we were experiencing as well. That is why there is such an interest — and even in Canada, I have raised this with the federal minister responsible for the Status of Women Canada on a number of occasions in person and on the telephone regarding the importance of having readily made information and the need to update that information and to make that applicable to provinces and territories as well.

The minister very much recognizes — the Status of Women recognizes — the need for this and is looking to us as an example in terms of one mechanism of making that information available and then to help direct those efforts in coming forward with this action plan and to implement it.

As we stated back at the end of March, we have convened an interdepartmental group of senior managers who will work with the Women's Directorate to help us develop and implement that GIDA, gender-inclusive diversity analysis action plan, which will use that information provided by the website to advance the work when developing government

programs and policies and so forth, throughout the organization.

There is a lot of work to be done, but I think it's a very progressive start. It provides a pretty good snapshot of the equality work over the past 30 years in the territory. We're looking to be creative, given our own unique circumstances north of 60, but also reflecting on the work of organizations and gleaning that from that information.

In terms of exclusion of data sources, we'll continue to work with our departments as reports become updated or as new reports become updated — focus on substance abuse. Women's Directorate has worked on this particular area over the years. We have contributed resources in terms of coming up with programs that are women-specific and providing that gender lens to the formation of our programs going forward.

It is very much a work in progress, but I just want to thank our officials within the Women's Directorate and to thank the many individuals who have helped contribute to the development of the website over the past couple of years. As I said, it's an interactive resource that can be updated and expanded as that information becomes available. In the meantime, we'll continue to build it out with an interactive timeline of history with interviews and sound stories of both men and women involved in equality work over the past 30 years. As I mentioned, we are very much open to working with organizations and groups like All Genders Yukon, to sit down and to help us to help further that information, but it also will require some steps going forward on the national front as well.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that and I do look forward to that search feature. It will be super helpful.

I appreciate that the minister mentioned being contacted by the founder of All Genders Yukon and appreciate what she said. With permission, I'm going to read the letter into the record right now because the minister and I both have read it and so has the official from the directorate. It's an important one because I think it's looking to expand not just the role of the Women's Directorate, but it's asking us to look at Yukon government departments in a different way. With that, I'm going to read the letter.

It says, "To the Honourable Elaine Taylor,

"Congratulations on your launch of the Gender Equality website. The Women's Directorate has an impressive history of ensuring the voices of women are represented within patriarchal systems.

"Upon hearing a radio report on a Gender Equality website I was very excited to hear the Yukon Government was promoting an interest in and acknowledgement of gender inequality in Yukon. My excitement turned to disappointment when I went on the website only to realize that the focus was not in fact on gender equality for all, but rather gender equality for cisgender women.

"My disappointment stemmed from a notice of the absence of gender non-conforming individuals. A population that is made invisible in all facets of society.

"I understand from the official YG website that 'The Women's Directorate is a government of Yukon Department

responsible for ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into all aspects of government policy-making, legislation and program development.’

“Transgender, agender, gender fluid, gender retired, two-spirited and many other individuals who do not subscribe to the gender binary system experience violence and systemic and/or individual discrimination at rates that are equally significant, if not more pervasive than those experienced by cisgender women.

“I do not wish to negate the significance of inequality faced by women. I am acutely aware of it from both an academic and lived experiences standpoint so I am not, nor would I ever deny the oppression faced by people who identify as women. I was appalled to read a recent study showing the pay inequality gap between men and women in Canada is double the international rate...

“I have researched the outline of the role of the women’s directorate and this only furthers my inquiries into how gender non-conforming voices remain invisible within an agency that is designed to empower them. I believe these voices could easily be included and represented moving forward.

“According to the website;

“The Women’s Directorate:

“works with other Yukon government departments to ensure policy-making, legislation and program development considers gender implications;”

“Do they consider the implications of all genders? Or only those within the gender binary system of male and female? Particularly as it pertains to policy-making and legislation, gender non-conforming individuals face significant barriers and lack of protections in almost all areas, from health to motor vehicles. Policy/legislative considerations can and should represent genders outside of the binary system.

“Offers a range of public education materials on women’s equality, health and violence prevention;

“Provides funding support to groups and initiatives that enhance women’s equality and security.’

“How is the Womens directorate defining ‘women.’ Based on biology? based on gender identity? Neither? Both? Other? How are individuals assigned female at birth who transition to male, or individuals assigned male at birth who transition to female included, welcomed and/or represented? What about gender fluid individuals, or agender folks? Is their biological sex the determining factor into whether they fit within the mandate of the Women’s Directorate? Are agencies and groups that support gender non-conforming individuals recognized and able to access the funding and supports available through the Women’s Directorate regardless of whether the community members they support were assigned female, male or intersex at birth?

“Transgender people face very high rates of violence and are overrepresented in populations such as those experiencing mental health illnesses, addictions, low income/unemployment. 43% of trans identified individuals attempt suicide according to PFLAG...

“How do we support this growing population within our community, knowing that this particular population experiences some of the highest suicide attempt rates of any population.

“Gender non-conforming individuals often fall within the scope of intersectionality and are members of multiple minority designations, only creating further barriers and increasing vulnerabilities. There is certainly a need for promotion of health and wellness in a population that faces so many barriers.

“In fact in Yukon we have not adopted the World Professional Association for Transgender Health standards of care as most other jurisdictions in Canada (and many across the globe have). As such gender non-conforming Yukoners face some pretty significant barriers in even accessing and obtaining health care that meets their needs. 43% suicide attempt rate and barriers in accessing the very services designed to provide relief, support and hope. This is a very dangerous combination. This is a deadly combination in our community.

“I reviewed some of the statistics available on the website and noted that gender non-conforming individuals would likely be represented in a statistically significant way in the following areas;

“Yukoners who have experienced discrimination because of sex,

“Yukoners who have experienced discrimination because of their sexual orientation

“Percent of Yukoners with a disability,

“Marriage rates,

“Gender of lone parent family leaders

“Visible minority population.

“Of particular interest would be to know statistics of trans and gender non-confirming individuals in the area of sense of belonging to local community. Belonging is something that gender non-confirming people can struggle with for the duration of their lives. I personally believe that feeling connections with others can profoundly impact gender non-conforming individuals in positive ways.

“I’m curious by the decision to call this website Gender Equality. From the content it would appear that a more appropriate name would have been ‘Gender Equality for Cisgender Women’ or ‘Womens Gender Equality.’ As the website does not in fact represent Gender Equality for all. It represents gender equality for women (and how a woman is defined remains unclear).

“My hope, and thus my reason for sending this is email to to invite the Womens Directorate to be an inclusive agency that truly does service, represent and make visible the needs of all gender minorities. That its continue to pursue gender equality for all, and therefore consciously makes space for and includes the voice of gender non-conforming individuals.”

Mr. Chair, it’s really important to know that the minister responded probably within hours of receiving this e-mail and then directed her official to meet with this individual, and that needs to be said here because it was so important.

The reason I read the letter in is because we know what it said and we know all the things that were highlighted, but I wanted to make sure that was put out into the broader public.

I appreciate that the minister was so quick in responding and so was the official.

Chair's statement

Chair: Order, please. I just wanted to remind members that if members during debate are going to be reading extensively from a document, it's only fair that all members have access to the document — just for future reference in debate for members to recognize that they should table the letter if they are reading extensively from a document so that all members can have access to it.

Ms. White: I can table that if that would make you happy. I would also point out that there have been things that have been read a lot more extensively than a five-page letter.

Cisgender is an important thing to mention here. There are expressions in that letter that go far beyond my level of comprehension, but I think that the term "cisgender" is important because that was referenced often.

That is the term for someone who has a gender identity that aligns with what they were assigned at birth. The term was created so we can understand that being born female and identifying female, which is what I do, makes me cisgender. The website is entirely cisgender in its focus, and it doesn't make it a source for gender equality resource, but more for a cisgender women's equality resource. I think that we need to expand these statistics to include gender diversity. For example, statistics on discrimination of "trans-asterisk" Yukoners — what they regularly face in accessing government services and employment are big gaps.

There is limited statistical information on sexual orientation, and I think that could also be expanded. The website gives us statistics on the number of Yukoners who have experienced discrimination because of their sexual orientation at four percent, but that doesn't tell us much because we do not know the percentage of Yukoners who identify as LGBTQ. What this website should tell us is the percentage of Yukoners who identify as LGBTQ who have experienced discrimination based on sexual orientation. Then I believe that number would be significantly higher than four percent and would tell us a lot more about equality or lack of equality in the territory. In the meeting that this individual had with the department, there was a conversation about the consideration of adding video/audio stories to the website. Has that been investigated further? Does it look like it might be going ahead?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I was alluding to earlier — and I do appreciate the member opposite acknowledging that we did issue a response — we have since followed up with the individual who the member opposite referred to earlier because this is important. It is an information gap that we readily recognize. As I referenced earlier, we very much acknowledge that there is an absence of information on the website pertaining to gender non-conforming individuals. As

per my response to the individual, I very much appreciated hearing those comments about that gap in data and recognize how important those suggestions are and continue to be and how we are very readily open and available to meeting. In fact, a meeting did take place, as I understand it, about a week ago with the Women's Directorate.

I understand that it was a good meeting. It was a good start and I think what we are looking for is some direction from All Genders Yukon in terms of what is important. Really, it is an information exchange for us as well, because, like the member opposite, I too could be more educated on this particularly important topic.

This is an opportunity for us through the Women's Directorate in terms of building up that website in terms of how can we make the storylines more available. I think one of the areas that I referenced earlier was building out the timeline — as the member opposite referred to — talking about individual stories, being able to share that information through having oral stories online and building up that information on our timeline as well. Again, referencing that it is, in fact, an interactive website, we are able to update that, so the whole purpose of having that one-on-one meeting with the individual was to be able to help introduce us to some of the challenges that are out there with the lack of information.

I also want to just put on the record how I am very much aware of the many aspects of discrimination that are faced on a daily basis and the violence faced by trans, or non-conforming people, and we recognize the need to do more work in this area. Being able to do that more robust work is by actually having those conversations, so it was good to hear directly from the organization and from this individual and to hear suggestions as to how we can build out that website as well.

As I mentioned, the website in its current form is a starting point. We certainly appreciate the opportunity to work with all genders of the Yukon to improve the site and to find more ways to fully include gender-fluid identities as well.

I do want to put on the record, though, that when this did come to my attention by way of the letter that the member opposite read into the record — it is a challenge that was faced throughout the creation of this website. I do want to acknowledge that the Women's Directorate, when building out the website and looking to develop it, did come across a number of challenges. They did actively search out the data on transgendered and other-gendered or fluid individuals and, according to the directorate, there was very little information. There was also very little information on the national level as well. We know that while those attempts were not as successful as we had hoped, we also recognize the need for this important work to take place.

Again, I want to thank the member opposite for raising this and to the Women's Directorate for having that opportunity to sit down as well. We recognize that it is going to be a work in progress for some time, but, again, it is a good start. I think by having these conversations, it helps inform us as policy-makers as to where we need to go as well. I'll just leave that there.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To echo the minister's last point, which is that when the directorate looked for the information, it just didn't exist, and I think that just really goes to the point that the author made, which is that this part of our population is all but invisible.

If you have any kind of conversation with anyone who is homeless or living in poverty or anything like this, people just say they want to be seen. It's not that we're going to solve the problem per se, but they just want to be counted. I recognize that the minister and the directorate acknowledge that it's been hard to find the information and I know just based on that last statement that we're going to try as best we can to find it. Hopefully with the long-form census in 2016, we will have a better poll than we've had in recent years.

I appreciate that the website is online and that means it's available anywhere and that makes it a lot more valuable because the data is so accessible, but when I compare it to "counting us in," the document from 1999, there are some things that are absent. Some of them that I think could be more expanded would be including health statistics — for example, access to birth control and access to a woman's choice of birth control, and the access and availability of abortions. Included in the 1999 "counting us in" document, we had births by age of mother, the percentage of births by age of mother and location, number of annual births and abortions, percentage of abortions by age of mother, teenage pregnancy rate, birth rate and abortion rate. I think those are incredibly important when we talk about the health of women. Also excluded were First Nation, Métis and Inuit statistics. So in 1999, in the "counting us in" document, we had a breakdown of labour force participation, rate by sex and ethnicity, aboriginal versus non-aboriginal for women and men, and unemployment rate by sex and ethnicity.

Sorry, Hansard, I apologize and I thank the Chair for trying to get me back on track.

The unemployment rate between aboriginal and non-aboriginal women and men, the aboriginal employment income by sex for aboriginal and non-aboriginal women and men, and the proportion of female representation in First Nation governments — those were all things that were not included in the website and that I think that could be expanded on. They were included in the 1999 "counting us in" document. I just think that the more information we have, the better it is to help form the decisions we make as policy-makers within this department and within others. That is more of a statement than anything else.

I have some questions about pay equity that was included in the Yukon gender equality website. In 2011, the median income for lone-parent families, led by women, was over \$20,000 less than that of lone-parent families led by men. In 2011, the average income for Yukon women was \$44,731 and \$56, 642 for men. In 2011, women accounted for only 31 percent of those persons in Yukon with an annual income over \$100,000. In sales and service occupations in Yukon, women earned 85 percent of men's wages. In 2014, women in regular full-time positions in Government of Yukon earned 94 percent of the average salary of men.

So why aren't equal pay or gender-based economic equality goals in the economic development strategic plan for 2012-2017? Will the Women's Directorate work with Economic Development in the future to include gender considerations within that planning process?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to thank the member opposite. Going back — in terms of extrapolating information and making information available, we relied very heavily on what information was available or was actually being made available by each of our departments throughout the organization. That included the Department of Health and Social Services, Education and all the departments.

In terms of working to extrapolate — and I know the member opposite did raise this during the opposition briefing in April, I guess it was, about information that the member opposite felt was missing. Like I said, we recognize that there are statistics that may either not exist or may be a challenge in bringing forward because of numbers or a sensitivity about personal information. The point is that we also recognize, again, that to help build and inform that action plan and build out some of those gaps, we need that information. I point to the work of the interdepartmental working group in having senior-level officials, primarily assistant deputy ministers, at the table to help us go over the information that does exist, point out some of the gaps that still exist and how we can better reflect that within the website. That does remain work in progress.

I appreciate the member opposite's comments and we'll review Hansard as well in terms of building out further information as we go forward.

In terms of the pay equity matter, this is an interesting topic that was raised when we were in New York at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women meetings.

We had the opportunity to actually present at the permanent mission for Canada. We actually had about an hour to provide a presentation on the website, but also what to do with all this information informing the gender-inclusive diversity analysis and the action and implementation plan going forward. It was a very interesting discussion and exchange with other women around the country — and elsewhere beyond the country as well — in terms of fielding questions primarily on pay equity and how we get our information.

I guess in terms of looking at where we are — I have a lot of information on this topic and I'm not going to speak to it, although I can certainly speak to it — but when we honed in on the pay equity matter, there was a lot of emphasis on the hourly wage rate. When you look at that and when you look at its representation on the website, we've actually worked to narrow that gap faster than any other place in the country, but that said — and it was also just brought up in New York and continues to be brought up as well — when you look at the annual income of a woman as well compared to others, we recognize that there are those gaps. There are challenges and there are reasons for that. Those reasons can be complex and very challenging to define, ranging from women being

primary caregiver at home for example and loss of income in that regard or — there are a whole host of reasons behind that.

Again, going back to that dialogue, what I can say is that, in terms of our work just even with the Yukon government, we have certainly been working. I know that the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission alluded to that work in Question Period not long ago. Women made up 54 percent of managers within the Yukon government in 2014. That same year, women in full-time positions earned 94 percent of the average salary of men in full-time positions. I certainly recognize that is not 100 percent, as the member opposite referred to, but it's certainly very close. It's much closer than many other jurisdictions, not only in the country but worldwide. Again, it is a work in progress as well.

I can say that there have been a lot of positive changes and one just has to look at the website again since 2000 when it comes to the labour force. A number of changes were supported by initiatives, such as the government-wide action plan for women, which affirmed Yukon government's commitment to ensuring fairness, equality and access to employment in training, development and promotional opportunities within the public service. As I had mentioned, part of our role through the Women's Directorate has really been providing that research, providing that information-gleaning and making that available to departments and agencies throughout the organization with the goal of advancing equality, and also to ensure that we consider those important issues that also contribute to inequality for women, such as pay equity issues.

As I referenced, while women make up roughly half of the territory's labour force, they also comprise almost two-thirds of Yukon government workers. In fact, in 2014, 64 percent of Government of Yukon workers were women. As I mentioned, there has been an increase in the percentage of women holding management positions across the organization, from 40 percent in 2000 to 53 percent in 2014. A notable increase was also made in the percentage of women holding jobs at the 16 to 22 level; from 51 percent again back in 2000 to about 62 percent in 2014.

Additionally, there has also been a decrease in the percentage of women in auxiliary-on-call positions in health services, home support and social work positions since 2000, from 90 percent down to 77 percent. Again, recognizing that we have been working to narrow that gap between women and men on the average annual salaries, but we are also recognizing that, in comparison to the rest of the country and the rest of the world, we are doing our part, but there is always going to be more that can be done here.

In terms of data reflecting changes in the labour force statistics in the territory, Yukon women earned about 100 percent of men's hourly wages, as I referenced earlier, last year, compared to 84 percent in 1997. In Canada, women — interesting to note — earned about 86 percent of men's hourly wages in 2015 compared to 84 percent in 1997. It is true that, in regard to hourly wage rates, as I said at the very onset, we have narrowed that gap at a much faster rate in the Yukon

than the rest of the country. We also recognize that there are ongoing challenges as well.

The member opposite referred to female-led, lone-parent families, median income — I believe she referenced that earlier — compared to that of male-led, lone-parent families. Again, not unbeknownst to other jurisdictions in the country, there are also occupational gender imbalances as well. The tendency is for men and women to be concentrated in certain industries, women to be concentrated in other industries and occupations is still very much visible, with women remaining concentrated in the fields of education, health care and public administration.

There is a whole host of different reasons here and I have a lot of information to share here, but, going forward, this is an area that we will work on with the Department of Economic Development, the Public Service Commission and our respective departments in gleaning the information that has been showcased within the website, looking at those challenges and those gaps in data and being able to build that out forward and illuminate even further where we need to go as well.

I could certainly go on and on about this matter, but I would just like to thank the member opposite for her questions in that regard.

Ms. White: Pay equity for Government of Yukon employees is included in the Yukon *Human Rights Act* under section 15, but the same can't be said for employees within the private sector. Under the Yukon *Human Rights Act*, section 15, equal pay for equal work obligations are restricted only to government employees and not to the private sector.

Does the minister have any interest or appetite to have that conversation with the private sector on expanding all those rights to women in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As the member opposite pointed out, absolutely we have the *Human Rights Act*, section 15(1) that the member opposite referenced. We certainly have obligations there in terms of the Yukon government. Again, just to reiterate what my colleague from the Public Service Commission had stated as well — support, adhere, work to promote the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in the public service. Likewise, we also have in place the Yukon *Employment Standards Act*. For example, part 7 requires that men and women receive equal pay when they perform similar work for an employer in the same establishment under those similar working conditions where the performance requires similar skill, effort, and responsibility.

Wage discrimination is prohibited, as the member opposite referred to in section 15 of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*. Between those two primary statutes, and with respect to the employment equity policy, which was brought in a number of years ago, ensuring that we have fair access to employment opportunities in order to create that representative public service that reflects who we are as a territory and the diversity within our territory as we know it today.

In addition to that policy, we also have a job classification system within the Yukon government that ensures that jobs determined to be of equal value — whether it is through skill,

effort, responsibility or working conditions — support pay equity principles as well.

There are a number of statutes that we do have in place. There are also a number of policies that we have in place within the Yukon government that apply to the government organization itself, but also applies — such as the *Employment Standards Act* — outside of the Government of Yukon.

Ms. White: In conversation with women's groups — understanding that inflation is something that affects all organizations, so the cost of doing business or maintaining space goes up — it would be fantastic at some point to see an increase in core funding for women's groups, especially for the First Nation women's groups. I'll just put that out there.

One thing that has also been mentioned to me was a way to make the directorate more inclusive — the thought that, instead of being called the “women's” directorate, it could look like what is happening internationally, which is the gender equality directorate. Has the minister had any time to think about expanding the inclusiveness of the Women's Directorate?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to thank the member opposite. As we look to the national and international fronts, there's a lot of transitioning; there's a lot of movement on this particular front. As the Minister of Justice has alluded to, we recognize that the diversity in our territory — the diversity in our country and around the globe — is changing, but is becoming more apparent and more readily existent and highlighted. So we need to recognize and acknowledge that.

With respect to changing the name, at this particular time, no, there hasn't been any consideration, but that's not to say it would not be a consideration. What I can say is that we have been quite busy over the past year, so to speak, on working on many numerous files. I also want to make very clear that it is a priority to be inclusive and to be representative of those we were elected to represent.

It's something that we'll be looking at, going forward, as we have these ongoing discussions with all All Genders Yukon, for example, and looking to the national front — the bill that was tabled by the Government of Canada — looking at all these different examples and seeing how things are shifting. As the member opposite is aware, we have annual meetings with our federal, provincial and territorial counterparts. To be sure, this is an issue that will continue to receive recognition on many different fronts.

I always like to point out that, back on April 1, 2003, we were really pleased to be able to fully restore the Women's Directorate to its previous status — prior to the renewal initiative that was undertaken by the previous Liberal government. What that means is that the director of the Women's Directorate reports directly to me, as a Cabinet minister, on all program matters and has the financial responsibility for the directorate. The director of the Women's Directorate also has delegated authority in accordance with the *Public Service Act* to administer those personnel matters as well.

I just wanted to reference that because we do regard the Women's Directorate as integral in all that we do and

instrumental in the work that we do throughout the organization — and to continue to ensure that they remain prominent. We have been working hard over the past number of years.

I remember back to 2003 — I was not the minister responsible at that time. It was actually the Premier who was the minister responsible and had this particular portfolio and really elevated that status of the directorate at that time by being able to speak to the issues of importance at the national tables. Making this move — in terms of restoring it to its previous status, to what it was before renewal — was very important, very symbolic and very effective for us. It has been a model that has worked really well and we continue to support this directorate in its current form.

We've also been able to build out resources being made available to the Women's Directorate. The member opposite referenced the financial support in support of organizations. As I referenced — I know we've had this discussion before on the floor of the Assembly — we have been working hard. With the resources made available to the Yukon government, we've been able to grow the directorate. Over the years, we've placed a really graded, added emphasis to supporting organizations and the very important and creative work that they do, day in and day out, in terms of providing research and providing on-the-ground services.

I referenced earlier today in the budget remarks at the opening about new programs like the women's legal advocate, which is a new position that was recommended by the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues. It was one of the remaining recommendations that came out of the *Sharing Common Ground* report back in 2011. It's a three-year pilot; we're into the second year. Through an RFP, the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre is the successful recipient and the proponent behind this. It's but one example.

Another example is the support that we provide to the family-focused housing initiative in Riverdale, providing programming support to single-parent families within that area by being able to expand the degree of programming made available — again, enhancing supports made available through Yukon Housing Corporation but really by providing a very defined function.

The Anti-Poverty Coalition is working with a whole host of — through their network — organizations to help provide that support available to tenants based on their needs identified through a survey, and also in terms of looking to A Safe Place. It's a new program. The Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre has been able to fill a gap in providing those supports to more marginalized women in a very creative way, in a very non-intrusive way and in a very non-barrier manner as well, which has been very critical in meeting those particular needs that weren't being met before.

This year's budget that we're currently debating does provide increased resources to the women's advocate in recognition of the important work that they do on behalf of women throughout the territory and also in support of their ongoing work to raise awareness about violence against women and girls in our territory by supporting them with a

\$40,000 increase that will certainly support the efforts of many different organizations throughout the territory.

We've been able to provide ongoing support through the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund, the women's equality fund and also the aboriginal initiatives fund. There are three different mechanisms. We have made a commitment to those primary organizations to come together in the course of the following months that remain within the fiscal year to really streamline the resources being made available to aboriginal women's organizations and being more flexible, being more responsive to the work that they're doing.

I can't say enough about Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, for example — the response-based practices, language and the work that they have been working on for many years and how that has now expanded to the Government of Yukon in terms of the Together for Justice initiative — that LAWS had really brought into effect with the RCMP detachment in Watson Lake and how that has now been expanded to the rest of the territory through those other women's organizations that have taken leadership and have expanded that working with the M Division of the RCMP as well. It's an example of how an organization can really lead and can really make some systemic changes for the betterment of all women and all individuals who live in the Yukon.

We are working to fulfill a number of recommendations and priorities identified by aboriginal women's organizations, primarily — as I mentioned — LAWS and the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle and the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council as well. There are other groups that we have been supporting — the Women of Wisdom through Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. We have been working to support that particular group and we're looking at ways of streamlining those funding sources to be more nimble, but more responsive and more effective to assist those projects that have continued to be delivered and built out to support women across the territory. We made that commitment in the year ahead of us, to work with those organizations.

When I look at 2002 when our government was first elected for the first term, I think there were only a couple of organizations that were supported, and those were the Yukon Status of Women Council and the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre. That was about \$70,000 or \$75,000 in total for organizations. Today we have transfer payments going out to those organizations just shy of \$1 million. So we have been building out those resources. Trust me — I know that there is always more that we can do.

I want to acknowledge how important the work is that those organizations do, and how we work with Justice in being able to acknowledge some of these unique initiatives, and being able to work with other departments to support that work through A Safe Place, for example, and the women's legal advocate. Thank you to the Minister of Justice and the Justice department for coming through on a couple of these different fronts. We need to do more of that, working with our departments, and sharing the information and the advocacy work that these organizations do, by being able to show

successes of what is working by having those departments support different initiatives being provided.

We recognize that there's always more work to be done, but we have been working by providing three-year agreements, but also our commitment to working with organizations to see how we can be more flexible and more responsive to some of their ongoing needs and priorities — and also the Government of Canada. I have to say that.

In years past, the Status of Women Canada, under the previous government, eliminated the whole need for advocacy work, for example. That's something our government identified as an important function of those organizations. We did not remove that. We also recognize, through the Status of Women Canada, that there appears to be more of a profile in this particular area with the new government. I've had many discussions with the current minister responsible for Status of Women Canada on how we can really support some of these unique initiatives that are being brought about by these organizations, and how we can partner with the Status of Women Canada — so how they can utilize our funding and leverage other funds from the Status of Women Canada, whereas, perhaps in years past, they haven't.

There are many different practices and many different programs that we feel have a role for the Government of Canada as well.

I'll leave it at that and again, thank the member opposite.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate?

Hearing none, we'll move to line-by-line debate.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women's Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11, Women's Directorate, cleared or carried

Chair: Ms. White has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women's Directorate, cleared or carried, as required. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: There is unanimous consent.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,938,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$3,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,941,000 agreed to

Women's Directorate agreed to

Chair: Do members now wish to have a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Department of Health and Social Services — continued

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I would like to take the opportunity to welcome officials from the Department of Health and Social Services: Peter Hayes, who is the director of finance; and, Bruce McLennan, who is the deputy minister of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Chair, additional information and responses to questions that were raised by the member opposite during Committee of the Whole debate a couple of weeks ago — currently, there are no children on a wait-list for adoption. Pertaining to Child Placement Services, as I noted earlier, just a couple of weeks ago, the number of children in various types of care varies from day to day.

The following are the current number of children in the care of Child Placement Services: there are 30 youth in residential youth treatment; there are 27 in temporary care in Whitehorse; no children are in temporary care in communities; there are 67 children in continuous care in Whitehorse; 20 children in continuous care in communities; there are 61 children in foster care in Whitehorse; 22 children in foster care in communities; and there are 3 youth in out-of-territory placements.

Pertaining to Child Care Services, the member opposite requested information regarding an appeal process for childcare subsidies. Under the Yukon *Child Care Act*, if the director refuses a grant subsidy, the applicant may appeal the decision to the Yukon Child Care Board. Child Care Services unit staff is available to talk with subsidy clients to answer questions regarding subsidy eligibility and how income testing is completed. If a subsidy client has a concern regarding how their subsidy application was processed, they can request a review by the financial supervisor, then the unit supervisor and then the unit manager.

Pertaining to questions around alcohol and drug services, in 2015-16, 66 people were accepted for the 28-day inpatient program and the program was successfully completed by 53 participants. Pregnant women are admitted immediately to detox and if a bed is not available, there is a protocol for priority access to admission to address this, and locate a bed for the individual. In 2015-16, the detox had two pregnant clients and both were admitted immediately. I can confirm that the current wait time is nine to 12 months, as the department is in the process of moving to a new program delivery; however, additional counsellors will begin offering services in the new building and this should help address the current wait time.

Yukoners sometimes need access to mental health or addiction treatment that is offered outside of the territory. The following numbers include Yukoners who accessed such

services while already outside of the territory, as well as those who travelled from the Yukon to access treatment Outside. In 2015-16, 55 Yukoners accessed inpatient or outpatient mental health and/or addiction services out of the territory. Of those 55 people, nine were under the age of 19. The 55 people made a total of 60 visits to access mental health and/or addiction services outside of the territory. Of the 60 visits, 58 were for inpatient treatment while two were for outpatient treatment.

The member opposite asked questions about income support; as requested by the member, I can now provide a breakdown of the average monthly caseload for income support.

The following breakdown includes both Whitehorse and Regional Services clients. In 2015-16, income support had an average monthly caseload of 819 paid cases. Of the 819 paid cases, 631 were single people, 29 were couples, 131 were single-parent families, and 28 were two-parent families. The number of children within these single and two-parent families was 289 in 2015-16. Of the 289 children, 232 were in single-parent families and 56 were in two-parent families. In 2015-16, there was a monthly average of 18 people, aged 65 and older, receiving income support.

With respect to the member opposite's question pertaining to services for people with disabilities, I am also able to provide the number of individuals obtaining services for people with disabilities who receive income support. In 2015-16, the monthly average number of services for individuals with disabilities was 144. Of these, 60 were receiving income support. These numbers change on a regular basis. In fact, as of this week, there are 156 individuals receiving services for people with disabilities, and 63 of these individuals receive income support.

The FASD diagnostic clinic completed three diagnoses in 2015-16, and 12 assessments are in progress. In 2016-17, we anticipate that 10 diagnoses will be completed.

Mr. Chair, I see that my time is just about complete, but prior to the member opposite taking the floor, I want to extend my sincere appreciation to all the staff in the Department of Health and Social Services for a job well done.

Ms. Stick: I just want to go back on a few things that I had asked previously and that the minister had given us information on. One had to do with the new contract for a psychiatrist at the hospital. What I was looking for was a bit of clarification about whether this is full time. I understand that this contract for the new psychiatrist working out of the hospital is a psychiatrist who is already here in the Yukon and has a private practice. I am looking for what the hours are going to be for this individual. If they already have a full-time practice in Whitehorse, how much more are they going to be able to do at the hospital?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for the question. We were certainly very delighted when the Hospital Corporation and the department were able to reach a new agreement with the psychiatrist. It was the psychiatrist who had previously been providing services in the hospital and then took some time away from the hospital for his own reasons. We're certainly glad that he is back.

It's my understanding that the psychiatrist will provide four hours of hospital care per day. On top of that, if there is an emergent situation, there would probably be an opportunity for him to return to the hospital to address those situations.

It is also my understanding that the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the department are working collaboratively together to try to recruit an additional psychiatrist to provide some more services at the hospital.

Ms. Stick: I'm going to move on. I've had correspondence from one or two constituents in the Yukon and it has to do with the Weight Wise program. I know I've asked about this in previous years. 2014 might have been the last time we looked at the Weight Wise program. The cost of the program was over \$1 million for space, psychologist, nurses, physicians, respiratory therapists. This is a program that's helping those individuals who are struggling with obesity, looking at possible surgery. It's more than just a nutrition program, but it's counselling, diet, exercise — all those.

My understanding is that the wait-list is now over two years for individuals. People are feeling very frustrated and not supported, trying their best but not getting ahead. I'm wondering if the department is looking at ways of reducing this, possibly looking at programs Outside. At one time, Alberta was where many of these individuals went.

Right now with this wait-list, these people are not getting the service they need and it's impacting their health and the long-term health care costs of these individuals.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for bringing this to the floor of the Legislature. I'm going to have to commit to getting back to her on the future of the program. I do know there is a wait-list for this program. It's something that people find very useful and we're appreciative of that.

For me, as Minister of Health and Social Services and as someone who takes part in active living, I recognize the health benefits to active living and to maintaining a healthy lifestyle with nutrition.

I am going to have to get back to the member opposite with some more detailed information on that program, either later this afternoon or at a later date. I will commit, if not today, to provide a response to the member opposite in writing.

Ms. Stick: I would like to move on to dental health. We're all aware of the impacts of poor dental health of children and how it can have lifelong impacts in terms of heart health, self-esteem, and those types of things. We've talked about this previously and that the number of dental therapists is decreasing because the program is no longer available in Canada.

In looking at the numbers that are provided in the budget document, it looks as though there's a drop in the number of children who are actually enrolled in the dental program from 2014-15. It's down for Whitehorse and rural areas. I will roll a couple of questions into this — this is on page 13-33 in the budget book.

The other one is the visits to rural communities. We all know that none of the communities have a full-time dentist

and that dentists, dental therapists or dental hygienists have to travel to the communities to provide these services. Again, it seems like the number of trips are going down, whether it's for children or adults, and in particular in the rural communities. Last year the forecast for 2015-16 for adults was 80, and it is going down to 48 for this year. The numbers seem to be going down for dentists' visits to the communities. I am curious about this and how this will be addressed. Not everybody can come to Whitehorse for dental care. Not everyone can afford dental care. It's a costly thing, and if you don't have private health insurance, then it costs lots of money and people therefore don't have proper care of their teeth, which can lead to health problems. I am looking for some explanations of why the numbers are dropping and why the visits to communities are dropping. How are we going to address this, especially in terms of children's dental health?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question. As the member opposite will know, the children's dental health program is operated through the Department of Education. We certainly recognize the good work in all Yukon schools with that program, so I can't really comment on if there is a decrease in children's dental visits through the program via Education.

What I can comment on are dental services around the territory. It is my understanding that there was either a request for proposals being prepared, or it has already gone out, to provide dental services throughout the territory. I believe, and the department believes, that, once that RFP has been awarded, it will fit and fill some gaps within the territory. I commend the work, especially in rural Yukon, of the dental therapists. They have a slightly expanded scope, I believe, from within Whitehorse. Whether it is working in the schools or working with a travelling dentist, their work is very much appreciated.

Ms. Stick: I am a bit confused by that because dental health is under Community Health, and it describes it as being: "Dental Health is responsible for the Yukon Children's Dental Program..." I understand that it is provided through the schools and that it is actually located in the schools — dental rooms — but this is under Health and Social Services: "a Preschool Dental Program and an Itinerant Dental Program"... and the Yukon Children's Dental Program. They are all listed in the budget under Health and Social Services.

Again, he talks about the itinerant dental program as an access to service where dental health reimburses dentists in private practice for travel and accommodation, and generally focuses on adult dental services and covers a community where there is no resident dentist, so we know that in most communities that is the situation. We're seeing these numbers go down, so 80 is being forecast for 2015-16 for adults receiving dental care in rural Yukon. This year, we're estimating 48. That's quite a drop — just about half the number. I was looking for an explanation for that.

I guess the other thing would be that these dental therapists and dental hygienists et cetera used to do a lot of work in presentation in health fairs, not just in Whitehorse and not just for preschoolers, but around the Yukon. Back in 2010-

11, a lot of these numbers were a lot higher, but they've decreased. Even this year, we're only looking at four presentations. I assume those presentations would be to families — to young parents, parents of toddlers — to instruct them and teach them to teach their kids how to brush their teeth — an important skill that we need to carry all through life. I understand that those programs happen in the schools, but it's here under Health Services and under community health and dental health.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: When it comes to dental services in rural communities, certainly there is a lot at play, one being the interest in Whitehorse dentists to travel out to rural Yukon — and that may be one piece at play here. But also there is the possibility that individuals in rural Yukon are choosing to come into Whitehorse for dental services.

I will commit to the member to look into that more in-depth and report back to the member, but it is my understanding that the member may be talking about a former federally funded program to teach teeth-brushing in daycares, but there have been a number of references from children's care to adult care.

I will look at the Blues and report back to the member opposite.

Ms. Stick: I thank the minister for that. I really truly believe that dental health is very important in terms of long-term health for all individuals in the Yukon and we need to be looking at this, especially for children.

I just read a statistic recently — I can't even remember where it was — but it talked about how one of the major surgeries now for young preschool children is actually dental surgery and it has to do with the poor condition of their teeth. To me that's just quite surprising.

I want to move on to something that we talked about earlier in the House this week and that's the Canada child benefit. Now, the Canada child benefit comes into effect July 1 and it is a combination of other benefits that have been rolled into one by the federal government — July 1 it comes into effect. The amount is income-tested. It is tax free and the federal government has encouraged provinces and territories to not claw this amount back from recipients of social assistance.

The minister suggested that there is a year for the provincial and territorial governments to decide, but I think as a family — well, the whole point of the Canada child benefit was to raise families and children out of poverty; to put more money in their pockets; to increase their food security; and to put healthier food on the family table. What I'm looking at is that we know that it starts July 1 and I think that families and the member mentioned the numbers and that there are 131 single parents with children on social assistance and 29 couples on social assistance with children, so we're talking 289 children right now in the communities and in Whitehorse who receive social assistance. I was just reading a report today that pointed out that 17 percent of Yukon households experience food insecurity and it is households that rely most on government that are most likely to not have enough food at home. That came from a document that was shared by one of

my colleagues in the house here, entitled *Is Nutrition North Canada on Shifting Ground?*"

What it talks about is that families on social assistance do not have adequate money for healthy food. Families on social assistance often rely on the food bank to supplement their food and we have those statistics from the Whitehorse Food Bank. I think, if I was a single parent with children and having to rely on social assistance, for whatever reason, I would want to know: When that first cheque comes for me and for my children on July 1, will I be able to use that money to go out and buy healthy food for my family? Or will that money be considered income and clawed back?

In six weeks, on July 1, this government has an opportunity to start reducing child poverty in the Yukon. We know there are 289 children on our system of social assistance — that does not include Indigenous Affairs or First Nations and those children — but we can start doing something in six weeks to reduce child poverty, to put healthy food on tables, to raise children and families out of poverty. They can rely less on food banks and have access to healthier food.

I am curious to know if, on July 1, when that family receives that cheque or a single parent receives that cheque, will they be able to use that money and keep it for their family?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question. We are aware that the federal government is introducing new anti-poverty initiatives, including the childcare benefit. We are taking a closer look at the childcare benefit to assess the potential impact on Yukon Health and Social Services support programs. The federal government has provided a one-year transition period to allow for provinces and territories to amend our necessary legislation and regulations and programs to align with that new CCB benefit program.

We will continue to work collaboratively with the federal government to help ensure that there is a smooth and positive transition to the CCB that will result in strengthened systems of support for families with children across the territory.

I can also report that the department is drafting an options paper for government to take a look at, but I do not have a timeline as to when that options paper will be before us. The department will, as I indicated, continue the collaboration with the federal government, and I am looking forward to seeing the options paper brought forward by the department.

Ms. Stick: That is great for the department, Mr. Chair, but it is not great for the families. In six weeks, they are going to get a cheque in the mail and they are going to have to declare it as income on their social assistance.

Families need to know: are they going to be able — well, from what I understand, that will be the status quo, which is that it will be declared as income and that money, or most of it, will be taken away from those families. It's not what the point of this Canada child benefit — not Canada childcare benefit, but Canada child benefit — is for. It is to help families to close the gap and to put healthy food on tables. Social assistance rates now do not put healthy food on tables;

that is why families are relying on the food bank and having to go there to supplement it.

Let's go on the assumption that this is going to be declared as income until the government makes the decision — then what? If the government decides that families can keep this money, will it be retroactive to July 1? Will they get what was taken away from them back? I think it's leaving families in a predicament of not knowing what's going to happen. If it is the status quo, then the government should say that for July 1 it's the status quo. Give families the information they need to plan.

I just think the federal government was clear what this was about. It was rolling these all into one. It was making them tax free. It was putting more money in families' hands to raise them out of poverty. There are others who aren't in poverty who will get a certain amount too.

This is a great opportunity. We can raise children and families out of poverty now, in six weeks. We can start putting good food on tables that families can afford. I know what the amounts are that families receive and it's not a lot, not when grocery prices are going up. It seems such a good thing to do. I understand they need an options paper. We've know about this — when was the budget presented? In October, I believe.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. Stick: Spring? Sorry, my mistake; it was this spring that the budget came out. The department has had time to look at this. This is important. I think families need to know what to expect come July.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I again thank the member for her question. The member opposite needs to recognize that the federal budget that was tabled one week before we sat in this Legislature had details — and not very elaborate details — on the changes to this federal program. The federal government had built in a one-year transition period, and what the details of that transition period are, I'm not completely clear on. It wouldn't be our intent, as a government, to tax this benefit as income. We will continue to work with the federal government. We will continue to consult with our partners and stakeholders here in the territory before we move forward on any sort of enhancement to the territorial budget.

We will continue to consult with our partners and stakeholders here in the territory before we move forward on any sort of enhancement to the territorial budget.

Ms. Stick: I have a number of questions coming out of that. This is a tax-free benefit for families, so I'm not sure what the minister meant when he was talking about tax. It's not an enhancement to this budget. Unless you claw it back, then I guess, yes, there is more money for this government and that certainly has happened in the past.

Mr. Chair, this is what I'm hearing from the minister. I'm just following his words. Others can check tomorrow in the Blues on what he said. It just doesn't make sense. This is not an enhancement. This is for families. This is money.

I guess the other question — the last one I had — he talked about going out and talking to stakeholders about this, so my question would be: Are you talking to single-parent

families on social assistance? These are stakeholders. This is money that they are receiving from their federal government, so it seems to me that if you are going to talk to stakeholders, this would be one group you would want to talk to — and about the implications of them having that money clawed back if they are on social assistance and what it means for them. They are definitely stakeholders.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: For the member opposite, she will be well aware that there are three components to the current system: Canada child tax credit, which is not clawed back; the universal childcare benefit, which is not clawed back; and the national child benefit supplement, which is clawed back. There are decisions that this government needs to make on a move-forward basis. The Canadian childcare benefit will combine these three into one benefit. The decision will be made primarily on the current portion of the clawback.

As I indicated in my previous response, there are decisions that need to be made by this government. There is a one-year transitional period, and I look forward to the recommendations coming from the department. Having said that, the member opposite seems to make claim that this government hasn't done enough for people who are requiring social assistance, when that couldn't be further from the truth. This government has raised the social assistance rates. We've cut personal taxes multiple times. We've increased the childcare subsidy. We'll continue to make those strategic investments.

As I indicated to the member opposite, within her questions that I was unable to answer, I will respond to her when I have those answers.

Ms. Stick: I will just respond to a few of those. Yes, the social assistance rates were raised, but it was before this current government was in place, and what we have now is an annual — excuse me, Mr. Chair.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Chair: Order, please. Ms. Stick has the floor.

Ms. Stick: I am talking about the current government that is in place today. It did not raise the rates but did add the cost of living. Once a year that is added — on April 1 — so acknowledge that, yes, that happens, but if you look at what those rates actually are and what a food basket costs in Whitehorse or the communities, families are struggling. If they weren't struggling to meet the needs of their food baskets or their food needs, they wouldn't be going to the food bank. You can check the statistics from the Whitehorse Food Bank on how many people, how many families and how many children are going to the food bank on a monthly basis to supplement their food.

Yes, the rates get raised every April 1 by indexing, but it has been a long time since a real review of those base rates have been looked at. We all go to the grocery store. We know how much our groceries have increased, and what was once a fairly standard bag of groceries has increased incredibly, especially around the cost of meat, fresh fruit and vegetables — the healthy foods that we want.

I am going to move on to Environmental Health Services. I had a question with regard to inspections of the hotels where

many individuals who are supported on social assistance are currently housed. We know which ones they are in town. I am just wondering what the responsibility of this department is? Are there environmental inspectors who go and look at these hotels and the conditions that people on social assistance — money that is being provided by this department — are living in — under environmental health? Is it only on a complaint-driven basis? The second part of that question, even though we are still talking about the hotels, goes back to: Are there workers going in and doing home visits and seeing the conditions that some of these individuals are living in in hotels where this department is paying, quite frankly, a lot of money?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: A significant number of individuals receiving social assistance continue to be perhaps under-housed or housed in substandard accommodations, including hotels. This situation contributes to their vulnerability and it does remain the primary barrier to social inclusion and wellness. The department continues to spend a significant amount of money for those individuals living in hotels. I know that, for fiscal years 2010-11 through 2014-15, hotels and motels had a monthly average of approximately 60 individuals who were recipients of Yukon government social assistance.

On January 1, 2016, the new *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* came into force. The new act includes a range of changes to the previous legislation and introduces residential rental standards, which are anticipated to have a further impact on the available housing stock.

It is anticipated that efforts by the City of Whitehorse fire department to strengthen enforcement of the *Fire Prevention Act* and the implementation of the new *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* may result in more displacements, perhaps an increased need for rapid rehousing of individuals and more intensive housing-related supports to assist those people with maintaining safe and secure housing.

With respect to the member opposite's question, there are a number of people at play here: the Residential Tenancies Office under the *Landlord and Tenant Act*; potentially the fire department; Environmental Health Services, if there are food services available; or perhaps they would work hand in hand with the *Landlord and Tenant Act* on a complaint-driven basis primarily through Community Services.

Ms. Stick: The *Landlord and Tenant Act* is a good thing. The office is open and we now have regulations in place. For those individuals who are housed in hotels or motels in town, it only applies to them if they are in those locations for more than six months. We're very aware of that. Under six months, they are not covered by that landlord; they do not have the rights to complain about substandard living conditions, infestations — whatever.

I have had constituents come to me with some terrible stories about bug infestations in their hotel rooms, and Environmental Health Services was the department that was called on this one and they were the ones to go and investigate.

But some of those individuals stay in hotels for the winter months and then are asked to leave when the tourist season

starts. Some go to the campgrounds, others couch surf, others find places in the bush around town where they camp or reside — and luckily with the warm weather, it's a good thing for them, but it's not real housing. But there are those who do stay in a few of these hotels year-round.

I'm just wondering if it's this department's responsibility to inform those tenants that they do have rights under the *Landlord and Tenant Act* and that, when they are substandard, they can make complaints to the *Landlord and Tenant Act* and, in fact, should have a lease. I know my colleague has asked these questions previously of the other minister, but this is on the flip side, where it's this government or this department that's paying for these services — paying for, as the minister said, substandard housing.

I guess the question is: What is the department's responsibility for those individuals who live there less than six months to ensure that it is not substandard? For those individuals who might live year-round in these substandard places, who is helping them to understand their rights and show them how they can address them? Having worked in social services a long time ago, this was a job where a social worker would work with an individual, and this is what we would do to help people find better accommodations and not be stuck in the substandard accommodations.

Those are just a few questions and I'm looking for comments from the minister.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: This government has made significant investments in affordable and social housing over the last 13 or 14 years. I applaud the government for making those investments. As per the member opposite's question about substandard housing, as I indicated in my previous response, there may be times when the fire department would be called to inspect a property. If it's complaint-driven as the result of an infestation, then that would be driven through Environmental Health.

As far as where those people go who are on social assistance to receive that support, the member opposite should well know that they have social assistance and social workers who are available to them and, if they have comments to make about their housing, then they have that option to make it to the social worker, who would work with them on whatever the situation may be.

We could spend all afternoon here talking about hypothetical situations but, at the end of the day, there are social workers available. The fire department will inspect properties if it's substandard. If there are infestations, Environmental Health will address those issues.

The Department of Health and Social Services continues to work with a number of other departments, including the Yukon Housing Corporation, specifically for this, looking for other options for those who are living in hotel rooms that may be considered substandard.

Ms. Stick: Unfortunately, these aren't hypothetical situations. These are real situations and these are real people who live in substandard hotels and, often because of the circumstances and because of the length of time they're in them, they do not have the rights that others might.

I would point out in the document that was tabled yesterday — *Yukon Health Status Report — Focus on Substance Abuse, 2015*, which was done by the chief medical officer — he talks about housing and the gaps in housing for Yukoners and how this impacts alcohol abuse, addictions and mental health. It says that: “A Housing First policy could be an additional tool. With a Housing First approach, housing is provided upfront with no preconditions for sobriety or abstinence from substance use, and the additional services needed by clients are provided after a home is established. The initiative has shown success across North America as a tool to support vulnerable people affected with addictions and mental health challenges. In Yukon, exploring a Housing First approach could be a wise investment.”

I know we have talked in the House about this at other times about Housing First, which really emphasizes the fact that by providing safe, good-standard housing for individuals is often the first step for them to then receive the services that might see them addressing some of their addictions or mental health needs. This is from the chief medical officer of the Yukon and it is a really good read. I would suggest people do more than peruse it, but read it like I have. There are, I think, 21 recommendations and it just struck me that housing was one of the very first in here. Before it was prevention through the lifespan and talking about prevention of FASD, listening to our youth and healthier choices, but the second bullet really was supportive communities and minimizing the harm.

I would finish by saying that these are not hypothetical situations. These are real situations and I know some people who live in these hotels. I do not know if the minister has had the privilege of visiting anyone in these hotels, but he might want to. It is a real eye-opener; the conditions that some people live in and that this department is paying for.

I am good to move on. I have been going back through some of my old budget questions and one I have never been able to quite nail down or have a clear answer on is a program that was started back a number of years ago, which is under the title of the Rick Hansen Foundation. At the time, there was \$20,000 allocated to the Yukon Council on DisABILITY and those funds were to be used to help people with mobility difficulties. People could apply to this program for — I think it was up to \$5,000 — and they could put it toward a scooter or an electric wheelchair or whatever those needs were.

This item continues to show up under grants. We know that the Yukon Council on DisABILITY closed just over a year ago. Where is this housed now? I had someone asking me how they could get some help in looking at funding. Scooters aren't cheap. I knew about the program, but I couldn't tell them where it is or how they can apply. What I am looking for is: Where is this? It's still in the budget. Where is that money? Who is administering it? How do people find out about it and make application to it? What has been the uptake on this program? I think it has been since 2011 that the money has been available every year, but I have never really seen a report on who has accessed it, how many and what the money is used for. Those two things are: Where is it today? How do people apply? There is nothing on the websites — when I go

through the department websites. In the past, how has this money been used and for how many people?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: To address a couple of issues from the member opposite — the new *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and regulations, as I indicated, came into effect on January 1, 2016. This legislation modernizes residential tenancy law in Yukon, and it balances the interest of both landlords and tenants. The minimum rental standards will come into force on January 1, 2017, giving landlords the opportunity to make any required repairs and upgrades. Community Services has opened the Residential Tenancies Office, which was a key recommendation of the Select Committee on the *Landlord and Tenant Act* during the development of the new act. A streamlined dispute resolution process outside of the courts is now in place and administered by the Residential Tenancies Office.

Also, I would certainly applaud the work done by Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the City of Whitehorse in their efforts to advance the vulnerable-people-at-risk initiative. The financial contribution by our government will certainly help support the creation of a vulnerable-people-at-risk action plan, a public forum and a youth forum. We have also committed to partnering with the two governments to try to attract infrastructure spending from the federal government. This initiative directly aligns with a number of other government projects that target increased supports for those most vulnerable, including the housing action plan, a new detox and inpatient drug and alcohol treatment centre, the new Salvation Army Centre of Hope, and our most recent partnership with the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council in the building of affordable housing units in the Whistle Bend subdivision.

The member opposite was talking about the youth health status report. I would certainly like to take this opportunity to quote something from that report, where it says: “The choices we make throughout our lives play an important role in determining our risk of illness, injury or premature mortality. Understanding how well Yukoners are doing in terms of dietary patterns, physical activity levels, and other health-promoting behaviours can help guide us to make positive changes in our own lives, and to support those around us to make healthier choices.” Yukon leads the country in activity with nearly two-thirds of us reporting active or moderately active lifestyles.

It was good to see that Yukon women, at 63 percent, outperform Canadian women overall at 52 percent. We see that Yukon has a lower rate of cancer incidence. We also see that nine out of 10 Yukoners report being satisfied or very satisfied with life, despite the fact that nearly one-quarter report experiencing quite a lot of stress in their lives. An estimated 65 percent of Yukoners reported very good or excellent mental health.

Speaking of mental health, I was certainly delighted to be able to table the mental wellness strategy, recognizing the important contributions of our partners — First Nations and other stakeholders — throughout the territory. With respect to some of the investments in housing, for those who may be vulnerable and at risk, I have to again recognize the

investment that we've made to replace the new Sarah Steele Building. Now, that building will address a number of addiction issues, whether it is drug or alcohol addictions, but those addictions certainly have an impact on a person's state of mind and ability to maintain or even find housing. A good partner to the new Sarah Steele Building will be the continued relationship we have with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Jackson Lake healing centre. Certainly I've talked to a number of people who have both worked and gone through that program and they continue to speak very highly of it.

We've also made investments in mental health housing. I've spoken before on the floor of this Legislature about the new home that we built on 4th Avenue for six to 10 people.

We put an RFP out to provide service in that facility and we're delighted to provide that contract to Challenge. I have talked to people who have lived there and people who are working there and they speak very highly of that program and the opportunities that it provides for people at a point in time when they need that help.

We have made investments in OFI — the new Salvation Army Centre of Hope that I spoke about — as well as the St. Elias group home that we just opened not very long ago. I'll be going back through that facility now that those individuals who were moving in, have moved in. I certainly look forward to see how they have transitioned into their new home and how the staff are providing supports and services for those living there.

With respect to the Rick Hansen Foundation — as part of the contribution agreement, the Rick Hansen Foundation produces an annual report that indicates what the funding was spent on. The Association for Community Living administers that Rick Hansen fund. In 2012, the Premier committed \$100,000 over five years. As part of the agreement, the Rick Hansen Foundation produces an annual report to indicate what the money was spent on, and I am assuming that would be available through the Association for Community Living. As the member will recall, we provided that information to her on March 17.

Ms. Stick: I'm not sure what information was provided to me on March 17. We weren't in the Legislature, were we? No. Anyway, I'll go back and look and stand to be corrected.

It's interesting — the minister spoke of the Yukon health status report. You know, Social Services and Health and Social Services are here as safety nets to address needs of Yukoners who are less fortunate. The minister started off by talking about choice and the choices we make in life certainly are going to impact the outcomes — and that's true. But there are things that are pointed out in this document that — one of them being about re-thinking addictions — and it talks about addiction as much more than a behaviour. It's a disease rooted in the brain and, unless adequately treated, it's an unrelenting chronic condition. There is growing evidence that problematic substance use is shaped by multiple, early and ongoing life experiences, factors and conditions — so more than choices.

It speaks of children and youth in the Yukon being more likely to use substances than their Canadian counterparts. One of the startling statistics I found here was that death from

unintentional injury is almost three times higher in Yukon than in Canada — more than the average. For males, unfortunately, it's even higher than the females.

The health status report points out the good things that are happening, but it also points to the things we need to look at in health and social services. We still have higher-than-average smoking rates. They're coming down, as is the Canadian rate, but we're still higher than the Canadian average. Accidents and, as we spoke about earlier today, sexually transmitted infections — two and a half times the national average for very young people in our communities. To me, that was the most shocking part.

The last piece I just wanted to ask about is to go back to the Rick Hansen Foundation information that was given and which is now housed — I guess would be the word — at the Yukon Association for Community Living. Is there an application process that individuals can go through? Do they need to go to that association to find that information?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Prior to talking about the Rick Hansen Foundation piece, I just want to back up to the comments from the member opposite around addictions. This government has made significant investments in the area of addictions. As I indicated in my former response, the new Sarah Steele Building will be completed late this summer or early this fall. We've made investments in after-care programs and will continue to make those investments when the new facility is completed.

Through the youth and family addictions and services, substance abuse services will be comprised of a 24/7 youth withdrawal and gender-specific experiential residential treatment program. These services will collaborate with community-based youth services, education, and First Nation health programs in order to provide a continuum of support services to youth and their families. We offer a range of services to support youth and families to prevent and/or reduce the harm associated with substance use and improve health and well-being.

I'm going to also back up to the tabling of the mental wellness document and how our primary focus over the next two years is on children, youth and families and providing those opportunities for individuals to work on their mental health. We certainly could acknowledge that without that physical health and without the support around addictions, it would probably be almost impossible to enhance your mental health. We certainly have targeted a number of areas for children, youth and families to work on throughout the mental wellness document. Again, I can't thank the First Nations enough for their support over the last number of months in the creation of that document. It was certainly an honour for me to stand side by side with Chief Doris Bill and Grand Chief Ruth Massie to provide the community with that mental wellness document — a document that will be adaptable over a period of time of 10 years as the needs change and as issues arise — but it would be great just to see us being able to take items out of that document, as we addressed a number of the areas.

I did make a reference to a document going to the member opposite on March 17 that may still be up in my office as a draft, but I am going to check on that.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I know the Leader of the Official Opposition finds that funny, but I do —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Chair: Order, please. Mr. Nixon has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now resume the chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Elias: Madam Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Tuesday, May 24.

The House adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled May 19, 2016:

33-1-206

Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees Twenty-second Report (May 18, 2016) (Hassard)

The following document was filed May 19, 2016:

33-1-136

Gender Equality for Whom?, e-mail re (undated) from Founder of All Genders Yukon to Hon. Elaine Taylor, minister responsible for the Women's Directorate (White)