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HANSARD

Wednesday, April 10, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2019 Spring Sitting

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

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

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Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Liz Hanson	Leader of the Third Party Whitehorse Centre
Kate White	Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, April 10, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Chair: We will now proceed with the Order Paper.
Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: I have the pleasure of introducing to the Assembly the grade 5/6 class from Selkirk Elementary School. I just had an opportunity to meet with them briefly in the lobby, and I certainly urge them to return to the Assembly when they can have a longer chat with me or with other members.

I have a list here to welcome — and I apologize in advance if I mispronounce any names or if I miss anybody. The students with us today are: Sophia-Jan Asp, Harmony Bain, Yvett Beke, Vivian Blanchard, Sheldon Bob, Dylan Edrei Garcia, Ryu Gray, Sanjana Jaman, Harmony Kendi, Myra Kendi, Prab Khtta, Piper Miller, Lance Jared Rogero, Rylie Rosychuk, Morgan Sharp, Alexis Smith, and Lawrence Wu.

I would also like to introduce their teacher, Lucy Morrison, and grandmother of one of the children, Laura Davidson. Please welcome them to the House today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would like to ask all of my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to help me in welcoming to the gallery today some people who are here for the Global Youth Service Day tribute. We have: Hana Val, community outreach coordinator; Tayo Adamek, also a community outreach coordinator; Alyssa Carpenter — who has, two days in a row, been here in the Legislative Assembly — is here as a community manager; and Bruno Bourdache from the Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon. I apologize if I messed up the pronunciation of those names. Welcome.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I would like to take this opportunity to recognize my great-niece, Sophia-Jan Asp, who is here with the class from Selkirk Elementary. I welcome you here today and ask my colleagues to help me in welcoming her as well. She is very, very special. Also, Alexis Smith, who is one of my constituents — I'm glad that you are here today.

Applause

Ms. White: I ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming the voice of the Legislative Assembly. Anytime we are not on-air, there is a soothing tone that repeats over and over in both French and English: "We are currently on

break and we will be back." Of course, RP Singh is in the back row looking quite uncomfortable about that — but he is the voice of the Legislative Assembly and he has made that radio station so much more pleasant in the off-time — and of course Sally Wright, who is no stranger to this Assembly. Thank you both for coming.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon, I would like the House to be introduced to Mr. Richard Gorczyca and Mr. Michael Zuccarini. Richard is a director of transportation planning and Michael is the program manager with transportation planning. They are the masterminds behind some of the improvements that we are going to be talking about this afternoon. I am certainly not qualified to judge such things, but I have been told that Mr. Gorczyca is one of the sharpest-dressed civil servants we have.

So please join me in welcoming them to the House this afternoon.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Global Youth Service Day

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise today on behalf of all my colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to Global Youth Service Day, celebrated from April 12 to 14. Global Youth Service Day recognizes the contributions of children and youth ages five to 25 and encourages them to be active in our communities for the common good.

We have one of the youngest populations in Canada, and our youth actively contribute to shaping the current and future vitality of our territory. They are active in our communities as volunteer firefighters, hospital volunteers, sports and academic coaches and mentors. They are engaged in social justice activities, environmental activism, and fundraising for worthwhile causes.

Our schools, our homes, our neighbourhoods — they're all better places thanks to their dedication, leadership, and passion for the issues that matter most to them.

Last October, our outstanding youth achievement awards highlighted some of the ways that young people are helping their communities thrive. We recognized Yukoners like Sebastian Cuenza, who dedicated his time to supporting young immigrants at the Multicultural Centre of the Yukon, and Grace-Anne Janssen for volunteering as a junior camp counsellor at Marsh Lake Bible Camp and as a games coordinator at Camp Klondike. We recognized Isabel Magsucang for her hard work supporting her school's social justice club as well. We have also celebrated Lizzy Sparling and her dedication in volunteering with the young women's transition home, the AIDS walk, and Little Footprints, Big Steps.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of these individuals and all of our youth. Thanks to their energy and ideas, youth across the territory are helping to build a stronger, healthier Yukon. In recognition of Global Youth Service Day, I ask the honourable members to join me in recognizing and celebrating young Yukoners for making a positive difference in all of our communities. Thank you.

Applause

In recognition of International Day of Pink

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Today I rise in the House on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the International Day of Pink.

This year, today — April 10, 2019 — people across Canada and around the world join together to celebrate diversity and raise awareness around homophobic, transphobic, and other forms of bullying. The symbolic pink shirt movement began in 2007 in Nova Scotia when a male student was bullied for wearing a pink shirt to school, breaking the perceived or unspoken gender rule that boys don't wear pink. His schoolmates rallied in support of him to denounce bullying by all wearing pink shirts to school the next day.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning, this movement has been led by students. Just yesterday, we had students visit us in the Legislative Assembly and a petition was presented that showed leadership and great initiative to achieve equality. In Yukon schools, bullying awareness and discussions about gender and diversity are integrated into activities, classroom lessons, and events throughout the school year.

It is also inspiring that a lot of awareness is being raised by youth leadership in clubs. With innovation and courage, the Porter Creek Secondary School gay-straight alliance is working every day to shift school culture to be more inclusive and to no longer tolerate bullying.

To celebrate the International Day of Pink, I understand the Porter Creek Secondary School social justice club has hung a giant poster in the cafeteria with anti-bullying messages. Students are invited to put pink handprints on the poster, sign their names, and take a stand in support of diversity. A group photo will be taken of everyone wearing pink alongside the completed poster. The school's gay-straight alliance is also supporting this event.

On April 18, the Porter Creek Secondary School gay-straight alliance will hold an opening ceremony for the first Rainbow Room in the Yukon, which opened its doors in the school in February. This is a dedicated safe space for students, where they know they are protected from intimidation and bullying. Teachers and school staff are involved by volunteering to be present in the Rainbow Room on all breaks, as well as before and after school.

The Porter Creek Secondary School and F.H. Collins Secondary School gay-straight alliances are holding their first three-day retreat in May to connect students, build relationships, and show support for one another. Gay-straight

alliances and students from any high school in the Yukon are also welcome to attend.

It is this kind of leadership and courage to stand for change that captures the spirit of the International Day of Pink. Since 2007, the pink shirt symbol has been used during Bullying Awareness Week in November, Pink Shirt Day in February, and the International Day of Pink in April. A lot of bullying is homophobic and transphobic in nature and is reinforced by gender stereotyping.

We are actively working to improve inclusion for LGBTQ2S+ individuals and to ensure that our communities are safe for everyone. We have committed and focused on modernizing legislation to ensure it speaks inclusively of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Broad public engagement is happening this spring that will inform the way forward.

Wearing pink today is a small action that speaks volumes about celebrating diversity and standing up against bullying. Creating a Yukon where we can all feel safe and supported to attend school, pursue our livelihoods, build healthy relationships, and connect to and with our community is our goal.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize today as the International Day of Pink. This global day of awareness began right here in Canada, and it is a testament to how small actions can have big results, as it is the result of actions of two students in Nova Scotia who witnessed the bullying and discrimination of another student.

When a 9th grade student was bullied for wearing a pink polo shirt on the first day of school in 2007, two of his classmates not only stood up for him, but they bought and distributed 50 pink shirts and tank tops to protest the discrimination that he faced. They went on to e-mail classmates to get them on board with their anti-bullying cause, inspiring a sea of pink throughout the school. It is said that some students even showed up to school in pink from head to toe.

This small gesture not only caught the attention of the students, but it caught the attention of the youth at Jer's Vision, a grassroots organization that has since evolved into the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity. Jer's Vision founded the International Day of Pink in an effort to bring awareness to the issues of bullying and discrimination faced around the world. April 10 has evolved as a celebration of diversity, with workplaces, schools, and organizations standing up against bullying, discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia in their communities. It is great to see today people all over dressed in their best shades of pink.

I urge Yukoners to take a stand against bullying and discrimination each and every day. It is true that kindness has a ripple effect, and every small action and kind word makes a difference.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to celebrate the International Day of Pink. Today, like us in Yukon, millions of people worldwide are standing together against bullying, discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, and trans-misogyny. Today, we celebrate our rich human diversity, our differences, and our commonalities by wearing pink.

It is often a small act of resistance that starts a revolution, and this movement is no different. All it takes is one person to stand up for what they think is right to create a tidal wave of support.

Last week, I had the privilege to speak to Ms. Morrison's grade 5/6 split class at Selkirk Elementary School. Although I was invited to speak about politics, these curious and intelligent young people had all sorts of questions about all sorts of things across the political spectrum. We ended up speaking about bias — what it means and what that would look like. Mr. Speaker, these kids get it. They have all faced situations that made them uncomfortable, whether it was being called a boy because of short hair, watching their dad deal with assumptions or being called names because of where you come from. They have all felt or seen bullying and the wide spectrum of discrimination.

We talked about how sometimes, when someone is making us feel bad, we can try to deal with it ourselves, but sometimes we need our friends to step in and help us out. We talked about how important it is to step in and stand up when you know that something isn't right. So we decided as a group that boys could wear dresses, that everyone could paint their nails and that there aren't "boy colours" or "girl colours" and that it is important to call a person by their chosen name — and especially by their chosen pronoun.

Things that you and I may take for granted are the rights that others struggle to achieve, like being addressed by the correct pronouns. If someone asks you to address them by "them" and "they", "she" and "her", or "he" and "him", it's not up for discussion — honour that request. You might make a mistake or two along the way, but mistakes are forgivable; willful ignorance is not.

Organizations and activists across Canada are working to stop bullying, discrimination, and homophobia in schools and communities worldwide by offering and facilitating workshops. Today and every day, we are reminded that the words we use both in person and online can be harmful. If you wouldn't say something to someone standing right in front of you, then don't post them online and certainly don't send it out into the Twitterverse.

In this day and age when we hear politicians fuelling the fires of hate, this beautiful class was a breath of fresh air. With the understanding that these kids have of being fair and of being kind and considerate to those around them, our future gets brighter each and every day. I thank Ms. Morrison's class.

Applause

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

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I have two photos that were taken this morning of the pretty much high-and-dry Destruction Bay boat launch and marina.

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

Are there any reports of committees?
Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 8 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 8 of the Second Session of the 34th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Leader of the Third Party on April 9, 2019.

The petition presented by the Leader of the Third Party meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Petition No. 9 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 9 of the Second Session of the 34th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King on April 9, 2019.

The petition presented by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 8 and Petition No. 9 are deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation.

Therefore, the Executive Council responses to Petition No. 8 and Petition No. 9 shall be provided on or before April 24, 2019.

Are there any further petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to launch an open data repository to put more government information in citizens' hands, to support openness, transparency, and economic diversification in the innovation, knowledge, and IT sectors.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to explain to the residents of Destruction Bay and Burwash, the Kluane First Nation and Yukoners:

(1) why it was possible for maintenance to be done last summer at the Sheep Mountain boat launch on Kluane Lake; and

(2) why the Liberal government claims similar maintenance can't be done at the Destruction Bay boat launch and marina to restore the use of this important access to the lake.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier to explain why he departed from the past practice of taking an all-party approach to considering changes to our elections laws, and instead chose to unilaterally announce his plans for an electoral reform commission whose members will be picked by him, following terms of reference set by him and will make a report to him.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize that the practices of conversion therapy or reparative therapy are seriously harmful and are opposed by the Canadian Psychological Association, the World Health Organization, the American Psychiatric Association and the American Medical Association; and

THAT this government introduce legislation to ban conversion therapy of minors in Yukon and prohibit transporting minors outside of Yukon or Canada for such purposes, and pass all such legislation as required.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Environment to ban the use or sale of neonicotinoids in Yukon in order to protect the populations of pollinating species.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Roadway maintenance improvement program

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise today to discuss the government's new and modern roadway maintenance improvement program. We are implementing a major shift in terms of the way we manage our territory's highway network. This new program will make Yukon roads safer for all who use them — safer for drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, equestrians, mushers, and visitors.

It will allow governments to plan more effectively, manage better and be more strategic in how we execute necessary work to our roadway network — working smarter, not harder. The new program uses modern management — better management, Mr. Speaker. It represents a system-wide overhaul of our approach to work both on and along the roadway. We are now looking at the maintenance of Yukon's road network as an exercise in asset management. It is about

putting the right dollars in the right place at the right time to maximize the life of our assets.

For example, the new program will see a total distance of 6,700 kilometres of roadway right-of-way brushed in six years. For reference, 4,200 kilometres were cleared in the past six years. In terms of line painting, that is 6,150 kilometres of road lines painted over the next three years. In the past three years, 4,830 kilometres of road lines were painted. This program includes the implementation of a new highway classification system that allows us to categorize Yukon highways based on how they are used and what they are used for. Mr. Speaker, this is the first time such a system has been used in the territory. It is long overdue.

We are using research data and condition assessments to help us allocate funding resources and determine priorities based on each roadway's specific needs. We are looking at things like trade corridors, community links, tourism and traffic volume data to determine the categories of our roadways. In addition to the new classification system, the program covers five major aspects of roadway safety and upkeep, including roadside barriers, lane delineation devices like rumble strips and raised pavement markers, line painting, removal of roadside obstructions, and increased vegetation control.

Individually, each one of these tasks adds to the protection and safety of our roadway users. Bundled together in this way, they provide more than just protection and safety. We are moving away from being a "paper and filing cabinet" department, and we are on course to become a modern, efficient, and effective department of the Yukon government.

Mr. Kent: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to respond to this initiative. I would like to thank the departmental officials for their work that they have accomplished in bringing this forward.

While we applaud any efforts to make our roadways safer, we do have some questions for the minister. We are left to wonder about the budgetary aspects of this new program. When you look at the highway maintenance budget, it is estimated to be \$41.7 million in this current fiscal year, which is a cut from \$44.2 million last year. On top of this, the branch will be asked to eat the carbon tax costs on all the fuel they buy, so dollars will be stretched even further.

I think the minister told this House earlier this Sitting that the carbon tax impacts on government will be \$750,000 in increased costs for just part of the year, and we know that is going to increase even further in future years. So it seems that the minister is asking his maintenance branch to do more with less.

When it comes to the brushing aspects, what are the budget projections going to be for the next six years of the brushing program, and what kind of standards will be used for brushing in the territory?

Mr. Speaker, hopefully Yukon citizens and all MLAs can be afforded a better avenue of registering safety concerns with this new initiative. The minister talked about safety issues, but again, we hope he is open to ideas from all MLAs and our

constituents on these requests for simple things like line painting, which have fallen on deaf ears over the past number of years.

The other aspect we're interested in is the Shakwak portion of the Alaska Highway. If safety is the priority, the minister's remarks about allowing this portion of the highway to revert to gravel probably isn't the best choice. It reminds me of the minister's comments from November 2017 when he famously told Yukoners that they had better get used to lower standards for highway safety under this government.

Mr. Speaker, the Alaska Highway is part of the national highway system and it's one of the most, if not the most, important trade corridors we have. It is unfortunate that the minister hasn't asked Canada for assistance on this portion of the highway. We are also hoping the minister will provide us with the traffic study that confirms that 85 percent of Shakwak traffic is American, and also the functional plan that gives the cost estimate the minister has used publicly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond today. I'm sure that we will have many more questions as this initiative rolls out.

Ms. White: We are always happy to see roadway safety brought up in the Legislature, and while the ministerial statement was interesting, it raised more questions for us than it answered.

I will just list them: How will the Department of Highways and Public Works work with local contractors and community members to ensure that they are able to be awarded as much of these contracts as possible? Many communities rely on these contracts for employment, particularly the brushing contracts.

While we understand that brushing can be mostly mechanical, we would like some assurances that no pesticides that contain neonicotinoids — a substance that is harmful to important bee populations — will be used for vegetation control.

In 2008, the Department of Environment released a report that found — and I quote: "... large cleared right-of-ways that are frequently mowed are prime sites for Sweetclover infestations..." and that "... brush-cutting and mowing equipment that is not cleaned frequently can act as a seed-dispersal mechanism... It appeared likely that the mechanical cutters would not only act to cast the seed in the immediate area in which they were working, but could also carry the seed in the machinery to new areas."

Did the minister consult with his counterpart in Environment to ensure that the provisions are included in this new program to reduce the potential spread of sweet clover or other invasive species as a result of this work?

The minister stated that this is an exercise in asset management and that this will improve the life of our assets. What specific assets will this program manage? How will they extend the life of those assets and how much longer will those assets last under this program than they would have under the former program?

The minister's statement on this program seems to imply that asset management and modernization alone have found the efficiencies that will see a 59-percent increase in kilometres of right-of-way being brushed and a 27-percent increase in kilometres of highway lines being painted. Is it accurate to say that these improvements are simply as a result of better planning, or is there additional money being allocated to these efforts? If so, how much?

The minister mentioned that this new program includes the implementation of a new highway classification system that allows us to categorize highways based on how and what they're used for and then determining what the priorities are based on need. I take it to mean that highway maintenance will not maintain each kilometre of highway equally, but rather that areas with more traffic will receive more attention. But I would be curious as to if the minister could explain all the factors that go into this equation.

As many rural Yukoners can attest to, certain sections of roadways in their parts of the Yukon can get pretty hairy. Will this program incorporate Yukon residents' concerns into the prioritization of this work? If so, where should Yukoners go to raise those concerns? How will the Government of Yukon respond and weigh these concerns?

Toward the end of his statement, the minister said that the Department of Highways and Public Works is moving away from being a "paper and filing cabinet" department. We're wondering: Is this just a euphemism for modernization or is it actually a reference to ongoing efforts to digitize the work of Highways and Public Works?

Finally, the minister referred to this as the modern roadway maintenance and improvement program, yet we have not seen the actual substance of the program. Typically when these are announced and a press release is posted on yukon.ca, there's a link with the detailed plan or program attached so that interested parties can review it. Perhaps the minister could table that program in the House and some of these questions could be answered.

I look forward to the answers to these questions — if not in his response today, we would be happy with a written response in the near future. Thanks again to the minister for bringing this forward, and we look forward to fewer accidents on our beautiful highways this summer.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the members opposite for their approval of this project. It has been a long time coming, and it is one of those things where the very simplest ideas are often overlooked and don't get the recognition that they deserve. We have a process now that we are putting in place that will actually put functional classes on our highways. You would think that a territory in 2019 would have their highways ranked, but we haven't until today. This is a major improvement. It seems simple, but it took a lot of doing on behalf of the departmental staff, and I think it will lead to tremendous improvements to the way that we manage our highways and to the safety along our roads.

There will be six functional classes of highways in the territory now, based on volume of traffic but also whether

they link large communities, major trade routes, or significant tourist routes. All those factors have been incorporated into the new plan, which then assesses our highways. There will be six categories, and they will be maintained on the basis of the category that they are assigned.

Brush-clearing and line painting will all be done more regularly and to a greater extent on the most populated, highest usage roads — the ones that are of the most strategic importance to the territory — and then as you move away, off the beaten path as it were; a little bit farther off the track — the roads will be maintained on a regular schedule, where you can actually see what the schedule is — but it will be to a lesser standard.

When the members opposite go online and see the functional classes, they will see how the Alaska Highway is ranked. It has a couple of rankings depending on where it is. They can then see the standard to which the road will be maintained going forward.

These are all really fundamental changes to the way we manage highways. When I first came in, we asked, “Well, how often does it — what is the brush-clearing schedule?” There really wasn’t one that they could point to. It was just done sort of on a worst-case basis, with no concrete standards. This is a bit of a change. Within the next six years, every kilometre of road is scheduled to be maintained and cleared to a standard. Once that’s done, we will continue to maintain it — ongoing. You won’t see huge trees in the right-of-way, if this is followed through on. It will be done to a standard that keeps our roads safe and visibility up — lines on the roads, barriers in place.

These are huge changes in the way we manage it, and over time, once it’s done, we will see operational savings — an anticipated about \$1.2 million in savings in maintenance of roads going forward. When you clear the brush away from the asset — and the asset that we are talking about is our road system. It’s now being maintained as an asset and considered an asset of this government. As you maintain it, you will keep the water away from the road surface, and it should last longer. The experts in the department have determined that this is a good way to go to save money.

One very quick thing to say — I fundamentally disagree with the Official Opposition calling on our federal government to fund a stretch of road for Alaska and Washington. I think that goes above and beyond. Ottawa contributes a lot of money to the territory and we should —

Speaker: Order. The member’s time has elapsed. This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Electoral reform

Mr. Cathers: At the heart of our democracy is the expectation that no party should be allowed to stack the deck or gerrymander the system. Past governments of every stripe have respected the importance of ensuring any changes to election laws are fair and unbiased and done through an all-party process. The last two times the *Elections Act* was

changed, the all-party Members’ Services Board reached agreement on it.

In 2015, MSB met multiple times and reached unanimous agreement on changes. The leaders of the Liberal Party and the NDP were even quoted in the government’s press release, and act changes passed with unanimous support of the Legislature.

The Premier is abandoning this collaborative approach and going with a one-party-decides-all approach that allows the Liberals to appoint the electoral reform commission and set their terms of reference. Why did the Premier choose not to present a proposal for an electoral reform commission to Members’ Services Board and attempt to reach agreement?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Members’ Services Board has its processes. What we’re doing is making good on a campaign promise to Yukoners. Electoral reform is extremely important to our government and we want to strengthen the fairness, integrity, and accessibility of our democracy, and that’s why we’re asking Yukoners what areas of our electoral system are most important when it comes to reform.

Members’ Services Board will continue to do their good work after every second election. This is different, Mr. Speaker, and the member opposite is confusing oranges and apples.

We have heard that the system we are using to turn votes into seats in the Legislative Assembly is a priority for many Yukoners, but that the rules of political parties and elected officials and the way that Yukoners voices are being heard are also important. These priorities — not the will of the Yukon Party, but these priorities — will guide the work of an independent commission on electoral reform, and those appointments will be made this month and into next month.

Mr. Cathers: Yukoners didn’t vote for the Liberal Party to impose its will on the democratic process. The fact is that the two long-standing processes for considering changes to the *Elections Act* and the *Electoral District Boundaries Act* involve all parties so that no party can stack the deck in its own favour.

The Premier chose to depart from a principled all-party approach and is undemocratically using a model that lets him set the terms of reference and hand pick members. The Premier had the terms of reference on his iPad when he met with the Leader of the Official Opposition but refused to share them. We finally got a copy just moments before he announced them publicly.

It’s ridiculous to suggest that an approach that gives one party all the power and all the cards is non-partisan. He has the option of working with other parties, but he in fact just told us how it’s going to be. The Premier’s actions are aggressive and blatantly partisan.

Why did the Premier refuse to share the terms of reference with the all-party Members’ Services Board or with the leaders and make a sincere attempt at reaching an agreement?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I really do appreciate the opportunity to correct the record for the public here. I did not have the terms of reference on an iPad when I met with the leaders of

the other parties. I went in with my suggestions. We presented a draft terms of reference — not a complete terms of reference. There is now a draft terms of reference that is out for the public to look at. It's there for more comments from the two opposition leaders, which I committed to — and I will still commit to that — but again, we are using existing processes to establish the committee — the boards and committees process. We are choosing this process because it is non-partisan and it is about the qualifications of the commission members as opposed to partisan credentials.

We will be judged by the members who will be on this committee — absolutely — and then Yukoners can go to the polls if they believe we're acting in a partisan way.

I believe that the Yukon Party is acting in a partisan way in this particular case by confusing the Members' Services Board process and what we committed to Yukoners. We are going to continue on that commitment and we will not be deterred by the comments from the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: The fact remains that the two existing processes provide for an all-party approach. The Premier has chosen to do something different. If he wanted to form a commission, he has had 2.5 years to work with the Official Opposition and Third Party in coming up with a model that we can all agree on. Instead, he has strolled downstairs to check the box to make it seem like he consulted, then made an announcement on his electoral reform approach where he writes the rule, he picks the members, and he can even tell his deputy minister to issue instructions to the supposedly independent committee.

The Premier's one-party-decides-all approach to change our democratic system is aggressive and fundamentally undemocratic. The Yukon Party has proposed a solution: Allow all parties equal say in appointing commission members, work with us and the Third Party to develop the terms of reference and commit that, if changes to our electoral system are recommended, Yukoners will have the final say in a referendum.

Will the Premier agree to abandon his one-party-decides-all approach and commit to holding a referendum before making any changes to our democracy?

Hon. Mr. Silver: With all due respect to the member opposite, they had 14 years to do electoral reform. They chose not to. Now that we are doing it, they want to determine the process and I absolutely and fundamentally refuse to allow that to happen. What I will do is I will commit to an existing process to establish a commission — an existing process of boards and committees. That is an existing process — not to be misled by what the member opposite is saying about us picking something out of a hat or out of the blue.

Again, Mr. Speaker, to correct the record: A draft terms of reference was shared publicly. It is already out there as a draft. The member opposite is saying that I had the final terms of reference on an iPad. That is categorically untrue. That is not true, Mr. Speaker. There are draft terms of reference out right now.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: I believe the Premier just twice contravened Standing Order 19(h) in responding to me and I would ask you to call him to order and have him retract the remarks.

Speaker: The Honourable Premier, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The point of order that the member opposite is making is about actually determining whether or not somebody is lying. I did not say that. I am saying that the member opposite has an opportunity to correct the record because what he is saying is false information.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I heard "categorically untrue". I can review accepted terms of legislatures and return to the House as required. In my view, it is a modifier, but it is not alleging a deliberate mens rea — but I will review it.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we will follow a public call for members. I will speak again with the opposition leaders about membership on that commission. That is a commitment that I made to the leaders, and I will follow through on that with a view to ensure that membership is in keeping with the intent of a non-partisan commission. In the course of this work, the commission will make recommendations as they feel necessary. The draft terms of reference that I mentioned include provisions with respect to the commissioner being able to ensure informed choice as they move forward through those recommendations.

Question re: Infrastructure funding

Ms. Van Bibber: Yesterday, the Parliamentary Budget Officer released a report examining the impacts of federal infrastructure funding on the territorial government's capital spending. The result of this study was a finding that the federal infrastructure programming has meant that the Yukon government has actually lowered the amount of capital spending that it has been planning. In fact, comparing the 2017-18 fiscal year to the 2015-16 fiscal year, the Parliamentary Budget Officer found that once you exclude federal transfers, infrastructure spending has increased in Nunavut and Northwest Territories; however, when you look at Yukon, there was actually a net decrease of \$34 million in capital spending from the territorial government.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us why they are cutting back on their capital spending plans?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Within our departments, it has been me who signed the infrastructure agreements with the federal government.

What I can say is that, overall, we are spending more on infrastructure. I have stood in this Legislature and have said, for example, that the Department of Community Services — when it comes to both infrastructure across all of our communities and land development — over the past two years has spent more than the previous four years combined. What I

will say is that maybe the point that the Parliamentary Budget Officer is making is that it has been less of our own money, and it may be correct — I will have to look that up, try to compare it and take a look. What I can say is correct is that there is more money going into infrastructure in the territory than previously. We are really happy to invest in the Yukon and to see those dollars go across all of our First Nation governments and our municipal governments across the territory, because there has been a deficit in infrastructure. It is a good point. We really have needed to reinvest in the Yukon's infrastructure.

Ms. Van Bibber: According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who is an independent and non-partisan officer of Parliament, between 2015-16 and 2017-18, federal transfers for infrastructure grew faster than new capital spending in the territories. Even though more cash was coming from Ottawa, the territorial government was cutting back.

For example, federal transfers for infrastructure to Yukon increased by \$39 million between that time period, but despite this influx of cash, net capital spending in the territory declined by \$34 million. This means that Yukoners are getting shortchanged on important capital investments in buildings and roads.

During the elections, the Liberals promised that they wouldn't leave a dollar of infrastructure money on the table, but as shown by the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer, why would the government hold back these infrastructure dollars when a road like the Shakwak portion of the north Alaska Highway is desperately in need of work?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There seems to be some fundamental misunderstanding. What I am saying is that we are spending more money on infrastructure, and we are happy that the federal government is giving us additional dollars toward this. That's great. In fact, we try to maximize those federal dollars and we work to ensure that the investment across the Yukon is territory-wide, fair, and serving all Yukoners.

It doesn't mean that every project that ever existed has happened, because there is a large infrastructure deficit. What it does mean is that there is more money being spent on infrastructure right now. I'm happy to say that the federal government has increased their contributions to us as a territory. I thank them for that investment, and we will work to maximize that investment in partnership with our First Nation and municipal governments as they set priorities for what infrastructure is critical within each community.

Somehow, Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a misunderstanding. I will work directly with the member opposite to make sure that I'm not misunderstanding her question later on — but I just want to say for all Yukoners that we are increasing the spending overall in infrastructure.

Ms. Van Bibber: Budgeting is about priorities. The independent Parliamentary Budget Officer who posted this online has found that while transfers to Yukon were increasing from the feds, capital spending from the territory was decreasing. For the period of the 2017-18 fiscal year

compared to the 2015-16 fiscal year, they also found that Yukon has lapsed \$201 million in unspent capital funding in that same time frame.

Will the minister commit to not leaving any infrastructure money on the table this coming fiscal year and reallocating lapsed funding to the Shakwak portion of the north Alaska Highway?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for the question. I know of no lapsed funding. I know that within each of the funding envelopes that we get, we have reallocated. In fact, my very first meeting with the federal minister of infrastructure — which also, by the way, included two chiefs of First Nations — because as we went to the Yukon Forum, we brought our partners with us. We sat down and talked, and the number one issue was to identify flexibility and allow for the fact that we have a short building season here, to allow for changing priorities that come from our municipalities and to allow for the ability to leverage as many funds as possible.

I don't know of any lapsed funding. What I can say with certainty in the Legislature today is that we have increased the spending in infrastructure overall and that is critical, because we know that we have to invest in infrastructure for the territory. That is critical for our communities, our municipalities, and our First Nations. We are seeking to balance our economic investments with environmental stewardship. We are looking to continue to be fair and transparent for the whole of the Yukon.

Each time the member opposite has stood and asked for a list of all the infrastructure projects, I have provided them. I did that again earlier through the budget debate and I would be happy to do it again.

Question re: Yukon nominee program

Ms. White: Recently, Canada's immigration minister promised new legislation to punish businesses that are taking advantage of foreign workers. For many years, the Yukon nominee program was operated with insufficient oversight and was structured in a way that allowed businesses to abuse the nominees of the program. We brought those issues to light and changes were made. While we hope that the program may now be operating better and more fairly, it is impossible to know, as the government does not provide any statistics on program participation.

The nominee handbook tells workers who are experiencing employment issues to contact the Department of Economic Development. Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell this House: How many Yukon nominee participants are there currently in the Yukon? How many nominating businesses are there? How many, if any, complaints has this government received from participants since the program was moved to Economic Development?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just a bit of background on the Yukon business nominee program — first of all, entrepreneurs and investors arrive in Yukon for the opportunity to inject new talent and innovative ideas and increase job opportunities and enhance economic diversification through these programs.

What we have tried to do on the nominee program — we have an allotment of potentially, I think, 260 spots on an annual basis. Not all were used last year. What the department has tried to do with it is to be very proactive on visitation to the actual employers, to ensure that the workplace atmosphere is respectful and that we are ensuring that we uphold the protocols that are in place for these individuals.

I also know that our department has reached out, I believe, to the Yukon Federation of Labour and has had discussions about a cooperative approach to looking at ensuring that these types of protocols are in place and that we have respectful workplaces.

Ms. White: I believe that, for the most part, we were speaking about two different programs there — the business and then the Yukon nominee program. The reason I ask about the numbers related to the Yukon nominee program and the number of participants or nominees is that, in the past, the program has seen some participants being exploited by some employers. There is a significant power imbalance between nominees and the businesses in which they are employed.

If a worker loses or quits their job before the nomination process has finished, their permanent residency application is cancelled. Granted, there is a short window to look for new employment, but this arrangement still puts the balance of power in the employer's hands. Even if they feel they're being taken advantage of, many of these workers don't want to jeopardize their permanent residency application by restarting the nomination process.

Does the minister recognize the power imbalance inherent in the Yukon nominee program, and does he believe the program policy, as it currently stands, is sufficient to ensure that participants are being treated fairly?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes — for the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, I apologize. When I started, I was talking about the business program, but I quickly switched over and explained our process, which was accurate as to how we deal with the nominee program. I will get her the current numbers for this year. I can bring that to the House.

But just a bit of background as well — the Department of Economic Development administers the critical impact worker, skilled worker, and express entry streams of the Yukon nominee program. The Yukon nominee program helps employers fill positions critical to the viability of their businesses with foreign nationals who intend to become permanent residents of Canada. Since 2007, the Yukon nominee program has assisted 385 employers to address labour shortages, with over 1,250 nominees. Most nominees are in food service, tourism, and hospitality.

I believe that I will have an opportunity during budget debate to discuss these programs, but I think our department has really tried to focus on ensuring — in Economic Development — that we really focus on the ability to follow up on the situation for each employee. That is really key — to ensure that the visitations are in place and that you ensure that those individuals do not have to experience things that they would have experienced in the past.

Ms. White: I do look forward to having this conversation later today during general debate on Economic Development.

The Yukon nominee program policy is clearly geared toward economic development and the Yukon NDP recognizes the positive effect that it has on business growth in Yukon. Yet, while it is an economic program for Yukon businesses, it should also be viewed as an immigration program for participants. These two purposes of the program are not incompatible, but they can sometimes clash at the expense of the nominee.

For many nominee participants who are working in Yukon, their number one goal is to pass through the probationary period and receive permanent residency in Canada. Is the minister open to reviewing the Yukon nominee program to ensure that it is fair to nominee candidates and that their unique situation as immigrants is reflected in the policy?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think it's just not as simple as taking a review of our current nominee program. I think also what we are seeing is, based on some of the work that has been done already in Canada — the pilot program that was executed in Atlantic Canada — a number of urban areas and some rural areas have really requested that these programs not just be a pathway to support economic growth or to ensure economic sustainability — which we have seen here, especially in the retail and hospitality sectors — but that there is a pure pathway that even potentially gives each jurisdiction the opportunity to have a greater role in the decision-making process.

Those are some of the things that were discussed when the federal minister was here. We of course had the business community, the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the Yukon College, and others all come together, as well as people who have been a part of this program, to give them an opportunity to reflect on their experiences, places where the federal government can improve and places where we can all collaborate to ensure that we have respectful programs that give opportunities for new Canadians and ensure that our business community has a strong future.

Question re: Internet connectivity

Mr. Istchenko: Last week, the Minister of Highways and Public Works announced that a \$1.5-million contract had been awarded for design and engineering work for the Dempster fibre line. However, if you look at the tender management system, the actual bid by the company was for \$2.6 million. This suggests that between the time of bidding and awarding of the contract, there may have been changes to the scope of work.

Is the minister able to explain why the contract is \$1.1 million less than what the actual bid was?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to talk about the fibre redundancy project that we are currently moving ahead with. It's a long-needed piece of infrastructure for the territory. It is going to provide some stability for our local high-tech and business community, and it is important for us to do this.

I know that the Minister of Economic Development and I have worked very closely to make sure that we get this project delivered and off the ground. We've worked very closely with our partners in Ottawa. Last week, the member noted that we have tendered the contract for the Dempster fibre line. We are also consulting right now with all the First Nations along the line to make sure that they are up to speed. I recently spoke to my colleague in the NWT about the project and made sure that they were aware of our progress on this file, because it is also essential and important to our neighbours in the Northwest Territories.

We have every confidence that we're going to be able to continue and finish this line within the next couple of years. It's a very major piece of infrastructure; it's very important to this territory, and we're very happy to be delivering on this promise.

Mr. Istchenko: I notice that the minister didn't really want to answer when I asked about the discrepancy in the \$1.1 million. The news release also says that the government has hired a permanent consultant for the Dempster fibre project. There is already a lot of expertise within the government to do permitting, as the Government of Yukon does large capital projects on a regular basis. I did find this interesting.

Looking through the tender management system, it doesn't say the total cost of the permitting consultant contract. My question for the minister is: How much has been spent on the permitting consultant contract for the Dempster fibre project to this date?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will continue to talk about this fibre line that we have committed to build, and we are actually following through on that commitment and delivering on our commitment to build that fibre line. Reliable telecommunications is a vital part of diversifying our economy and will help Yukoners and northern residents participate fully in the digital economy, which is why this is such an important project for the territory.

The project will benefit more than 70 communities, including 63 indigenous communities in Yukon, Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and northern BC, and the northern route will create more employment opportunities for Yukon contractors and residents.

We are talking about a line that goes 800 kilometres, from Dawson to Inuvik in the NWT. It's going through several mountain ranges; it's going across rivers and creeks. It is facilitated a little bit by being along a roadway, but it's also a very complicated project, which is why we are bringing in expertise. We have seen our colleagues in the NWT — that project proved to be a little bit more difficult than initially expected, and we want to make sure that, when we're building this line, we have considered everything and are working very closely to deliver it within a reasonable time and on budget. That's very important to us, so we will employ the experts we need to get that job done.

Mr. Istchenko: I don't think I got an answer on the awarding of the contract to the consultant. It didn't sound like the minister really wants to answer these questions.

Regarding the Dempster fibre project, again, I have another couple of questions. I do have some questions, like I said, about the actual regulatory submission now. Specifically, when will the regulatory submission for this project be submitted? We have seen this government tender projects before they get approval on the regulatory process; they have done that in the past. So I'm wondering: Will the government be tendering any of the construction work for this project prior to the approval from any of the regulatory bodies?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to note that Yukoners have been waiting for a very long time for fibre optic redundancy in this territory. I want to note that the Yukon Party talked a lot about the need for a second fibre optic connection, but they never did any of the work necessary and they never followed through — never followed through.

We are following through. We are delivering on the commitments. We have actually tendered the contract. We actually have people in place to help us deliver this line. We are talking with Northwestel. We are talking with First Nation communities. We are actually following through with a fibre optic redundant line that links the north — Inuvik with the rest of the country, with the territory, to provide stable and dependable telecommunication in the Yukon and the north. That's something we have committed to, Mr. Speaker, and we are following through on that.

I do recall that it was several years ago that a group of people went and started a sod-turning event for a school in Riverdale that still hadn't gone through the regulatory process. We had pictures of guys in hardhats with shovels doing the sod-turning to launch a project that had not yet been fully funded or gone through the proper regulatory processes.

We don't do that here, Mr. Speaker. We go through the processes and that's what we're doing on this file. I am very pleased with the way we are proceeding with this and I look forward to having redundant fibre in the territory in the next couple of years.

Question re: Liberal platform commitments re schools

Mr. Kent: I have some follow-up questions about the 2016 Liberal election platform.

The Liberals promised Yukoners that they would — and I quote: "... ensure that schools have the necessary resources (e.g. in-school social workers, psychologists) to facilitate health services work within all Yukon schools."

We talked about this in debate on Monday but never got specific answers. Has the minister expanded the amount of in-school social workers or the amount of school psychologists, or has she abandoned this campaign promise?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am surprised a bit to hear this question because we did discuss it recently in the budget debate. I believe that what I said at the time was that Student Support Services — where the social workers and school psychologists are generally employed — is undergoing a consideration by the Department of Education because we are very keen to make sure that the individuals who have those skills are in fact spending their time in schools and assessing

students and helping students and supporting families so that they are in fact receiving the services they need at the place that they need it — which is in the school — and on a more regular basis.

I believe I also said the other day that we would provide numbers with respect to the social worker employees or the people with those credentials employed at the department as well as psychologists employed at the department. I have not yet filed the response by way of a legislative return.

Mr. Kent: Another Liberal election platform commitment was — and I quote: “A Yukon Liberal Government will: enhance education governance, in consultation with partners in education, by exploring the establishment of an additional school board(s).”

On Monday, the minister told us that the government would not be pursuing this election promise any further and they are not planning on creating a new school board.

As I noted, the platform indicated that this would be done in consultation with partners in education. Can the minister tell us which partners were consulted before the government decided they would abandon this promise? Why is there no reference to this consultation on engageyukon.ca?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. This is actually the third time I have had it, and I am happy to say what I said at that time again.

Consideration has been given with respect to that commitment going forward and we have worked very, very closely in collaboration with Yukon First Nations and determined that the current governance with respect to the school councils is an important method for individual families and members of school communities to have input into projects going forward involving their school community and that it was appropriate for us to work with each individual First Nation government in a commitment to work toward appropriate, better consultation and reconciliation with respect to school programs and our education support of Yukon First Nations and their students.

Yukon First Nations are essential partners in supporting First Nation students, in teaching all Yukon students about First Nation ways of knowing and doing, about cultural inclusion, about success in whatever path they choose. The focus, as I have said on more than one occasion in this House, is on reconciliation and working with our partners in First Nation education to improve that process.

Mr. Kent: So I am going to read that specific Liberal election platform commitment again for the minister: “A Yukon Liberal Government will: enhance education governance, in consultation with partners in education, by exploring the establishment of an additional school board(s).” Of course, we agree that First Nations are critical partners in education, but there are other partners in education as well.

Can the minister tell us which other partners were consulted before the government decided that they would abandon this election promise?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As my friends across the way are wont to say on a regular basis now, this is about prioritizing. It is about working closely with the partners in education,

including First Nations and First Nation governments, the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education, in an attempt to work and share perspectives and to collaborate and support learners from cradle to career.

One way the Government of Yukon works with its partners in education is through the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education. This committee has met three times in this school year. It is a topic that the member opposite asked me about quite a bit last year, but hasn't asked me about this year, even though I would be happy to explain that it has been reinvigorated and that it is an opportunity for all of the education questions, including the ones he has asked me several times, to be dealt with in a way in which the partnerships are made a priority. This year, the committee and our work with Yukon First Nations will be continuing to set priorities for the Department of Education, our student learners, and our school communities.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 437 — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Motion No. 437, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod; adjourned debate, the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the class left.

I am very happy to rise again to speak to this motion. I appreciate that the Official Opposition brought this motion back. I want to begin again by thanking the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this motion. I agree with her that counselling services are very important for Yukoners, so I am very happy that we have the motion back in front of us. I want to just begin by briefly recapping a little bit, and then I will move on to the debate.

The Member for Watson Lake had spoken about concerns that were happening with Many Rivers — and I quote “... problems that were in place before employees of the organization entered into this labour dispute and strike, followed by a return to work and almost immediately a layoff of the employees.”

In part of her presentation to this Chamber, she talked about wanting to see additional leadership. She used as one of her examples that the Minister of Health and Social Services or we as a government should have taken a leadership role in the labour dispute. I again will say that I disagree with that position. I have said it a few times in this Legislature and I have said it as well to the Third Party and past members of the Third Party who wrote publicly to say that we should have been involved in that labour dispute. That would have been incorrect. That is not a sign of leadership; it would have been a sign of working beyond our jurisdiction, inappropriately.

There are many ways in which we can and should show leadership. As I said, I believe that the Minister of Health and Social Services has shown leadership. That is about making sure that there are services for counselling here in the territory. In fact, I am aware and I know that she has stated that she has, in the interim, found ways to increase services for counselling services. Another way in which she is showing leadership is by reviewing how the money that went to Many Rivers has been spent, because of course we have a responsibility to all Yukoners to show accountability around that funding and to make sure that we are focusing on well-being, investing in health, building strong communities as a result — that there is a responsible government that is accountable for the monies that it transfers and that is showing that it is serving all Yukoners and is fair.

Overall, moving forward from that recap, Mr. Speaker, what I want to say is that I — and we on this side of the Legislature — support the spirit of the motion, if not the specifics. I will move an amendment.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT Motion No. 437 be amended by removing all the words after the words “Social Services” and replacing them with the following: “to continue to work with organizations to ensure the future of effective counselling services in Yukon.”

Speaker: I have had an opportunity to review the proposed amendment to Motion No. 437 with Mr. Clerk and can advise that it is procedurally in order.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: If the Member for Watson Lake has another opinion, she can share it by standing.

It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services:

THAT Motion No. 437 be amended by removing all the words after the words “Social Services” and replacing them with the following: “to continue to work with organizations to ensure the future of effective counselling services in Yukon.”

The motion as amended would then read:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to continue to work with organizations to ensure the future of effective counselling services in Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Let me begin by talking about Many Rivers just slightly — which was in the original wording of the motion and why I am proposing this amendment.

Since we last stood to speak, they have now announced an annual general meeting. I believe it's for Friday, April 26. I am happy that is going forward, and they have stated that they are accepting memberships for those people who, as per their bylaws, respect the principles of support for counselling for individual Yukoners and families. That is great.

But I have also noted that there is some uncertainty around Many Rivers. For example, they are not yet in compliance. They haven't yet had an annual general meeting.

They haven't yet submitted their financials to get back into compliance. Beyond that, there is also work that Health and Social Services necessarily has to undertake to look at the spending of the contribution agreement with Many Rivers to make sure that those dollars are accounted for.

In the meantime, there is also another group — we have seen here in this Legislature just this week; they provided a petition for us here in the Legislature — called the Community Counselling and Support Services Society, a newly formed society that has been working with the Minister of Health and Social Services and her department to propose an alternate perspective about how to achieve counselling services here in the territory. They have put forward their ideas. There is some overlap, I think, between the two groups. The point I am trying to make is that they are the second group that is looking to provide the services — a second not-for-profit.

Also, as I mentioned earlier, the minister has — in showing leadership on the file — worked to increase interim supports around counselling services. I'm not suggesting that this is where things will ultimately land, but in the meantime, she has worked to increase the services for Yukoners so there is more counselling available. One of the ways in which that has happened is through the Yukon division of the Canadian Mental Health Association. So that's another group that is a not-for-profit and is engaged on this issue.

It's my opinion that all of these groups want to help. They want to help see the services delivered in the territory; they want to assist the minister in achieving those counselling services. So the landscape is not just Many Rivers as was in the original motion, which is why I am proposing the amendment that I am. It is to acknowledge that there are organizations that all want to ensure the future of effective counselling services here in the Yukon. I think that, through this motion, we should be directing the minister to work with all those organizations to make sure those services are delivered.

Mr. Speaker, I will say again that non-governmental organizations are critical to the delivery of services here in the territory — whether that's counselling services or other services — and we work with many of them across the territory. All parties in this Legislature have talked about how it's important to support our non-governmental organizations.

I think the role of Health and Social Services — and by extension, the minister — is to ensure, in this case, that counselling services are available for Yukoners across the territory. I don't think it's a good role for us as MLAs in this Legislature to say, “It will be this group and here's the way to go.”

I just think the wording of the motion, unfortunately, made it out that it would be Many Rivers, and I think it's important that we consider that there are several organizations. That's the reason why I proposed the amendment coming forward.

I look forward to the debate on the amendment and to see where we land. Again, I wish to thank the Member for Watson

Lake, because I think we all agree that counselling services are important for Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to the amendment, I do thank the Minister of Community Services for providing more clarity than the government has to date on how the government is approaching this situation through some of his remarks, although we're still waiting for full clarity.

This is an area where we have seen, for almost half a year, an interruption to important mental health services and a real lack of leadership on the part of the Minister of Health and Social Services in this area. There were options and steps the government could have taken to provide clarity to Many Rivers on what steps were required. The government has taken a hands-off approach to this issue while they did have options for assisting in this matter. This would be far from the first time that government has assisted an NGO in understanding what the rules are, what steps need to be taken, and to ensure that they provide services while they come into compliance with the *Societies Act*, if they are temporarily out of compliance with that act.

In speaking to the amendment brought forward by the government, I would point out that it does, to some extent, gut the motion proposed by my colleague the Member for Watson Lake.

I have to point out that the wording the government has a problem supporting — by bringing forward this amendment, the Liberals have made it clear that they don't expect the Minister of Health and Social Services to show leadership. They have a problem with that part of the wording. They are not supporting government ending the uncertainty, and they are not comfortable with wording that says the government should make clear what steps will be taken to ensure that those important services resume.

I would note that, to the minister's point, he seems to be indicating now — and I would appreciate and I know that Yukoners who are interested in this issue would sincerely appreciate the government elaborating on what lies ahead in this situation.

I have heard and I know that some of my colleagues — including the Member for Watson Lake, our critic for Health and Social Services — have been hearing from people who are interested in this. For people who are involved in groups that are interested in this matter — both Many Rivers and the new group whose name escapes me at the moment and the one that has formed out of the Friends of Many Rivers organization — in this case, the Community Counselling and Support Services Society, of course, is the name of the new group. I thank my colleague from Watson Lake for providing me with that reminder.

Whether the path forward is with Many Rivers, the Community Counselling and Support Services Society, or the mental health society that the minister made reference to — all of those options — if the government is considering that — we recognize that there may be more than one approach to resuming mental health services.

The point that the government seems to have been missing is that, through the Minister of Health and Social Services' repeated failure to work with NGOs and the damaged relationship that this Liberal government has with the NGO community — they have provided a lack of clarity to everyone involved in the situation about what options the government is considering, whether it is resuming the relationship with Many Rivers — who, I would note, have been providing those services for some 50 years — or entering into a relationship with the Community Counselling and Support Services Society or continuing some of the temporary services with the mental health society that have been put in place.

What we are looking for from the government — and what concerned Yukoners are looking for from the government — is clarity about what they can do, clarity about what the government is prepared to entertain, and clarity about whether or not government is looking at a potential relationship involving a mix of these groups — what the process is for determining that — whether they should be working directly with the government or whether there is a competitive process of some sort, or just exactly how government envisions this proceeding. They are looking for answers.

The fact that, almost half a year after this situation and interruption in service came into play, these groups are reaching out to the Official Opposition for answers because they are not getting any answers from the government is concerning and is an example of how this Liberal government talks a good line but is not very forthcoming with information to the public and is not providing clarity to NGOs about what options government is prepared to entertain and how they could potentially take steps to enter a relationship with the government or to compete through a competitive process — because government has simply not provided that clarity.

I do have to point out that the Liberal government's repeated failure to work with NGOs includes the freeze on funding for many NGOs, which did affect Many Rivers and helped contribute to the problem.

We have seen as well their failure to work with groups that have gone to the point of having to go public with their funding problems — such as the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society — and we know that there have been issues as well with others — such as the Child Development Centre — having a funding shortfall and with the government taking quite some time to actually wake up and listen to calls from the Official Opposition and from the organization itself to address their needs.

We have seen as well, in the case of the Salvation Army takeover, a demonstration that the Liberal government would literally rather add 40 government employees and grow government — despite their commitments to the contrary — rather than entering into an effective relationship and assisting that NGO in addressing their problems in services.

Again, in concluding my remarks on this proposed amendment, we recognize that government has a majority. We assume they intend to force this amendment through, but

again, it should be noted that it's quite reasonable to expect the Minister of Health and Social Services to show leadership and end the uncertainty by making clear what steps the Government of Yukon will take to ensure that these important services resume and continue to be provided. It is unfortunate that the government is not willing to support that wording and is insisting on watering it down.

I do have to point out that, in the proposal brought forward by the Minister of Community Services, the suggestion that the phrase "continue to work with organizations to ensure the future of effective counselling services in Yukon" — to continue working with organizations, one must first actually start working with them. That is what we have seen lacking on the part of this Liberal government and the Minister of Health and Social Services in this area.

The government has taken a "look ma, no hands" approach to dealing with this situation affecting Many Rivers and the clients who were affected by the gap in services. It's unfortunate that, though we have a tiny bit more information here today, we still see a lack of clarity about what the path forward is — a lack of leadership on the part of this Liberal government.

Ms. White: Just in quickly speaking to the proposed amendment right now — understanding that other groups in the community have been working hard to try to fill in the voids left by Many Rivers' absence — I think that it is important to acknowledge, which the minister has. I will have questions, when we get to the other side of voting, about what kind of safeguards will be put in place.

What I find that this motion does — it actually removes the name of any organization. I find that hopeful because it's not saying that advancements will have to be made with one organization over another — especially knowing that the Community Counselling and Support Services did put forward a proposal to government last Friday which they have been actively working on, with some directional help from department officials.

I am happy to see the changes. I appreciate that we are not naming one organization at this point, but we are talking about working with organizations to ensure that counselling services happen. I do appreciate the amendment.

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

Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it. I declare the amendment carried.

Amendment to Motion No. 437 agreed to

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

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am pleased to rise to speak Motion No. 437 as amended: "THAT this government urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to continue to work with organizations to ensure future effective counselling services in Yukon."

I am just reflecting a little bit on some of the comments about what we are doing. It is not a watered-down process, Mr. Speaker, or a lack of leadership. I believe that is absolutely not the case. I do want to put some clarity on the record with regard to what we are doing and how we are working through a transparent process to allow for participation of interest groups who have come forward. We are aware that there are other interested parties that are interested in looking at supported services in the territory.

Our government strongly supports mental health services for Yukoners. We know that healthy living and happiness are lifelong pursuits of Yukoners. As a government, we are committed to the wellness and lifelong journey of Yukoners. We are committed to ensuring that our policies and services coordinate for the betterment of Yukoners.

The Department of Health and Social Services has done and continues to do tremendous work with our communities and partners, advancing us all toward a healthier Yukon. Mental health supports are a major part of that. In partnership with the Department of Justice, we have increased access to mental health and substance use counselling services for Justice clients. We are continuing to support land-based healing initiatives with 14 Yukon First Nations.

In May, we launched the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services branch. This service integrates Alcohol and Drug Services, Child and Adolescent Therapeutic Services, and mental health services into a single point of contact as a branch to serve Yukoners better. That is alignment and that is efficiency.

We have opened Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services hubs in Carmacks and Haines Junction and provide services to Ross River, Faro, Pelly Crossing, Burwash Landing, and Beaver Creek, which we have not seen in history past. We have also done tremendous work to increase the number of mental health support workers that we have in Yukon communities. Community-based wellness and substance use staff include clinical counsellors, child and youth counsellors, nurses and support workers. We now have social workers in all of our communities. We have taken a one-government approach to provide support to all families.

As well, we have worked with the Department of Education to ensure that we have clinical counsellors and youth counsellors within all of our communities so that we can better align a one-government approach to the services. As of January, we have 27 staff in mental health and substance use positions across rural Yukon. We are working to recruit nine more. All of these increased services help to support the overall intent of this motion, which is to ensure that Yukoners have access to mental health services.

I think it bears outlining for Yukoners — what all this means in terms of actual support workers in our communities and why that is relevant to today's motion.

Mental wellness and substance use counsellors are responsible for providing ongoing support to Yukoners. They work with individuals with mental health complaints as well as those with substance use concerns. Our clinical counsellors provide a high level of care for more chronic mental illness complaints, trauma, and chronic disorders or concurrent disorders. Child and youth counsellors in Yukon support children and youth who are impacted by mental health concerns and/or substance use.

In Dawson, we have two mental wellness and substance use counsellors, one clinical counsellor, one support worker, and one child, youth and family counsellor. We are in the process of recruiting a mental health nurse there. In Old Crow, we have one mental wellness and substance use counsellor. In Mayo, we also have a full-time mental wellness and substance use counsellor. In Haines Junction, we have two mental wellness and substance use counsellors, one clinical counsellor, one mental health nurse, and one child and youth counsellor, and we are currently recruiting one mental health nurse. In Carcross, we have a mental wellness and substance use counsellor and support worker. In Carmacks, we have a clinical counsellor, a mental wellness and substance use counsellor and a support worker, and we are recruiting additional positions. In Watson Lake, we have two mental wellness and substance use counsellors, two support workers, one mental health nurse, and one child, youth and family counsellor, and we are recruiting one more clinical counsellor. In Teslin, we have one mental wellness and substance counsellor.

We are working hard to recruit additional supports to provide services to Faro, Ross River, and Pelly Crossing. While we are in that process, people in these communities have access to the interim services from Whitehorse and to one of the mental wellness hubs. These services were not available previously, Mr. Speaker. Our objective and our job in Health and Social Services — with our partners — is to look to provide the services that are needed in time for Yukoners who need the support. This increase in available supports has changed the landscape of how Yukoners in communities access mental health supports. The health and well-being of Yukoners is a priority for our government.

We know that the strike and layoffs at Many Rivers has affected many Yukoners. We have made a significant effort to meet Yukoners' mental wellness needs during this disruption in service. That is something that we are committed to continue doing. In order to do so, we have experienced of course some pressures as a result of the disruption of services through Many Rivers. We have expanded our services to meet the needs of Yukoners during the recent disruption. We have increased the availability of drop-in counselling and we will increase it again, if needed.

Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services at 609 Steele Street has expanded its drop-in counselling hours and is working with individuals to determine how they can best be supported during this time. Previously only available on Wednesdays, the mental wellness and substance use drop-in counselling sessions in Whitehorse are now available Monday

through Friday, and we will continue that expanded scope of practice. Outside of Whitehorse, drop-in counselling can be accessed through the community wellness hubs.

There are more supports available in the communities now than ever before, thanks to the opening of these four mental wellness and substance use hubs in 2018.

While there is one drop-in session with a counsellor to talk about difficult thoughts or feelings or for an urgent and acute mental health issue, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services offers a range of programs and supports to meet people's different levels of need. In addition to drop-in counselling, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services offers long-term counselling services, drop-in group sessions, and in-patient nursing services.

I am extremely proud of the work we have done to ensure Yukoners are supported through access to the Mental Wellness and Substance Use hubs we now have across the Yukon. As today's motion specifically identifies a need to work with organizations, I will also note that we have taken action through an expanded partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association Yukon Division.

The Canadian Mental Health Association Yukon Division is an organization dedicated to supporting Canadians living with mental health problems. Following the strike of Many Rivers, the Department of Health and Social Services contracted the Canadian Mental Health Association Yukon Division to offer drop-in counselling services. This is a partnership that we have continued since November. They are offering drop-in counselling sessions on Tuesdays and Saturdays. In addition to drop-in sessions, appointments can be booked Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Canadian Mental Health Association Yukon Division is located in the Horwoods Mall at 1114 Front Street in Whitehorse, and they can be reached at 668-6429. Between the services we offer at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and those available through the Yukon division of the Canadian Mental Health Association, drop-in counselling services are available to meet Yukoners' needs throughout the week. For the French community, we fund the Tel-Aide listening line. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A French language counsellor is also available at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.

While I, as the Minister of Health and Social Services, have been working hard to ensure that Yukoners have access to essential mental health services in Yukon, my colleague the Minister of Community Services has been working on the Many Rivers file with the registrar through the requirements outlined in the *Societies Act*.

Let me state again for the record that Many Rivers is not in compliance. The organization failed to submit the required annual reporting documents to the registrar of societies by the July 31, 2018, deadline. There are outstanding questions pertaining to their AGM. That has affected our ability to fund the society. Many Rivers has historically received an annual revenue in excess of \$2 million a year. The action of the society means that we are not currently continuing that agreement. Our government supports open and transparent

government processes, and we are committed to being a government for the people — one that acts at all times in an ethical, responsible, and accountable way. We have a responsibility to Yukoners to move forward on this issue in a way that respects a transparent process. The registrar of societies has released their decision and has found the complaints made against Many Rivers to be valid. The society has indicated a willingness to return to compliance. We look forward to seeing the work that needs to be done on that front.

In the meantime, we have been taking steps to address clients' needs and working with other organizations to ensure Yukoners have access to services. We have paid Many Rivers' rent up to the end of this month — which is two months that they were not in compliance — directly to the landlord of their Whitehorse office to give them a bit of flexibility. Providing this rental support will allow Many Rivers to appropriately process and manage their confidential client records and bring confidential client records into Whitehorse from the communities. The department will be sending Many Rivers a letter outlining their obligations under HIPMA for managing confidential client records. We recognize that there are other organizations interested in providing counselling services in the territories and we are reviewing all of our options as we go forward. We will be in a better position to outline the next steps after Many Rivers has made a decision about their future as a society.

I want to acknowledge Many Rivers support workers and all of those Yukoners who have supported them through what has been an incredibly hard time for not just the workers, but their clients as well. It is important that we acknowledge that and we recognize the supports that are needed and provide them in a timely fashion.

From the beginning of the dispute, we have been transparent and accountable about what we have jurisdiction over and what we can and cannot do. My priority is ensuring that Yukoners have access to mental health support services. We are grateful to all of our partner groups that have worked with the Department of Health and Social Services to step in and provide additional mental health supports for Yukoners during this time.

I am more than willing to agree to today's amendment and to continue to working with organizations to ensure the future of effective counselling services in the Yukon.

Ms. White: In speaking to the amended motion today, I just want to highlight some concerns that I have, basically, in what steps come next.

Understanding that Many Rivers is not currently in compliance but that they are holding an AGM on April 26, I know that the group that has been referenced and has put forward a proposal to government is at this hard junction right now to decide if they should go ahead on the route that they have chosen or if they should look at taking over the Many Rivers board for a whole bunch of reasons. There is an existing building in the client files that are already within that society.

I would like to point out some of the safeguards that I have concerns about. One is making sure that, if a new board were to take over or be elected on April 26, there would be protections in place to protect them from the actions that happened prior. I say that because I know we have mentioned or have heard of a forensic audit happening — that government is looking at what happened to the money that has been transferred. I think it is very important to know what has happened up to this point, but I very much understand the intention and the passion of the people who have formed the new board. It was out of desperation, and it was about really making sure that counselling services were available — and not government counselling services. That is super important.

I appreciate that the minister spoke at length about what government has done and what they have put in place, but that doesn't answer the call or check the boxes for a lot of people. A non-governmental organization is important, including understanding as well that the work that was done in the communities was in conjunction with the mental wellness hubs — that there was enough for two to be there.

I just wanted to highlight that my hope is that protections will be put in place that would protect, if the new organization decided to go to that board meeting and made overtures to be elected to that board, that the new board at Many Rivers, and whatever it might be called in the future, would not be affected by decisions of the past.

I was happy to hear the minister talk about the client record transfer because that has been a concern. It has been a concern because the counsellors who worked with Many Rivers sometimes worked for a long period of time with clients and the information that they had documented was to help them in treatment plans and those things. There has been a question as to how that would work. I know that the counsellors themselves have said that they are prepared to take notes on paper and that they could forward without but those are really important. That client information is really important.

Those are just some of the questions that I have. Also, knowing that the work that has been done and the intention right now has been to make sure that the steps have been taken with the advice of the ADM and the officials from the departments when the CCSS met with them — that the community members did that with the full intention of putting in a serious proposal as a serious option.

I hope that is regarded because one of the concerns that has been brought forward is if the government decided to go in a completely different route than anything that exists right now — that if an RFP was to be put out, that it could take too long, that it would make people wait longer. I just wanted to say that my hope is that a community organization is able to continue forward, whoever it is — I don't pretend to prejudge that — but just to make sure that there is protection in place if a new board is elected at Many Rivers.

Mr. Speaker, those are just the points for now. Like many in this Chamber and many in the community, I look forward to a community organization being able to support community

members. I think that is ultimately what we're talking about today — community supporting community.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard on Motion No. 437 as amended?

Ms. McLeod: Some of the members who have spoken to this motion — both the last time we talked about it and again today — have tried to state that the original motion favoured one group over another. I certainly would have preferred that those members read the motion.

The fact that the minister has not shown leadership during this service shortfall continues to be valid. We and the public have struggled to get the government's attention on this. Today, finally, we hear something from the government.

Today we hear that there is an audit being performed on Many Rivers' contribution agreements and I think this is warranted. We are talking about public dollars and certainly groups that are recipients of these public dollars do need to be accountable.

I don't know what the government's path forward is in this regard. I did hear, I think, the minister speak today about waiting to move forward until Many Rivers makes a decision on their way forward, but of course, we don't know exactly what the government's thought process is going to be on this. What I do know is that Yukoners deserve some consideration by the government to have these services put in place as soon as possible. I hope that once an audit is done Yukoners are afforded an opportunity to be advised by government in their open and accountable way, telling them what the results were and to fully share with Yukoners what the findings of an audit were.

With that, I want to thank the members of the House, and good day.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yeas, nil nays.

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

Motion No. 437, as amended, agreed to

Motion No. 463

Clerk: Motion No. 463, standing in the name of Ms. White.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to remove barriers for qualified individuals to have access to pre-exposure prophylaxis which significantly reduces the risk of human immunodeficiency virus infection by:

- (1) educating at-risk individuals of this preventive option;
- (2) ensuring the best access and availability to this drug option; and
- (3) providing this preventive option for free.

Ms. White: Today, I hope to lay out the case of why Yukon should join seven provinces across the country in making HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis medication available free to qualified individuals. From this point forward, I am mostly going to refer to it as "PrEP" because it is much easier to say.

Right now, the provinces that already cover PrEP under their health plan include British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Quebec. Alberta was the last to join on October 1, 2018.

PrEP is the use of an anti-HIV medication to keep HIV-negative people from becoming infected. In layperson terms, PrEP is an HIV blocker. When taken consistently, PrEP has been shown to reduce the risk of HIV infection in people who are at high risk by up to 92 percent. Mr. Speaker, that number is astronomical. The fact that there is a drug that exists that is able to reduce the new cases of infection by 92 percent is impressive. It is a powerful HIV-prevention tool and it can be combined with condoms and other prevention methods to provide even greater protection than when used alone.

I spoke to a program coordinator at the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS and I was told that a major benefit of being prescribed PrEP was that it encourages linkages to care, and that regular visits with the health care system encourages better sexual health. One of the issues that have been identified is that high-risk individuals are often not connected to the health care system and not in a way that is regularly prescribed to a PrEP user. It requires regular visits every three months and you are then monitored by a doctor.

In British Columbia, PrEP is available through the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS drug treatment program at no cost to qualifying patients who are deemed clinically at risk of HIV infection. This is an important point to make, Mr. Speaker. I am suggesting that we only make the

drug available to those who would qualify as high risk for HIV infection, not just to anybody. I have read through the application documents from BC, Alberta, and Ontario, and if anyone feels that the questions asked at No. 4 Hospital Road are deeply personal, then I would suggest that the qualification process to access PrEP may make them blush. This is not an easy process to apply. I mean, it is an easy process, but it is deeply personal — the questions that are asked to rank a person as to whether or not they are at high risk.

People need to meet the clinical criteria for being at high risk of acquiring an HIV infection as per the fairly universal guidelines. They need to have had a negative fourth-generation HIV test within the previous 15 days of application, be residents of the respective province whose health care plan they fall under, and have the prescription completed by a licensed physician. So you have to be able to approach your doctor first before you can even access the drug.

I think it's worth mentioning that non-insured health benefits for First Nations and Inuit already cover the cost of PrEP. That is universal across the country. In Yukon, it would mean that it is two-tiered, because it's not available yet for the other Yukoners who would like to access it.

I have an article from February 26, 2018, from *The Globe and Mail*. The title of it is "HIV Pre-exposure drug approved for funding in BC, but barriers remain." I am going to read selections of this article, and I think that it's important to note that it talks about the barriers — it talks about cost being a barrier, it talks about having to educate your physician, and it talks about rural residents in BC sometimes not even being out to their physicians — so having to have that conversation.

I'm quoting: "Health Canada approved PrEP in the form of the drug Truvada last year, but it has remained too expensive for many patients at \$1,000 a month. It's considerably cheaper — \$70 — in the United States, prompting Mr. Adamson to drive from his home in Vancouver across the border every three months to a rented mailbox to pick up his prescription.

"That changed in late December when the B.C. government announced it would become the first province, as of Jan. 1, to fully fund the generic form of the drug to patients at risk of contracting HIV — a policy that has seen 600 patients enrol in the program, but, patients and doctors say, hasn't completely removed the barriers to getting the drug.

"In Mr. Adamson's case, even with a Vancouver-based physician who was supportive and open to prescribing PrEP, he had to educate his doctor about the funding decision.

"I was a little surprised. It seems like the word isn't really out as much as I thought it was," said Mr. Adamson. "I see it on my Facebook, in my social group it's talked about and it's a thing, but I guess it's not everywhere."

"The funding program, which is overseen by the Vancouver-based BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS... provides the drug for free to people at high risk of infection. As of Feb. 15, there were 601 people enrolled in the program, with 32 requests still being processed. Of those, 60 percent are

completely new to PrEP. So far, 120 physicians in B.C. have prescribed the treatment."

The reason I bring that up, Mr. Speaker, is how quickly it took off in British Columbia. When I was talking to the BC centre of excellence, one of the reasons they said was that they did targeted education campaigns. For example, one weekend they invited residents from across British Columbia to Vancouver and they did a PrEP education weekend. The reason I would say that this was so important — and the reason why PrEP became something on my radar — is that the education was shared quite widely in Vancouver on media such as Tinder or any Internet dating application.

The trainees or the men in British Columbia who are educated actually send out information to online users to say that this drug is available, is free of charge, and this is how you go about applying. One of the program coordinators I talked to said that what they realized is that by educating people in their communities who can then reach out within their communities, they were going to get a further grasp than, for example, a website that members are free to look at.

I'm going to go back to the article, which says, "In order to get on PrEP, a patient first needs a doctor to approve their request and submit a form to the BC-CfE on their behalf; the patient is also sent for blood tests.

"Not every person at high risk of contracting HIV has a family physician, let alone a physician with whom they feel comfortable sharing details of their sexual activities or their history of drug use. For people in rural parts of B.C., where more conservative attitudes prevail, this can be an even bigger challenge."

The reason why I think this is really important to note is that we are often even more rural than rural British Columbia. What they have noticed in BC is that you need a family doctor or someone you are having that conversation with, and that it is up to them to prescribe the medication. Part of the challenge has been that, in some cases in rural communities, if you are going to go see your auntie or a family member at the health centre, you may be outing yourself in a way that you are not prepared to do.

Part of the reason why I wanted to read part of the article is the fact that it has been ongoing now for a number of years in British Columbia. They have seen some changes. Information is now being more freely shared, which I think is super important, and doctors are now becoming more educated about it. I know anecdotally in the territory that often, when a person approaches their doctor about the prescription, they have to be the one to say why it is important and why it is a thing that they would like to do. Although the drug is partially covered by, for example, the government health care plan, it is not entirely covered. The cost is still a barrier.

When I was talking to the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, they actually talked about Blood Ties Four Directions. They talked about Blood Ties Four Directions as being a community partner in Yukon. They already knew of the work that Blood Ties has done. They said it would be a perfect fit as far as educating about PrEP.

When I talk about high-risk individuals, Mr. Speaker — this typically would affect gay men, and it would affect intravenous drug users or anyone in the sex work trade. Even talking about that alone — there are biases that exist. It is interesting, because we could go back to the conversation about why having free condoms in bathrooms is important. It doesn't increase sexual activity; it just increases safe sexual activity. I think that is an important thing to note.

On *aidsmap.com*, it just talks about debates on PrEP provision. I think that part of why it is important is that it talks about the stigma. It says: "The authors acknowledge that HIV-related stigma poses particular challenges, since this can affect decision making. For example, one argument against provision of PrEP for groups such as sex workers, drug users and men who have sex with men 'is based on the idea that providing prophylaxis expresses approval for high-risk behaviours'..." It is no different from the conversation that used to be around the argument against needle exchanges or condoms and making those available. This is just one more tool.

It goes on to say: "Another issue is the perception that people choosing risky behaviours should be at a lower priority for prevention than those whose risk is not affected by their behaviour..." So that is an issue — the fact that a system could judge whether someone is deserving or not, based on their decision-making. I have advocated over and over again in this Chamber that this is not actually our business. It is not our business to say what is morally right and what is morally wrong — but to treat people as such.

One of the reasons why I wanted to start having this conversation about PrEP is that it is important. The BC centre for excellence had really great ideas. They said things like, "It would be good; the Yukon government could partner with us, and we could help them with their bulk buying and we could bring down the cost of the drugs. They don't have to do it alone. They can contact us."

With the other provinces that I listed — I went through some of their documentation and their statistics, and it is really positive. I don't think that this should be a barrier. There shouldn't be a barrier to have access to this drug in Yukon for people who would qualify. The reason why I keep on saying "people who would qualify" is that, just like in British Columbia, you go through a process to make sure that you qualify. I think that if someone is willing to go through that process, then they should be given the opportunity to access what is really an HIV blocker. That is astounding.

The centre for excellence — I believe their goal is to eradicate new cases of HIV in British Columbia by 2024. That is how quick and how effective this is.

Education is easy. We have partners like Blood Ties. Part of the education process would be making sure that Yukon physicians understood what PrEP was. There is an entire education process out there that exists already; we don't need to rewrite it.

When I talk about best access and availability to this drug option, it just means making it available. Whether you go to No. 4 Hospital Road and you see the nurse there, whether you

go to your family physician, or however you access health now — this would be a continuation.

The really important point is point 3, which is providing this preventive option for free. That would have us on par with those in the Yukon who are already covered the NIHB program. That would make us on par with that. When I was talking to the centre of health in British Columbia, they were excited about the prospect of getting it into the territory in a similar fashion.

What I would really like to know is: What does the government think? Is this a possibility? Is this something we can discuss? Is this something that can be consulted on with the community? Right now, what I am really looking for is where government is in this process — understanding that the first time I mentioned it was during response to a budget. I have tabled a motion, so I was highlighting that this was an issue I was going to talk about.

There is lots of information available online. I think really of interest — or maybe of concern — is that financial access is a barrier. The drug is expensive; it's true. It was \$1,000. They now have a non-name brand that is more affordable. But it is still something that I think should be made available to Yukoners who qualify.

With that, I look forward to hearing from the minister and from other government members.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House to speak to Motion No. 463:

"THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to remove barriers for qualified individuals to have access to pre-exposure prophylaxis which significantly reduces the risk of human immunodeficiency virus by:

- (1) educating at-risk individuals of this preventive option;
- (2) ensuring the best access and availability to this drug option; and
- (3) providing this preventive option for free."

I would like to thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing this important opportunity forward for discussion.

We strive to provide accessible collaborative care to Yukoners every day through our health care system. Our pharmacare program ensures access to drugs and treatment needed by Yukoners to keep them well. The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving its extended benefit program to improve efficiencies and access. In fact, this morning, I met with members of the Yukon Pharmacists Association and the Yukon Medical Association to discuss pharmaceutical coverages in the Yukon and to talk a lot about the national pharmacare program and, of course, to talk a lot about their structures and some of their challenges in terms of how they govern themselves and how they navigate our complex system.

Reforming our pharmacare program is one of the key things to be addressed by the comprehensive health review and its independent expert panel.

Motion No. 463, in its current iteration reads that the government will remove barriers for qualified individuals to

have access to pre-exposure prophylaxis which significantly reduces the risk of human immunodeficiency virus infection.

Before we remove these barriers, we need to better understand what the barriers are. Exposure to PrEP is currently covered for qualified individuals, as noted by the member opposite, in British Columbia and Quebec.

PrEP is not covered by our current health insurance; however, it is currently covered by all private drug plans. If there are financial barriers associated with accessing PrEP, we want to know what those barriers are and how best to support individuals at risk of human immunodeficiency virus infection. The administration of PrEP requires a prescription from a physician or NP. Individuals must be HIV negative and go to their health care provider every three months for HIV testing. Ensuring that at-risk individuals have access to physicians and nurse practitioners are part of this equation.

Our referred care clinic is one of the ways this government is ensuring street-involved or at-risk individuals who need increased supports can have access to nurse practitioners who would be able to prescribe PrEP. The use of the oral PrEP involves regular medical appointments for monitoring and support. The patient takes the medication themselves but it would require ongoing follow-up bloodwork. The follow-up would be through the ordering medical provider.

Ensuring Yukoners have access to primary health care is another factor we need to consider here. Improving Yukoners' access to primary health care physicians is a foundation of our health care system. We recognize the importance of family physicians and understand that many Yukoners, particularly in Whitehorse, cannot find a family doctor, and we are working with our partners, the Yukon Medical Association, on strategies to ensure better access to family physicians. This includes recruitment and matching patients with family physicians who have room in their practices.

We are also working with our partners on exploring new delivery models that focus on collaborative care. Collaborative care is interdisciplinary, team based, and provides improved access continually to patients. In order to successfully ensure Yukoners have access to PrEP, we need to continue our work to ensure Yukoners have access to regular medical providers.

Motion No. 463 was brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. In its current version, it suggests that we provide this prevention option for free.

Mr. Speaker, whether or not we would decide to provide a drug like PrEP in Yukon for free depends on a number of factors. First, how much does this drug cost? The preliminary scan shows us that the oral PrEP can cost between \$250 and \$500 a month. Second, how many Yukoners not currently covered under private health care benefits would be eligible for PrEP?

We heard some comments around the disparities and some comments around private versus public health coverage. I want to just make note that there are some discrepancies that we need to certainly consider, but we also need to get accurate data in terms of how many Yukoners are currently not

covered. This is important information to consider prior to making a decision to cover the cost of this drug. PrEP is 93- to 99-percent effective in stopping the human immunodeficiency virus, and the target for PrEP is gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, sex trade workers, and injection drug users.

The daily use of oral PrEP has been approved by Health Canada to reduce the risk of sexual health transmission of HIV, in combination with safe sex practices for people who are at risk of HIV infection. PrEP has actually been found to be more effective than condoms in stopping HIV infection. Oral PrEP is a highly effective HIV prevention strategy when used consistently and correctly. It is generally safe and well-tolerated. For people who have trouble negotiating the use of condoms, PrEP may be especially beneficial because it is a prevention strategy that a person can control without their sexual partner knowing that they are using it.

Another advantage is that oral PrEP use can be started during periods of higher risk and stopped during periods of low risk. Although research suggests that the use of oral PrEP is generally safe and well-tolerated, the long-term effects of using PrEP are less known.

Health Canada PrEP approval does not include transmission through drug use; however, Canadian PrEP guidelines recommend that PrEP may also be considered for use by people who inject drugs if they are at high risk of HIV.

The motion, as proposed, talks about qualified individuals having access to PrEP. I would like to take a moment to talk about who those individuals are and what access to services Yukon government has available to support them. Recent cases of HIV are immigration-related and have been reported by Yukon. Although the transmission occurred in another country, Yukon's rate of locally acquired HIV is low in comparison to other jurisdictions. It is imperative that we get the data and we start doing the analysis and working with our partners — the pharmaceutical association and the medical association — to better align service needs with them with drugs like this. When we talk about disparities and essential services, it is really, I think, a critical component of the discussion.

Health and Social Services community health programs, through a funding agreement with Blood Ties Four Directions, provides supports for persons living with HIV and hepatitis C. This includes education and linkages to Yukon infectious disease specialists. We're very pleased with the relationship and very pleased with the work that Blood Ties Four Directions is doing and continues to do.

Testing for HIV is available in all Yukon communities. As well, Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit provides outreach support and services at Blood Ties Four Directions and the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. Yukon communicable disease recently engaged the community nursing sexual health clinic. The sexual health clinic and Dr. Hanley engage some of Yukon's medical providers to get a sense of how many people they may be seeing who either ask or may benefit from PrEP. So we are starting that process and we are starting that engagement.

As I understand it, the number is very low. Yukon's communicable disease assessment indicated they are aware that the criteria for PrEP is through the context that we have through the medical professions — looking at lifestyles and trying to look at preventive measures. So a lot of great work has happened already in terms of education and our partnership with Blood Ties.

Both through our extended health benefits and through referral back to primary care providers, we are covering some individuals through these programs. The government is supportive of closing the gaps in health care coverage facing Yukoners, especially those who do not have access to private health care insurance plans. This government also supports a proactive, preventive approach when it comes to health. Ensuring Yukoners have access to PrEP qualifies in that respect. However, for the reasons I have outlined, I have concerns about the way the motion is currently written.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would therefore move:

THAT Motion No. 463 be amended by:

(1) removing the word “remove” and replacing it with the words “review the”; and

(2) deleting all the words after the word “prophylaxis”.

I have the amending documents here.

Speaker: If the copies of the proposed amendment could be distributed to all members for their review.

I have had an opportunity to review the proposed amendment to Motion No. 463 with Mr. Clerk and can advise that it is procedurally in order.

Therefore, it is moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services:

THAT Motion No. 463 be amended by:

(1) removing the word “remove” and replacing it with the words “review the”; and

(2) deleting all the words after the word “prophylaxis”.

The proposed amended motion would then read:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to review the barriers for qualified individuals to have access to pre-exposure prophylaxis.

The Minister of Health and Social Services, on the amendment.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I think the amendment is pretty self-explanatory. Before we commit to funding PrEP, we require a more fulsome understanding of the barriers Yukoners trying to access this medication face. We are committed to supporting Yukoners and taking precautionary and preventive steps when it comes to risk of HIV infection. However, before making a decision like this, we need to have a stronger understanding of local need and what the associated cost of making this drug available is. I look forward to hearing from other members on this important subject.

Ms. White: It's fascinating, because the opposition always gets told that we should bring our proposed amendments to the members opposite — the government —

ahead of time before debate. If that was the case, then I would have suggested that the minister responsible remove the word “have” so it would flow better.

But as I am on the floor right now and sending notes to my office, I'm not sure that I will have the ability to propose an amendment to the proposed amendment prior to that amendment going forward. I know that we often hear from the Minister of Community Services that we should have the discussion prior to bringing amendments to the floor, and I think that this is an example of where that would have been helpful. I do understand why we would have this amendment; I don't disagree. I would have questions about how the government is going to go about reviewing, but I can have all that in my closing argument. I would have appreciated the ability to see how it was going to be worded prior to right now, but I understand that what we ask for some is not what we expect of all. So here I am hoping that my office can bring forward the paperwork. I don't see any problem with it except that I have questions about what the review process will look like.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the point brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and note that we had noticed as well this afternoon with both this amendment to the motion brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King regarding an issue important to her and with the motion that my colleague the Member for Watson Lake had proposed earlier — that in both cases, the government did not share copies of the proposed amendments with the Official Opposition or the Third Party.

While, of course, in the case of both those motions — including this current amendment to Motion No. 463 proposed by the Minister of Health and Social Services — for those who are listening and unfamiliar with the rules, there is nothing procedurally out of order with the government choosing not to share an amendment with the opposition or vice versa, but the point is that we have often been treated to members of the Liberal caucus standing here — on government private members' day especially — and extolling the virtues of the Official Opposition or the Third Party sharing our proposed amendments with them prior to making them and chiding members of the Official Opposition or the Third Party for not doing so. It is just important emphasize — and my colleague the Member for Takhini-Kopper King is quite correct in pointing out — that there appears to be a double standard at play here.

Mr. Speaker, in this area, I do appreciate the concern that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King brought forward about the flow of the motion. It does seem that the government, in proposing the amendment, did not come up with a very smooth way of making that amendment. Though technically procedurally in order, I recognize it does create a bit of an odd flow in the language. I note that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King expressed her frustration that she would have liked an opportunity to bring forward an amendment to it to smooth out that section.

In the government bringing forward this amendment, I recognize a point raised by the Minister of Health and Social Services about the need to look into matters further. I am not personally familiar in-depth with the treatment that is referenced in this as a preventive option. I did a bit of research after the Member for Takhini-Kopper King brought forward this motion, largely relying on what is in the public domain. I don't have a detailed understanding, from a health policy perspective, of the effectiveness of this or what department officials would think of the proposal. At face value and based on the information presented by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, if this is an option that can reduce harm and improve health outcomes for Yukon citizens, then certainly anything that falls into that area is worth exploring.

I would just note in connection to this general area, as well as the specific amendment that we are discussing here at the moment, that it is unfortunate that in most areas related to the Department of Health and Social Services and the pressures that are placed on it — emerging needs of Yukoners and so on — the stock response from the government to all of these requests has been, “Well, we need to review it.” Usually, they punt it off to the health review and tell Yukoners to wait until the end of 2019 or whenever that review actually ends up being completed.

It is not clear what the amendment to the motion brought forward by the Minister of Health and Social Services — it wasn't clear to me from her comments both in speaking to the main motion and in speaking to her amendment to it whether it is their intention to punt off this review until the end of 2019 when the health review is done. Perhaps that review will not be completed on time, since we have already seen the timelines for it shift several times.

I just note that specifically on the topic at hand and the drug being referenced by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King in her motion — whether it is new medication or new pressures on the health system that are seen here in the territory, one of the benefits the Yukon has by being a relatively small jurisdiction is that we can often respond in a more timely manner than other jurisdictions can to new and emerging pressures.

Mr. Speaker, this provides an opportunity to respond to the needs of Yukoners. The fact that the government both in this particular area and as a general policy seems to be looking at health from a cost-cutting perspective — which they euphemistically term “efficiencies” — while not recognizing that investing in new medication that can improve health outcomes, investing in new technology that can lead to earlier diagnoses and earlier interventions that improve the health outcomes and investing in reducing wait-times for surgical procedures and other matters — all of those matters require financial investment. They do require an increase to the budget, but ultimately, if the government is focused — as they should be but so far have not seemed to be, into the third year of their mandate — on the needs of Yukon citizens and their health care outcomes, we would hope that — both with regard to the specific request made by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and as a general matter — emerging health care

needs of Yukoners would be dealt with in a more timely manner based on their merits, rather than simply punted off and pushed down the road until the end of 2019 — or perhaps for the next government to deal with after this government falls in the next election.

Mr. Speaker, with that, in the interest of cooperation with the Third Party, I am pleased to move a subamendment to Motion No. 463.

Subamendment proposed

Mr. Cathers: I move:

THAT the amendment to Motion No. 463 be further amended by adding a third clause, as follows:

removing the phrase “have access to” and replacing it with the word “access”.

Speaker: I have had an opportunity to review the subamendment proposed by the Member for Lake Laberge with Mr. Clerk. I think we have the wording, and it is procedurally in order.

It is moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT the amendment to Motion No. 463 be further amended by adding a third clause, as follows:

removing the phrase “have access to” and replacing it with the word “access”.

For greater certainty, it would be:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to review the barriers for qualified individuals to access pre-exposure prophylaxis.

Mr. Cathers: I would just note, as I mentioned earlier, that I'm proposing this amendment to facilitate the request of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King in the interest of collaboration on this and making the motion more grammatically correct. I would just like to thank Mr. Clerk for his assistance, as the subamendment was hurriedly prepared, as well as the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and the Member for Watson Lake.

I think the rest of it is self-evident.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon, I don't have much to add to this debate. It's a fairly simple amendment. I just wanted to thank the Member for Lake Laberge for clarifying and strengthening the motion that lends support and potential access to a drug that helps gay men, intravenous drug users, and sex workers avoid HIV. I thank the member opposite.

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

Subamendment to Motion No. 463 agreed to

Speaker: Is there further debate on the amendment as amended?

Amendment to Motion No. 463, as amended, agreed to

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

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I am happy to rise today to speak to the amended motion. I would like to thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing the original motion forward, thank my colleague the Minister for Health and Social Services for her amendment, and then further, thank the Member for Lake Laberge for the subamendment, which I believe is clearer and appropriately focused on the barriers that exist for qualified individuals to have access to pre-exposure prophylaxis, also known as PrEP.

We agree with the members opposite that this is a very important matter worthy of investigation. The safety and health of our citizens and how we as a government can help them live healthier and happier lives are priorities. Oral PrEP is a highly effective HIV-prevention strategy when used consistently and correctly — and with significant support, I might add. It is usually prescribed for people at high risk of HIV infection and involves regular medical appointments for monitoring and support.

I too reviewed the assessment forms that were provided through the BC website, and they are extensive. There is a lot of very personal and in-depth information that those assessment forms go into. It is not an easy process to access, according to the BC website.

I would like to just point out — because it came up in the member opposite's opening to this debate — that we have information and the member opposite has a different set of information around which jurisdictions cover the cost of this particular medication. BC and Quebec fully cover the cost. In the other jurisdictions, it's partial — that's our understanding, but we're going to go back and verify that. That will be part of our investigation into the use of this medication in Yukon.

In daily use, oral PrEP is approved by Health Canada to reduce the risk of sexual transmission of HIV in combination with safer sex practices for people at high risk of HIV infection. Health and Social Services reported Yukon's rates of locally acquired HIV are low in comparison to other jurisdictions. By no means am I saying that this isn't an important question for us in Yukon; we need to remain vigilant and continue to promote harm prevention.

We as Yukoners are all concerned about the health and safety of our peers. Transmission of HIV is something that can impact our lives and the lives of our loved ones, friends, family, and coworkers.

I would like to just reflect a little bit in terms of how fantastic it is to see how far we have come over the past decades in that we are able to have these debates and discuss HIV in the way that we do now. We have come a long way in our country, and particularly in Yukon. I remember when there were tremendous fears about the transmission of HIV and ultimately AIDS. We now have these amazing treatments and we have preventive measures that we can take to prevent this from happening.

As my colleague the Minister of Health and Social Services outlined, Yukon Communicable Disease Control recently engaged Community Nursing, the Yukon Sexual Health Clinic, and Dr. Hanley with some of Yukon's medical

providers to try to get some sense of how many people they may be seeing who either ask for or may benefit from PrEP.

Health and Social Services, through a funding agreement with Blood Ties Four Directions, provides support for persons living with HIV and hepatitis C. This includes education and linkages to Yukon's infectious disease specialists. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, there are services already in place to help Yukoners access education and treatment relative to their needs. Nevertheless, it is important to look into whether more needs to be done to ensure that we are serving all Yukoners as best we can.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and as the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, I would like to take a minute to speak about post-exposure prophylaxis. Post-exposure prophylaxis is a way to help prevent the transmission of HIV in persons who may have been recently exposed to HIV. The Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board policies are clear for when a worker has been exposed to a high risk of HIV infection. While this worker does not currently have work-related injury, preventive measures such as post-exposure prophylaxis may be considered to be covered by the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* expresses requirements around health and safety in the workplace, distributing a full range of personal protective equipment designed to prevent workers and other people from being infected or directly exposed to biological or medical risks, which would support employers' efforts to satisfy these workplace safety and health requirements.

Another important aspect of this issue concerns victims of sexual assault. When someone is a victim of sexualized assault and has a risk of contracting HIV — for instance, in cases where the assailant is known to have HIV, or the victim was exposed to a needle — they are offered prophylaxis antibiotics, the morning-after pill, and post-exposure prophylaxis.

Mr. Speaker, I mention this to make sure that Yukoners are aware of various services that our government currently provides along with community partners to protect our citizens and workers and give them access to this medication. Barriers certainly do still exist, and I agree that it is important to review them, with an eye toward eliminating them.

With these thoughts in mind, I encourage all members to support the amended motion that we are debating.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing forward Motion No. 463. I agree that it would be beneficial for the government to take a look at this drug option, if only to provide further education to those who might benefit from its availability. It appears that it is provided at no cost to qualified individuals through the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS.

While I am not aware of the financial capacity of that organization, it is no doubt at the forefront of information research on HIV and AIDS in British Columbia. At the very

least, I think the Yukon government should look to explore what funding or supporting this medication would mean. It does seem as though conversations between government and organizations in other jurisdictions such as the centre in BC might be a good starting point.

I have of course done some reading on pre-exposure prophylaxis, and it has been a learning session for me because I actually was not familiar with it. I am going to shorten that up a little bit because it is a mouthful, and I am just going to call it PrEP. It's said to lower the risk of an individual getting HIV from certain activities by more than 90 percent and by more than 70 percent for those who also inject drugs. I can see it being a benefit in the prevention of this devastating disease.

I also think that there is something to be said about what having this drug available would mean in terms of cost-savings to Yukon's health system. By preventing the spread of this disease, perhaps we will actually save money in the health system, which would allow the government to reinvest it into other health priorities such as medical travel or home care. Finding savings through mitigation and prevention is an area that the government can explore.

There are a number of questions I think should be addressed before any government could readily agree to fund this drug option at no cost. The government would have to know how many people are likely to be considered to be qualified individuals and what the cost to government would be per person, per year, per month. Is this a costly drug option for the government? What exactly are the cost implications? Who is to determine whether an individual meets all requirements? What is the cost of treating an individual with HIV/AIDS in the Yukon presently? I'm sure Yukoners are not aware.

What percentage of qualified individuals are at risk because of drug use, and are there alternatives to this drug option that could be offered for substance abuse treatment to these individuals? Has a cost-benefit analysis been done on this drug from a government standpoint? I think today we heard that it has not, to date.

I am fully supportive of educating at-risk individuals about this and other preventive options. I believe that education is key in many situations, and the only way for an individual to make an informed decision is to have all the information — options available to them.

I am aware that there are proponents of this drug advocating for free access across the country, and I see it as an issue that is very important to a number of people. I encourage the government to take this motion seriously and to ensure proper research so we can make an informed and evidence-based decision on this.

We have spoken at length in the House and through correspondence with the minister's office about the importance of funding medication such as the shingles vaccine for seniors and those with compromised immune systems. This is a single vaccination, a one-time cost for a portion of the population.

We have spoken in the House and with the minister's office about funding such things as constant glucose

monitoring for children living with type 1 diabetes. This is an ongoing cost, but it's very important — life-saving, in fact — to these children and their families.

Of course, there are benefits to be argued for any type of medication, and it would be a nice thing indeed if we could fund them all. I do not think any medication should be publicly funded in full without full scrutiny of the government to ensure that it would be feasible and effective.

I would like to reiterate our support for the spirit and intent of this motion. We absolutely need to promote education of high-risk individuals around PrEP and lifestyle.

Individuals need to have all the information when deciding if it's right for them. I agree that PrEP could be a life-altering drug option for a number of people. I encourage the government to look into the financial implications and potential savings for the health care system and to make a decision that respects the rights of these individuals and promotes the best results for Yukon's health care system.

Once the government does this work, I assume that it should present this information to the House and to Yukoners at large.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard on Motion No. 463 as amended?

Ms. White: I just want to thank my colleagues. Like the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate said, we have come a long way to be able to have this conversation on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I feel that is like a congratulations on its own, because who knew, when I first mentioned it in a budget response, that we would be here, in the middle of April, talking about how important it is to have PrEP coverage in the Yukon.

I appreciate the amendment made by the minister and I look forward to knowing how the review will be done and how we are going to contact the affected community. There were really good points brought forward by the Member for Watson Lake in that there are other drugs that are really important to be covered and how many people this would affect.

In response to one of the questions from the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate about different information, I am but one person with two possible researchers, if they have the time to give me, and I can say that I got the information from a website called "Narcity". The title of the article says, "These 7 Canadian provinces provide coverage for expensive \$250 HIV prevention drug", and it goes on to talk about it. At the bottom of the article, it does very much say, "The provinces that already cover PrEP under their health plans include British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Quebec. Alberta will be the seventh province to join beginning October 1st, 2018."

That is where I got my information, but I am not the Department of Health and Social Services. I am but one

person using Google as my main search. I am not sure if it is accurate or not, but I do know British Columbia very much has this covered right now with zero barriers for qualified individuals.

I would really like to thank my colleagues for having this conversation with me today. I can let the minister know that even with current coverage under the Great-West Life health plan in Yukon right now, it costs \$200 every three months for a person in Yukon to access PrEP. So, yes, it is subsidized. I agree that it's not \$1,000 a month, but \$200 every three months is going to be a barrier for some people. That is just one of the things I wanted to bring forward.

Mr. Speaker, I am really happy that we had this conversation today. I am really happy. I look forward to having this conversation with my new friend at the BC centre of excellence — to talk about how we did have this conversation. I am looking forward to seeing how this moves forward.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for this conversation and the points of view that were brought forward. If anyone in the Chamber would like to support me in standing to call division on this, I would be very grateful.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to a vote.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yeas, nil nays.

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

Motion No. 463, as amended, agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 210: First Appropriation Act 2019-20 — continued

Chair (Mr. Hutton): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Do members wish to take a 10-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will take a 10-minute recess.

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Economic Development

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would just like to start by welcoming the officials here this afternoon. Deputy Minister Justin Ferbey is here, and also our director of Finance, Ms. Catherine Marangu, who is going to be here to support me this afternoon through opposition questions.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members, and visitors, I am pleased to rise today to table the Department of Economic Development's operation and maintenance and capital budgets for the 2019-20 fiscal year. These budgets aim to support a diverse growing economy that provides good jobs for Yukoners in an environmentally responsible way. The funds are intended to be responsive resources for targeted opportunities that have measurable impacts on Yukon's economy. Over the fiscal year, the department will fund programs that attract new investments to Yukon business, develop innovation in the knowledge economy, enhance trade opportunities in manufacturing, strengthen entrepreneurial opportunities for First Nation development corporations, and encourage local purchase programs that complement government procurement practices and reduce red tape. Each of these actions will contribute to the development of a robust northern economic ecosystem.

The department has been committed to these efforts since the beginning of this mandate, but there is more work to be done. Our operation and maintenance budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year is \$16,750,000, with a capital budget of \$1,060,000.

The budgets aim to provide comprehensive support to all levels of the economy, whether this means advancing the territory's economic interests on the global and national stage or investing in local place-making opportunities, small businesses and individual entrepreneurs. Through the allocation of the targeted funds, we can be a nimble partner for businesses, First Nation development corporations, communities, and the overall Yukon economy.

The department represents the Yukon in a number of trade pacts. This year, Canada signed the Canada, United States and Mexico agreement. Parties will now undertake their domestic process toward ratification and the implementation of this agreement. Economic Development will continue to support all Government of Yukon departments throughout this process. In doing so, the department can ensure that Yukoners and local businesses can make the most of the opportunities that the Canada, United States and Mexico agreement brings.

The Department of Economic Development participates in a number of working groups to represent the Government of Yukon on the national stage and contribute to the successful implementation of the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*. In an effort to reduce red tape, the working group on regulatory reconciliation in cooperation identifies barriers to trade and negotiates specific agreements between provinces and territories to address those barriers.

The working group on the development of the food sector in the territories identifies economic development opportunities in Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. In the fall of 2018, the Government of Yukon submitted two funding proposals to this working group: a proposal for an agri-food innovation centre designed to meet the Canadian Food Inspection Agency grade for exports and review of Yukon's agricultural industry to create a supportive legislative environment for the expansion of this sector, from livestock to production and processing.

Through these proposals, the government aims to drive economic growth and diversification. Trade files are overseen by the Policy, Planning and Communications branch, which will benefit from a \$2-million budget to support this work among other activities this fiscal year.

The Department of Economic Development also helps companies to capitalize on trade and export opportunities in several sectors. In the last fiscal year, the Business and Industry Development branch convened an export workshop that brought together Yukon businesses and federal government agencies. The workshop provided a productive environment for capacity building, networking, and information sharing. It equipped participating businesses with the skills they need to identify and seize export opportunities as they arise.

Alongside this workshop, Business and Industry Development has been raising Yukon's profile in strengthening the territory's trade ties with Alaska. The aim is to open up export possibilities that will benefit Yukon businesses. Export and trade promotion, investment attraction and capacity building are four key areas where government can support businesses and help them achieve the critical mass

they need to prosper. The department is making close to \$7.4 million available to the Business and Industry Development branch this fiscal year in order to continue work on these focus points.

In 2018-19, the branch supported a number of Yukon-based entrepreneurs in promoting their technology-driven products through the enterprise trade fund. For example, we provided to start-up Proskida to help attract investment and market their digitally enhanced pole grips for cross-country skiing, and we helped Kryotek Arctic Innovation travel to Alaska in order to market their climate-adaptive drills and sensors and strengthen their commercial relationships in the technology sector. Of the \$7.4 million available to the Business and Industry Development branch, we are committing \$360,000 to the enterprise trade fund. This will continue the program's work and help businesses as they strive to build up trade links in search for export opportunities.

Attracting investment is critical to maintaining a diverse and sustainable economy. It is also a full-time pursuit for businesses. It can be a real challenge to stay ahead of the competition, particularly in the mineral sector. In order to develop Yukon businesses in this effort, Economic Development has budgeted \$934,000 toward investor relations for 2019-20. These funds come from the \$7.4 million allocated to the Business and Industry Development branch. Every year, the Business and Industry Development branch promotes the territory as a top mineral investment jurisdiction at the Vancouver Resource Investment Conference and the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. The events are attended by major investors from countries worldwide, looking for new economic opportunities. I am pleased to say that the branch will continue to support the Yukon Property Tours and Investment Conference which will be taking place this summer in Dawson City. The event is a chance for Yukon to showcase some of our top-tiered mine properties to investors and international media. Initiatives such as this allow the territory to raise its profile in the face of unrelenting competition from investment-ready jurisdictions across the globe.

I have covered how the Business and Industry Development branch supports trade, export promotion, and investment attraction. The final key component I mention, business and industry capacity building, is served by a number of targeted funds. While I will not cover all of these funds in my speech today, I would like to briefly mention the strategic industries development fund as an example of the good work the department does in this area.

In the last fiscal year, the fund assisted: the Na Cho Nyäk Dun Development Corporation in setting up its own indigenous mineral exploration services company; the Yukon Chamber of Commerce in highlighting investment opportunities in the territory and showcasing the capabilities of Yukon businesses at Opportunities North; the Chief Isaac Group of Companies with branding and marketing to attract new business from the mineral sector; and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation with pre-feasibility planning to explore tourism opportunities in the hospitality sector.

This is a good moment to also mention the collaboration with First Nations — of course, it has been a major focus of our government. We are eager to work with First Nation governments and businesses to build a strong, sustainable future for our economy. The projects that I mentioned are just a few examples, among the many, that the fund has benefitted.

In 2019-2020, the strategic industries development fund will make \$800,000 available for projects with the potential to grow Yukon businesses and produce positive economic impacts. This fund, through the branch's portfolio of other business incentives, tax credits, and investment funding programs allow the department to be a dynamic partner to Yukon businesses.

When we support Yukon businesses, we are helping talented, dedicated and ambitious individuals to thrive. These individuals drive our economy and grow it in innovative ways, and attracting new talent to the territory can help Yukon to maintain a sustainable economy.

The department's Yukon nominee program helps employers to fill positions that are crucial to the viability of their businesses. The program brings in foreign nationals who intend to become permanent residents of Canada. Since 2007, the Yukon nominee program has assisted 385 employers in addressing labour shortages, with over 1,250 nominees. Alongside this, the Yukon business nominee program has successfully attracted businesses and entrepreneurs to the hospitality, service, tourism, arts, and agricultural sectors. Their businesses and investments span Dawson, Mayo, Faro, Haines Junction, and Whitehorse.

A budget allocation of \$476,000 will allow our departments to continue this work, as well as other programs.

Technology and telecommunications are the pillars of our competitive and resilient economy. Both help workers far from home to connect with friends and family and both help businesses to run efficiently and to reach new customers. In the past fiscal year, the Department of Economic Development made two announcements that will positively impact the territory's technology and telecommunications landscape for years to come.

First, Economic Development made a significant investment in reliable Internet, together with the Government of Canada and Northwestel. We announced the Dempster fibre loop which, once completed, will close the gap of a continuous 4,000-kilometre-long fibre loop. The project will ensure that the communities currently being served by the network, including those in Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and British Columbia will have access to a secondary network path in the event of a service disruption. It will also provide a more reliable connection for other northern communities that tie in through earth stations such as those in Nunavut. This is good news for Yukon businesses and communities.

The Department of Highways and Public Works has taken over the project, and my esteemed colleague will be able to provide more information about the Dempster fibre loop.

Secondly, we announced funding support for construction of the NorthLight Innovation Hub and shared workspace for

entrepreneurs. NorthLight Innovation opened its doors this past summer and has attracted an impressive amount of activity and interest. It has already become an ecosystem where technology innovators work, participate in events, and share ideas. It also brings existing business support programs, such as the Canada-Yukon Business Service Centre, together in one location. Building on the success of these two flagship projects and other programs in the last fiscal year, the department has committed close to \$1.92 million to technology and telecommunication programs for the 2019-20 budget year.

The funding will ensure further support for technology-focused companies, such as TechYukon, YuKonstruct, and initiatives such as the Yukon Innovation Prize. This year, the Yukon Innovation Prize competition will offer Yukoners a chance to win prize money for ideas that improve sustainability through the use of clean technologies. The theme is both relevant and timely as clean tech covers a broad range of activities from recycling to renewables.

In total, \$100,000 will be awarded to innovators, helping to support our local talent and bring green products and services to the market. I am also pleased to announce that we will continue to finance the Cold Climate Innovation and technology innovation program managed by Yukon College. The program managed by Yukon College grants seed money to help entrepreneurs and businesses develop innovative cold climate technology products and applications. It also helps companies such as Icefield Tools, a borehole survey technology company, to develop products that are being exported outside of Yukon.

The budget for the Technology and Telecommunications Development Directorate will also support angel investing by helping start-ups to access capital. To kick off this process, the directorate provided funding for community engagement workshops, bringing together angel investors, First Nation development corporations, local businesses, investors, and entrepreneurs. Through initiatives such as these, we aim to foster a network that helps early-stage Yukon companies grow. By promoting growth in targeted industries such as technology, telecommunications and media, the department can lay the foundation for a more diverse and prosperous economy.

This fiscal year, Economic Development has identified an \$819,000 transfer payment budget for the media development unit. The unit works with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure local and visiting film productions and Yukon musicians are successful while maximizing the economic benefits for the territory. Media development is supporting several important initiatives this fiscal year in an effort to foster sustained growth in the territory's media industries.

I am delighted to say that the department is working with Music Yukon and the Western Canadian Music Alliance to host BreakOut West in Yukon this October. This is an event that everyone will be able to benefit from — Yukon musicians, industry professionals, Yukoners, visitors, and businesses. The music festival offers Yukon musicians a chance to perform for visiting music buyers who have

travelled to the territory looking for the next breakout act. The conference, which takes place alongside the festival, will help Yukon musicians gain industry knowledge and build connections with the Canadian and international music industries without having to travel far. This event is expected to bring 70 of western Canada's top musical acts to Yukon, performing at up to 12 separate venues. It represents a boost for our economy as well as for our talented musicians.

Media development provides support services to Yukon musicians and production companies. The unit aims to be a responsive partner to Yukon's market-driven content creators. It also assists production companies from outside the territory who want to film on location in Yukon and hire locals.

In order to ensure that the programs continue to meet client needs, Economic Development is currently undertaking a film fund review. Ideas for change are being developed, following a first round of public engagement, and the department will seek further feedback from the public on the recommendations. We want to make sure that all voices are heard.

We also want to make ensure that the Yukon productions are appreciated beyond our borders. As part of our export marketing strategy, media development is providing funding for the Screen Production Yukon Association along with up to six of its members to attend Hot Docs. Hot Docs is North America's largest documentary festival and provides delegates with an opportunity to meet with industry professionals, funders, co-producers, and investors. The aim is to help Yukon producers to increase investment for their content, thereby growing the territory's media sector.

I have talked at length about how the department hopes to help Yukon's economy fulfill its potential in different sectors and stay competitive at the national and international levels. However, the projects, initiatives and businesses that can be found in communities and regions are just as important for a thriving economy.

For the fiscal year 2019-20, the Regional Economic Development branch will benefit from a \$3.75-million transfer payment budget in order to champion regional, community and First Nation economic development, and of the transfer payment funds available, \$2.95 million will be directed toward the community development fund. The fund policy was recently updated to improve its delivery and to be more responsive to the needs of Yukoners. Deadlines have shifted in order to better accommodate seasonally dependent projects. In addition, First Nation development corporations are now eligible to apply for funding to support their community-level initiatives. Expanding eligibility allows for a more diverse range of projects that are aligned with program objectives to qualify and support community well-being. Beyond this fund, the Regional Economic Development branch will undertake projects to support Yukon's communities in reaching their economic goals.

Mr. Chair, in closing, I think I will just touch on two pieces — because I know that we are pretty much ready to go to questions. The corporate services as well will benefit from about \$2 million to keep our programs running successfully.

That is really to provide clients with advice, to dynamically respond to their needs and champion their projects, and to drive projects promoting Yukon as an advantageous jurisdiction to invest, live in and work.

Also, just in closing, in my mandate letter, I was tasked with supporting and developing a thriving and prosperous economy. One of the balances is economic diversification with environmental stewardship. Our operation and maintenance budget for \$16.75 million and our capital budget for \$1,060,000 reflect this task. The work that the department undertakes using these funds will responsibly and measurably deliver well-defined benefits for First Nations, communities, and Yukon as a whole.

I look forward to the questions from the opposition.

Mr. Istchenko: I want to welcome the staff here today and thank them for coming. I will also thank the staff at Economic Development who do the good work. I am sure that there are some listening to debate right now, ready to provide what is needed. I want to thank them very much.

I want to talk about an upcoming conference. The St. Elias Corridor Economic Development Conference is coming up at the Da Kų Cultural Centre on April 26 and 27 in beautiful Dakwakada. One of the conference highlights includes "Investing in Place: Communities and Regions Building for Success", and they have Dr. Greg Halseth and Marleen Morris from the University of Northern British Columbia coming up. I know that the Department of Economic Development has been doing a lot of work with this and has probably helped in picking who would come as guest speakers. I know that a friend of mine, and a friend of the minister's, who is organizing the conference has been setting it up.

As the minister will know — I think it has been highlighted by him, but I tabled some documents in the past from the past 25 years of different conferences in the Village of Haines Junction, tourism conferences — I tabled them in the House, so they are on the record. I am just wondering if the minister or the department had a chance to share those documents. I will use a famous saying from a famous politician by way of background on this — it would probably be really good for both Dr. Halseth and Marlene Morris to get a little bit of history of the community. I am just wondering if the department had an opportunity to share some of those documents.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that is a great piece of advice. I want to commend the Member for Kluane. Within the start of this mandate, because of his passion for his home, he had collected — he has worked around this sector, in the private sector. He contributed of course to this sector as well and provided us with sort of all the documentation and work that had been done. It was just a conversation really about — you know, sometimes we see work duplicated, and it is important — especially when you are lucky enough to have somebody who can go through the whole chronology of what had happened to provide you with that. I think it's a great idea.

I also want to point out for the record — although it gets a little steamy in here at times, I would say that we also look

forward to the remarks from the Member for Kluane, who is going to be taking part in that event — I think some of the opening remarks. A lot of it is focused on tourism, but of course that is a big economic driver. I will commit that we will make sure that those resources are shared so that people can properly prepare. I think it's a great idea. I also think that we can maybe put some of those documents out for the public who are there in the back to read — because I think people have come into communities and they don't have the same history as others. Just to see — before they come up with new good ideas — that those good ideas might have been there before. So I commit to that, and thank you for that good advice.

Mr. Istchenko: I do thank the minister for that. He is exactly right — sometimes we are just reinventing new ideas, but I think it's good to look back and then see, moving forward, what can be done for the community.

I also shared this information and all of these documents with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation and the Kluane First Nation. I shared it up the highway, but I also shared it with the Village of Haines Junction.

I am just wondering if — this is more of a request than a question to answer — those documents are there, and I know how busy the chiefs and the mayor can be. They have a lot on their plate. But when the minister is having conversations about Economic Development, it would be good — now that he has a bit of a working knowledge of that stuff that I tabled in the House — to have a conversation with them and see some of the thoughts on there. I think it would be really helpful moving forward.

I want to move now to question with respect to CDF funding. I actually have a few questions about the eligibility for funding. Can the minister provide a definition of “for-profit social enterprises at the community level”? This was referenced in the December 6, 2018, news release.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Chair, I really do appreciate that question and I was hoping that I was going to be asked that. Really, a lot of this centres around our changes to the community development fund and the fact that we have opened up the eligibility criteria for Yukon First Nation development corporations.

I received a letter from the Leader of the Official Opposition just asking for clarity — it was a very polite letter about changes to the community development fund. I don't know if I will exactly answer the question as stated, but I think I can get to the heart of where we are going here — I hope I can, and if not, I will try to do better in my supplementary, if there is a supplementary.

What this stems from — and I am just going to go through the letter. Basically, there was a lot of concern that we are providing opportunity for First Nation development corporations to compete with community groups when you have a finite amount of funding. I think that is a valid concern and that is something where I want to ensure that we are not taking away from our community organizations that have always used that fund, but that we are also ensuring that

across the Yukon — that the small communities all have a chance to do community-level programs.

Just quickly — in reviewing the original policy for the CDF, it makes reference to economic investments. Over time, funding has been focused on social initiatives driven by not-for-profit organizations. Broadening the eligibility list allows the CDF to become more responsive to Yukon organizations that have undertaken projects to create social and economic benefit for Yukon communities and Yukoners. This change is more aligned with the original intent of the fund, which is to fund projects that create sustainable economic opportunities in communities.

First Nation development corporations have become important drivers of community-level development initiatives — not in every community, but in some communities. The broadening of the eligible recipients list allows First Nation development corporations to access the CDF program when they are undertaking community-level projects for which profit is not the objective, but rather the objective is creating sustainable social benefits. This ensures that opportunities for investment in social enterprises within communities are not missed.

Social enterprises have both business and social goals. Whether operated by a non-profit organization or a for-profit company or development corporation, a social enterprise has two goals: to achieve social, cultural, or community economic or environmental outcomes; and to earn revenue that is reinvested into the community. I provided the policy. That gives a little background.

We are going through the process and the criteria with the CDF. I think the staff are keenly attuned to this. It is not just about First Nation development corporations. We have organizations in our community that provide a recreational activity, but yet there might be — or there is an organization in one of our communities that provides a recreational opportunity and then we have somebody who does the exact same service in our communities, but they do it for profit. We always have to balance that to ensure — if we're providing some level of support for a capital expenditure for a piece of equipment, in many cases — that we go back and have that discussion with the for-profit entity.

Another example that people might not think of would be if you're going to go out and buy a tent. Well, if you're going to go out and buy a tent that could be used for a summer festival, we always have to respect organizations like Marsh Lake Tents & Events, which does this as their main revenue source. Organizations would then go and have a discussion with them and then provide us with a letter stating that the for-profit organization supports that initiative.

That's the same on this one. Whether it's somebody going to get a greenhouse, or somewhere in the member opposite's riding, such as Beaver Creek, where it may be the development corporation — it might be the First Nation or there might be only one or two entities that are willing to do this work — to put an application in — or it could be a skateboard park in Carcross — that sort of thing. That's where we want to see — making sure we have entities that do it, but

all the while ensuring that we are not having development corporations do something where they're getting some sort of unfair competitive advantage in a community or within the Yukon because they are leveraging money from the CDF.

Mr. Istchenko: I was going to ask about the direction the minister had given to officials to guide this discussion about eligibility, but I think the minister answered that already for me.

The minister, in his letter in response to the question we asked about CDF changes, said that the department would — and I will quote from the letter: "... monitor and evaluate the impact of First Nation development corporations on the CDF program after a full cycle of funding intakes has been completed."

Will the minister commit to providing results of any of this evaluation when it's done, or if it's done?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, I think that's the appropriate and transparent thing to do. Some of the things we will look at are: We will go through the full cycle as stated there and that we also consider any comments that may arise. There is a complaint system that is in place for the CDF if a private sector organization feels there has been inappropriate funding. I believe there is a system, and we put together our annual report.

I'm just going to get a bit of further information on this particular point — I just wanted to clarify that we do have that mechanism in place, and part of what we would owe to the public and to organizations is to identify if we have seen an increase in those challenges because of decisions that have been made. Also, the department consistently does a phenomenal job — the individuals at CDF — of risk-managing this and ensuring that the amount of work that goes into the analysis of these proposals is immense.

These are not light decisions, as people may think. They are a very talented group of people who take all of this into consideration. I do commit to that after the year is over.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that also and we look forward to that.

It appears that the fund was fully subscribed to last year. This leads to the question — because the size of the pie remained the same, but the minister is giving more groups access to the pie — will this have the real effect of resulting in less funding or more difficulty for organizations to receive funding? Could the minister just expand on this and tell the House if maybe he would be willing to increase the funding allocation if this proves to be the case?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Chair, in our initial intake since the policy has been switched, we have not seen the increased pressures. I just want to state that I do not have at my fingertips the history over the last decade, but I know that this is something that has occurred before. There were development corporations that were funded through the CDF, but I would have to go back and take a look at the chronology of that.

I know it certainly happened previously — or what would happen is that a First Nation government would apply. They would then, for administrative reasons, hand off the tasks to

the development corporation to do the work. So you have one organization and whoever inside — usually with many of the First Nation governments, they may or may not have an economic development officer. Now you have someone potentially in the finance department writing an application and then potentially it will be successful. Then it gets shifted over to the person who is doing the financial oversight at the community corporation. I think the member opposite would know that the community corporation in his riding — there are two of them. The one in Kluane is very active. They are successful in what they have undertaken.

This is a great example — it's not that you're cutting up the pie, it's just that what you are doing is essentially — it's the same piece of pie, and what you're doing is trying to reduce the red tape on it. So it's not going back and then go extra steps. You are just trying to make sure that you're streamlining the financial reporting and the project management to ensure that the best use is made of the dollars.

I think that's our perspective on this. I think that we have all taken into consideration all the different aspects of it. Maybe I could have done a better job of communicating this, because I really don't want anybody in the Yukon to feel that there aren't the same opportunities. I also want people in the Yukon to understand that in their communities, if there are only one or two people who can champion these grassroots activities, they now have a more streamlined approach to be able to do these community greenhouses or the small recreational infrastructure that they may need.

Mr. Istchenko: I am also hoping to receive a breakdown of funding over the last five years for the regional economic development fund, the community development fund, and the enterprise trade fund. I realize that the information will not be available to the minister immediately, so I'm hoping he can provide it in a legislative return. Specifically, I'm looking for which communities and organizations successfully access these funds. Will the minister commit to doing that?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that's a great idea. We were actually discussing this today. I know that this is some preparation work that is important. We'll make sure both the Official Opposition and the Third Party have access to this. I know that we wanted to take a look at significant investments that have gone into communities — whether it be Faro or Dawson or Watson Lake. We want to make sure that we can provide that.

The CDF does a great job of a meticulous breakdown in those communities, but we can also take a look at the regional economic development fund and the other funds the member opposite has mentioned — no problem.

Mr. Istchenko: I'm sure both the Third Party and the Official Opposition look forward to that — thank you.

Another question: Is the government looking at making changes to the immigration policy in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Chair, I'm just taking a look to see if I have any — I always like to — our public servants all work so hard to prepare, and if I ever get an opportunity to

touch on some of the information around their departments, I like to take that opportunity.

I'll get into the question, but Yukon — Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada — IRCC — is preparing to negotiate a new five-year joint agreement for Canada and Yukon in cooperation on immigration. The agreement defines the respective roles and responsibilities of Canada and Yukon relating to foreign temporary and permanent residents coming to Yukon through its nominee program. I touched on statistical information earlier.

I'm just looking for the dates of the previous strategy. I may have to get back to the member opposite on when the conclusion date is, but we are coming to a point where I believe that we only have a year or two left — and I could be wrong — within our current immigration strategy that was in place for the Yukon.

We have an obligation to Yukoners in the near future to undertake some strategy work and to then have an immigration strategy and plan in place that will then complement the work that has already been done — also giving us a bit of a vision of what that will look like moving into the future.

Mr. Istchenko: I'm not sure if — I'll ask it again. Is the government looking at making changes? I'm not sure if the government has made changes. I know there's a working relationship with that, but I'm just wondering if they're in the process of making changes and what some of the proposals for change would be.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have not made any changes to our immigration strategy. We have an obligation to prepare an immigration strategy before the current one sunsets. Whatever that would look like, we would need to go and consult with Yukoners before that work would be tabled.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. I guess that begs the question: When the government moves forward with this, will they be meeting with municipalities to discuss any changes on the policy? Will those proposals, or whatever, be shared with the municipalities?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would have to look and see what a broad range consultation would look like or what our consultation process would look like. Normally, on government consultations, we would speak with the municipalities — as the member opposite has asked — First Nation governments and usually key organizations in our community. For something like this, you would be speaking with the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, all of the chambers out in the communities of Yukon, as well as the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and a number of other organizations — sort of your standard list of organizations that you need to speak with.

I touched on it earlier today — we had a visit from the federal minister a few months back. During that, it was a very broad range of individuals who we brought together. The department had reached out — both First Nation chambers as well as our local and Yukon chambers were there, and we also brought together Yukon College and different organizations

— the multicultural organizations and many of the organizations that represent certain groups of people who have now come to Canada to live their life here, to grow their families here, and to take advantage of the amazing quality of life that we all have.

Mr. Istchenko: I am just kind of wondering if this government, to date, has met or will meet in the future with some of the actual stakeholder groups here in the Yukon with respect to maybe some of the immigration policy changes — I will just use an example such as the Canadian Filipino Association — if the minister can answer that.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, this is the type of consultation that is undertaken when you have a conversation about renewing your strategies around immigration. I would say that we will be speaking with the organizations I have mentioned, but also if the member opposite has any direct advice for us — I am thinking of some of these other organizations that are really important to this — I would urge him to reach out to me. These are important conversations, and you want to make sure that you can get as much advice and feedback from local organizations as you can, to ensure that you have the most comprehensive strategy as you go forward.

Of course we will go back and I will take a look at what was done in the past as well on some of this immigration work to get us to where we are today.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that, and I think that is about all the questions I had on some of the immigration stuff.

I want to ask my final question here before I turn it over to the Third Party. When the minister was updating us at the very beginning on his department, I think he mentioned trade and investment a few times, which is really important to the north. We have seen it — we all watch the media — the southern jurisdictions are having a bit of a tough time getting pipelines going, and there have been issues with tariffs when it comes to aluminum and steel. We are looking at the canola industry — having a bit of a tough time too in the south. I know the Yukon has always been quite active in PNWER, the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, and I am just wondering if the minister has had conversations through Economic Development because this would be a file for Economic Development — with the southern jurisdictions needing assistance or having conversations about concerns and issues — or maybe the Yukon might be open to bypassing a certain jurisdiction for a pipeline or a railroad. I am just wondering if the minister could comment on that a little bit.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think I will first of all touch on the PNWER part of the question. I think PNWER can be a very effective table, depending on what you're putting into that membership and making sure that all of the different jurisdictions are represented. In my first year attending, it was hosted in Portland — of course leading up to some of these very significant negotiations in North America. There was a very robust contingent of Canadian parliamentarians of all stripes, as well as individuals from many US states. At that point, Alaska did not have representatives, and the model was that it would have to be through the Alaska House of

Representatives, I believe — that there was a decision that would have to be made, and they would appoint individuals that would then sit at the table so that — the Arctic caucus at that point really consisted of just the Yukon and Northwest Territories as sort of the key members in our area. Since then, of course, there has been representation from Alaska. We touched on it in the Legislative Assembly just the other day.

Of course, leading up to PNWER being hosted here, the Member for Porter Creek Centre had spent some time working on that. Really, the reason is — I think this is a good opportunity in the Assembly to talk about that — the Leader of the Third Party had asked that question — there is a tremendous amount of activity that comes with being a member of PNWER. There are quarterly meetings that you have the opportunity to attend, depending on your workload in your Assembly or House. It is very continuous.

The decision, at least in my case — I looked at the level of participation. I looked at the other individuals from Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba who were doing some of this discussion and work and felt that, although that key conference is a great time to talk about trade, it was a great collaborative effort that we put together, consistently working as one group to ensure that we had open trade between the United States and Canada. I think it was really effective and, moving forward — there has been a letter sent to PNWER and it essentially identifies the fact that I would be stepping back and the Member for Porter Creek Centre would be taking more of a lead role. He attended PNWER last year, and I believe he is going to do it this year.

We use every opportunity that we can to move ahead on trade files. Just a month ago, in March, we were at PDAC in Toronto, which is of course really focused on promoting our jurisdiction as a great place to invest in the mineral sector. You also have chances to meet with individuals who are representing international entities. For the second year in a row, we had a meeting with the public servants who were there from India and had them meet up with some of our companies. Icefield Tools had one of their lead team members come in who has immigrated to Whitehorse from the same jurisdiction as many of the senior public officials. This is a very significant — I think it is an industry worth over \$100 billion there — and looking for the technology and the training that we have. Icefield Tools has already had success in procuring contracts there — more on geological-survey-type work — but they have a keen interest, and we are supporting the work that they are doing. GroundTruth Exploration out of Dawson — how do you ensure that nobody does it better? Going into these communities — Archer Cathro — where you can get community-level individuals trained and involved in that early exploration, and much of that exploration is done in a way that takes into account environmental impact concerns. Then of course there are companies like Kluane Drilling, which are quietly doing work across the Americas, based out of the Porter Creek North riding but with multiple offices from Canada right to the tip of South America — so making sure that companies such as that have opportunities to get contracts.

Just through our tables — we have a great team at Economic Development that has done a lot of work, including on the trans-Pacific partnership — making sure that local individuals know what that means to them. We touched on that in our opening comments. There was a great workshop — I thought it was very well done — where we brought local companies. We are constantly trying to increase market access.

Just in closing, I would say that I was very impressed, and I think that all of the ministers were impressed by the way that Minister Freeland handled the negotiation piece.

I will say for Hansard and the record, it did not matter — the political view of the minister. You had an individual who worked absolutely tirelessly, and at the end of those negotiation sessions, he was always available for us to call in. We're a very small jurisdiction comparatively — when you think about the GDP of Ontario or Alberta — but he was always open for us to advise or to talk about things that were of concern to Yukon — whether it be our concern about making sure that we still had the same framework around softwood lumber or what we thought might be something that — depending on how negotiations went around agriculture and other things.

When it came to some of these big infrastructure projects that the member opposite has touched on — on the railway, on at least two occasions, we have had organizations — I think they have been in the news lately — competing. Organizations have come and they have sort of done a tour where they have met with Yukon government, they have met with the Council of Yukon First Nations — sometimes specific First Nations. All those conversations were focused on rail, and that was rail under this idea and concept of running bitumen from northern Alberta into Alaska — different approaches to both of them.

There have been some comments — I'll leave it there. I think there have been some Alaskans who have made some comments after the news last week, but that has been it when it comes to conversations around big infrastructure projects. The only people who have come to sit and meet with us have been from that sector.

I'll conclude with that and I hope I have answered the questions from the member opposite.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister and staff for their time, and I'll turn it over to the Third Party.

Ms. White: I welcome the officials here and I'm excited to see them and have this opportunity today. I'll just put a couple of questions on record, because I imagine that we're close to the end of the time today.

I'm quite familiar with the nominee program or the immigration file, as it used to be in Advanced Education. That's where I'm going to ask my questions today. I was just going through the tripartite agreement that is between the employer, the immigration unit, and the employee. One of the questions I have is: What is the current base salary for a nominee? I would like to know how many nominees were in Yukon, let's say, for 2018. How many separate employers are there? Without singling anyone out, could I get an idea if

we're talking every community in the Yukon or specific communities?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just to be respectful for the member opposite, I'm going to touch quickly on a couple of pieces that are not as statistical, and then we'll make sure we have a legislative return. We discussed this earlier today — really talking about — I think the term that was used by the member opposite — sort of a power imbalance when it comes to the relationship within our nominee program — or if there was one.

I just wanted to add that Yukon's immigration programs have safeguards built into them to protect the integrity of the program, the employer, and the nominee. Mandatory orientation sessions are provided for recent Yukon nominees and their employers. Immigration unit staff are open for weekly drop-ins, and Yukon nominee program participants sign a tripartite agreement that sets out the rights and responsibilities of the nominee, their employer, and the Yukon government.

The Yukon government monitors the agreement with site visits as well as meetings with the nominee and their employer — not to say that the remarks today weren't good advisement, because of course this is always ongoing and it is quite active. You have to continuously talk to different people and different employers. You always have that obligation to be very diligent in how we ensure that people stick to these tripartite agreements that are signed.

Ms. White: That is a good start. The reason why the nominee program is so near and dear to my heart is that it was through the advocacy of the Yukon NDP that the program did change, because previously, there were some fairly awful things happening to people who came over to do the work. In this not-ideal world, there is an imbalance between the employer and the employee.

In the tripartite agreement, it refers to the base salary. Could the minister tell me what the base salary is for a nominee?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am going to provide some of the information on the base salary — I will have to go back and take a look in my other notes and make sure that it comes back in a legislative return. I can also provide the other steps on what those salaries are — also the numbers that were requested — just on how many people and how many nominees we have.

I do appreciate the work that was touched on by the Third Party — to ensure that people are treated appropriately. I can just imagine the sacrifice that many people make. There is an opportunity, but also a sacrifice — to be somewhere trying to build your home and making sure that people are treated appropriately.

I know that we are getting late in the afternoon, Mr. Chair. I just want to sincerely thank staff. A lot of people put in a tremendous amount of effort over the last year in preparing — we've asked a lot of the team. There have been lots of things to work through in the department. I just want to thank people from the bottom of my heart for the work that has been accomplished and the work that they continue to do.

With that, Mr. Chair, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move 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. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*, 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. Ms. McPhee: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.