



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Monday, March 26, 2018 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2018 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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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 Party

Stacey Hassard	Leader of the Official Opposition Pelly-Nisutlin	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
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
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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, March 26, 2018 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper.
 Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Nutrition Month

Hon. Ms. Frost: Every year in March, the dieticians of Canada celebrate Nutrition Month. This is a time when dieticians all over the country work together to raise awareness of the importance of food in our lives and in our communities. The theme for 2018 is: “Unlock the potential of food”. This is a great theme. It speaks to the potential of food to not only fuel our bodies, but it also looks at prevention of diseases. It promotes learning, skill development and bringing young people together.

Eating nourishing whole foods in conjunction with an active, smoke-free lifestyle can help to prevent almost 80 percent of premature stroke and heart diseases.

There are many values to eating a nutritious meal. It is a means to prevent long-term health issues from occurring. Prevention measures start with good eating habits and education. Teaching children to shop, cook and prepare foods provides them with a necessary lifetime of skills. It also sets them up to promote and pursue healthy eating habits.

Food also brings communities together to share a meal at a community gathering. It is a way in which families come together. It brings communities and like-minded people together, whether it is a lunch with co-workers or a dinner with family. Eating together opens dialogue, prompts conversation and helps us to eat a more balanced diet. We all have busy schedules, but it is worth every effort because of all the benefits of sitting down and dining together.

Speaking about nutrition this year, as in many other years, the Department of Health and Social Services community dietician has taken an active role in raising awareness of healthy eating. Our dietician has organized a themed event for families to attend to get tips on how to make fun, nutritious lunch meals. I encourage everyone with young children to attend. It is on March 28 at the Old Fire Hall. More information can be found on our Facebook page.

We also have reached out to CBC Radio and through other means to promote the importance of eating well and also some of the social events in the communities.

We work with our family support workers and our staff in each one of our communities to encourage healthy eating and promote healthy family dynamics.

We know that in the Yukon, in our rural Yukon communities — in particular, with my community, which I

am familiar with — harvesting traditional whole foods from the land is a fundamental grounding principle for us in terms of eating what is there for us on the land and sustaining our way of life as a people, supplementing that with what we get through our grocery stores in some of our far northern rural villages.

I want to encourage everyone to unlock the potential of food by choosing healthier options and to share meals with one another.

Ms. McLeod: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March as national Nutrition Month in Canada. Throughout the month, dieticians across the country work toward the common goal of promoting healthy eating and educating Canadians on the importance of making healthy and smart food choices.

By picking up small habits — such as eating meals together as a family, avoiding or limiting unhealthy snack foods or treats and reading nutrition labels — we can all take the steps toward healthier eating.

I encourage all Yukoners to focus their attention on their diet and make healthier choices whenever meal planning. Planning meals ahead of time can not only save time and money, but we can ensure we have the ingredients we need on hand for wholesome meals and avoid impulse buying, which leads to buying foods that may not be nutritionally valuable.

Another important aspect of healthy eating for Canadians is reducing their salt intake. High sodium intake is the main cause of high blood pressure, which can lead to a number of health problems. Dieticians encourage the use of fresh food, such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, milk products, dried legumes and unseasoned meats, fish and poultry. Young people who grow up in an environment that fosters healthy choices are not only at a lower risk for childhood obesity, but also for other health problems that can be avoided simply by eating more healthily.

By encouraging smart and healthy eating at home, we give our children the best possible start. I would like to thank all of our registered dieticians for all the work that they do. I encourage Yukoners to listen to the dieticians’ valuable advice and to make healthy food choices.

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge Nutrition Month in Canada. No one will disagree that this year’s theme of “Unlock the potential of food” — discovering the potential of food to improve our health and well-being — is timely, but I suggest it falls short.

Some of the healthy snack ideas suggested include almond butter on banana slices, Greek yogurt with berries or whole grained toast with avocado and sesame seeds. All great suggestions, but if we look at the fact sheets through the lens of poverty, then the problem with nutrition becomes a different issue altogether.

One in seven people in Canada live in poverty. That means that for those 4.9 million people, nutrition is often a choice they can’t afford to make. We only need to look at the *HungerCount 2016* from Food Banks Canada to better

understand this issue. In March 2016, 863,492 individuals accessed food banks across the country. This is 1.3 percent higher for the same period in 2015 and 28 percent higher than in 2008. If the trend continues, and experts believe it will, those numbers will only be higher for 2018.

Where does nutrition even start for an individual? I would suggest that it starts long before we begin talking about food. I would suggest that it starts in your mouth with your teeth and your ability to consume healthy, nutritious food. I had a good friend whose teeth caused her such pain that before her death, all she consumed was meal replacement drinks because she was unable to chew. So I ask: Does this constitute good nutrition?

Riverstone Dental understands the need for oral health and recognizes the challenges people face in getting the help that they need. For the last two years they have offered a free dental day at their Whitehorse clinic for people without dental insurance. They have helped over 100 people who wouldn't have otherwise been able to access a dentist.

This brings me to housing. Our own government pays half a million dollars a year on average for people to stay in hotel rooms over winter months. The large majority of these rooms don't have cooking facilities. If lucky, they have a mini-fridge and a microwave. So I ask you: What happens to nutrition in these cases?

We agree with the need for people to be able to make nutrition a key part of their lives, but we believe that in Canada and the Yukon, we as decision-makers need to recognize the barriers that face at least one in seven people to make nutrition a key part of their lives, and once recognized, what specific measures we as decision-makers can take to ensure equitable access for all to healthy, nutritious and affordable food.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling four legislative returns responding to questions from the members opposite.

Mr. Kent: I have for tabling an e-mail dated June 28, 2016, addressed to Minister Doug Graham from the co-chairs of the F.H. Collins Secondary School Council regarding a francophone school at the F.H. Collins site.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Kent: I rise to give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of cost estimates, drawings and all background information on the new francophone school.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to:

(1) publicly release engineering reports related to the repairs of the Ross River School;

(2) inform the Ross River Dena Council and the community of Ross River of how the Government of Yukon plans to proceed with repairs to the Ross River School; and

(3) ensure work done during the summer of 2018 achieves a permanent and not temporary fix.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately appoint an independent body with requisite expertise to:

(1) conduct a fully independent review of all aspects of the operations of Government of Yukon operated and/or funded group homes for children and youth;

THAT the review body be given access to:

(a) current and former residents of Yukon group homes;

(b) current and former staff of Yukon group homes, managers, directors and senior management responsible for Family and Children's Services;

(c) any other materials or individuals as determined by the independent review body;

THAT the independent review body consider recommendations for amendments to *Child and Youth Advocate Act* to strengthen the independence and powers of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate to act in the best interest of children and youth; and

THAT this review body report to this Legislative Assembly no later than October 31, 2018.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly be amended to establish an all-party standing committee on children and youth, to be guided by:

(1) the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*:

(a) article 12 — children should be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting them;

(b) article 20 — children who cannot remain in their family environment should be entitled to special protection and assistance;

(c) article 25 — children placed in government care should have periodic reviews of the care they are receiving and the circumstances that led to their placement in government care;

(d) article 30 — indigenous children should not be denied their right to enjoy their culture, practise their religion and use their language; and

(2) principles to be established by the committee that reflect issues specific to the broad range of matters related to the well-being of Yukon's children and youth; and

THAT this select committee shall conduct hearings, accept submissions, and call witnesses with respect to:

(a) the five-year review of the *Child and Family Services Act*;

(b) the as-yet-to-be-scheduled review of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*,

(c) matters related to early childhood development and childcare in Yukon; and

(d) other matters the committee deems relevant to the attainment of the objectives set out above, and that this select committee report its findings and recommendations to this House in six months and every six months thereafter.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Tourism and Culture to ensure that all calls for casting of ads, commercials or other materials promoting Yukon are free of racist, sexist or otherwise discriminatory references to ensure the diversity and inclusiveness of Yukon society is reflected in materials promoting Yukon.

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

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of all current applications for infrastructure funding that the Government of Yukon has submitted to the Government of Canada.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure healthy environments and resources for Yukoners in order to encourage activity, good nutrition and community wellness.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Children in care

Ms. McLeod: Over six weeks ago, the Minister of Health and Social Services was told of serious allegations of abuse within government-run group homes. I have asked the minister this question several times, but she has not provided an answer.

Why did the minister not notify the RCMP about these serious allegations when she became aware of them over six weeks ago?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I do want to just note that the process — six weeks ago — actually on February 15, when this was brought to my attention — I met with the youth in question and, following that, we took the concerns that were brought to my attention back into the department, and the department

proceeded, internally, to look at the concerns brought to our attention and subsequently met with the youth and reviewed his concerns.

At that point, the department did follow the correct procedures and brought forward the concerns and worked with the department staff. If the RCMP were involved — we noted recently that there was some media coverage on that. We want to assure members that we are following the procedures. The process in which the RCMP is conducting its investigation is a process that they are involved in and they will follow through on the wrongdoings, if there are any. We will look at the internal policies of the department to ensure that we take seriously all of the allegations that are brought to our attention.

We did take immediate action, and we will continue to do so.

Ms. McLeod: The *Child and Family Services Act* was passed in 2008, and the Minister of Health and Social Services is responsible for this act.

Section 22 (1) of the act reads: "A person who has reason to believe that a child is in need of protective intervention shall immediately report the information on which they base their belief to a director or peace officer."

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Health and Social Services believe that by not reporting these serious allegations to law enforcement for six weeks, she is in compliance with her own law?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We did take the allegations seriously and we proceeded, as requested and as required, through the procedures. With respect to the *Child and Family Services Act*, that was two years overdue for a review, and we are now conducting that review to address the serious allegations and the policies, procedures and efficiencies that have come to our attention throughout the government and throughout our Family and Children's Services programming.

Ms. McLeod: The Health and Social Services website is very explicit on what the responsibilities are for all Yukoners when they become aware of these types of allegations. The website states — and I quote: "All Yukoners are required by law to report suspected child abuse." That is taken straight from the minister's website.

Can the minister tell us what actions she took to live up to this legal requirement?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think the minister was very succinct in her answer to that question.

We are very concerned with the issues that are coming forth in the media, but that doesn't mean that this is where we start this process. This work began in the Yukon Forum — one of the examples of the things that we have been doing on this side of the Legislature. We were planning for a review with the *Child and Family Services Act* — 2017. That work is beginning.

There was a five-year review that was due in 2015, but inaction from the previous government, even though this was legislated, meant that this important work was left undone. Policies, systems and procedures around government group homes are all part of that review. We are undertaking this

review, and we are finding better outcomes for our children and for our families and for our communities. We will accomplish this by working cooperatively with the communities with the joint goal of keeping as many children as possible in their homes. I think that the minister has done a commendable job in that pursuit. Through efforts to return and to keep kids at home and in their communities with family members, there has been a reduction of more than 50 children in group home care.

So I would like to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for her dedication and for her hard work on this file since the moment she took on that responsibility.

Question re: Children in care

Ms. McLeod: While the minister awaits the results of the Child and Youth Advocate's report, has she made any changes to the way the government operates and manages group homes?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that the department is proceeding as we have indicated and as the Premier has indicated. We are looking at the *Child and Family Services Act* review, and that means we look for efficiencies in programs and services. What we've done from a holistic perspective is look at how we keep our children in their communities. How do we work with families in the communities to keep the children out of care facilities? We're really trying hard to work with our community partners, doing on advocacy work, working on outreach, working on education and helping the families to retain and do extended-family care programming. We have been very successful in reducing those numbers.

We have also looked at the group home — the group home that we're going to be proceeding with in Porter Creek. That's a transition unit. Some of the issues that have come to our attention from this very issue that we're discussing look at the effective transition of young adults who are in our care back into society successfully — so life-skills training and job-skill readiness. We want them to have tools to be successful. Those are things that we're working on, and we're doing that very successfully with our communities. We're looking at safety as a key component of that.

Ms. McLeod: Last week when speaking to the media, the Minister of Health and Social Services referenced internal reviews and assessments that were done regarding these allegations of abuse that she first learned of over six weeks ago. What were the findings of these reviews?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I think it would be premature for me to respond. I know that the issues were brought to our attention. Very serious allegations were brought forward. We are working with our departments, working with the Public Service Commission, working with the Department of Justice, working with our staff. We're really looking internally at what supports are needed to ensure that these things don't happen in the future. We are taking the advisement of the youth advocate office and the recommendations. They are proceeding independently and we will allow that process to evolve.

Ms. McLeod: So it begs the question to the minister of why she reported in the media that these assessments and reviews have been done.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Perhaps the member opposite misunderstood. The point here is that we were given some critical information, and that is what we're proceeding with. Historical reviews that have been done by the members of the opposition when they were in power may have addressed some of these issues and concerns.

We know that perhaps youth have not been listened to historically. I know and I can assure members of the public and this Legislative Assembly that we are listening. I am listening to the youth, I care about the youth, and I care about our policies around group homes, around residential care facilities. As a product of that system, I have first-hand knowledge of what youth experience and I want to be able to bring all of our experiences to light and help us to make our society a better place for children to be successful. We will do that by cooperating with one another, really homing in on the issues and concerns, making our policies and our procedures better, and working with our communities to bring our children back into the communities to the families where they belong. We know that oftentimes the children have been whipped away and that's part of the whole assessment that we will look at.

Question re: Children in care

Ms. Hanson: This government promised openness and transparency, and on this issue, we're getting neither. We hear reports that a manager of group homes has been moved to a special project. There are glaring contradictions between what the Premier, the minister, and the Child and Youth Advocate have said as to who set up the review and whether or not the report will be public. Now it appears that the RCMP is looking into specific cases of abuse reported in the media. One sign that something is really awry is when brown envelopes start showing up, as they have been.

We have heard that more individual cases of youth getting let down by the system have been brought to the minister's attention.

Concerned professionals working for this government have, at great risk, reached out to the minister to express their concerns. How has the minister responded to these concerns?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think the minister has been succinct in what we are doing on this side of the table, on the government side of the House, when it comes to an issue that has been around for a while.

I mentioned on the floor of this House that I have known of issues — the member opposite, as well, during her second supplementary, talked about the reviews that have been done in the past — also knowing that there have been issues in this case.

A five-year legislative review due in 2015 was not even put forth. Again, this is the inaction that we have been dealt and we are working on. I think the minister has been working since day one on this file — not just six weeks ago, as the

members opposite would say — and we're also not going to necessarily just be dealing with one particular issue.

If there are manila envelopes flying around — according to the member opposite — we would like to know specifically what she's talking about, but again, whistle-blower legislation is there for a reason. We want to make sure that we can do better there — because I would agree with the members opposite, in other conversations that we've had, that we need to work on that.

However, this minister is doing a fantastic job to get out with this report, with this work, to actually take a look at what was supposed to be happening in the past and work forward to make sure that all kids' concerns — all the children who are in care — are taken care of. We implore — the work of the department — and, again, for all of these individual kids who are coming forth with their stories as well.

Ms. Hanson: As the Premier knows, it is one thing to be aware of issues as the opposition; it's quite different when you are in a position of power as Premier and as minister.

On Friday, the Yukon Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner issued a press release related to the whistle-blowing by staff of Family and Children's Services. In her release, the commissioner was very clear — and I quote: The act "... protects an employee against reprisal if they disclose a wrongdoing in one of two ways. The disclosure must be made to an employee's immediate supervisor or to the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner. Disclosing a wrongdoing in any other way could result in a loss of protection against reprisal."

Can the minister explain how staff will be able to participate in a review by the Child and Youth Advocate when the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner has been clear that they risk losing the protection of the whistle-blower legislation?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to be perfectly clear to this House. This government wants free and open disclosure of any problems that they find within their department. My colleagues and I are modelling the behaviour. We want to know what is going on, and we want the staff and the managers to know that we cannot deal with problems unless they come to our attention.

There is no punitive material here. We want our children to be safe and we have to know that the information is reaching the right ears.

We have got this. We have legislation in place to protect workers on this file. That legislation is relatively new and there is a culture within the Yukon that we have to break through, but I know that my colleagues on these benches are modelling that behaviour and are expressly saying, "Please, bring your concerns to our attention and we will deal with them."

Ms. Hanson: It is fine for the minister to stand here in the Legislature and state that protection will be offered, but the statement by the commissioner puts an entirely different light on the matter and has left staff feeling vulnerable. Even the Child and Youth Advocate made a similar statement supporting staff coming to her. Again, this type of protection

is outside of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*.

A Tuesday, March 20 memo to all Health and Social Services staff sent hours after the government press release announcing the Child and Youth Advocate review says that government — the department — will develop a process for staff to express their views. How does the government reconcile these contradictory messages given to staff in Family and Children's Services? How does it believe that those staff will believe that they actually do have the protections?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I want to refer to the *Child and Family Services Act* and the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*. As members of this Legislative Assembly are aware, the Child and Youth Advocate office represents the members of this Assembly. They are conducting their work according to the act that was established to do that. We have made that clear. We have attempted to demonstrate that. The power to determine the scope and nature of the review is defined in the act. It is defined and the Child and Youth Advocate office has made it known that they are proceeding with section 12(1) where the act speaks to becoming aware of a policy or systemic issue of concern. We brought that to their attention and they are proceeding based on what they have in their system — and they have noted that. I have already hit on the power to determine the nature of the review, and that refers to section 12.

Under section 23(1) of the act, the advocate has the right to information — members of this Legislative Assembly and the opposition have asked that. Will we disclose? Will we cooperate? Most definitely we will. The act was designed to allow for that to happen.

With respect to protection of persons having information, section 27 of the act provides protection of persons giving information to or assisting the advocate.

Question re: Children in care

Ms. Hanson: Yukoners continue to hear through the media about the proposed independent review of government group homes by the Child and Youth Advocate. What we are hearing though does not instill any confidence at all that this will be an independent review. The government seems set on controlling the situation and this review.

On Friday, the Premier was quoted in the *Whitehorse Star* as saying — and I quote: "I'm confident that the department, over the last several months, has been working on this issue, and I am confident that the review that is going to be set up by the minister and her department will get to the bottom of a lot systemic issues that have been around for years." Why is this government insisting that this is an independent review while at the same time calling the shots?

Hon. Mr. Silver: This is a good opportunity to be succinct in messaging. The health and safety of our children — and obviously our youth in care — is our top priority. The advocate has agreed to conduct a systemic, independent review of transitional support services, and we are cooperating fully to ensure its effectiveness. As the members know, an all-

party committee determines the resources going to the advocate's office and we on this side of the House believe that it is important that the advocate has the necessary resources to carry out those particular services.

Ms. Hanson: Tuesday morning, after the news release issued by the government about the Child and Youth Advocate review, and before Health and Social Services staff even had an opportunity to start their day, an e-mail was sent out from the ADM of Health and Social Services. There were many red flags raised in this e-mail.

One was the announcement that the review would only cover the time period that the current Child and Youth Advocate has been in her position. Another was the following comment — and I quote: “We will develop a process for staff to express their views and insights.” Another was that the department expected the advocate to submit draft terms of reference to the department.

It is less than a week since the news release announcing this independent review, but it is becoming more apparent that this department and this government is very much directing this review.

Can the minister explain why?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I want to note that, with respect to the time limit of the review, if the recommendations do come back that we need to look at a broader scope, we will certainly take that under advisement and proceed.

The recommendations and the letter issued with respect to staff participating in a process — part of that was the assurance that they needed to engage. They do need to participate and share their experiences without fear of reprisal or any kind of reprimand. We want to ensure that everyone engages and participates and that we all find solutions and address the issues and the concerns together.

With respect to the notification of an independent systemic review, we have received clarity from the Child and Youth Advocate office, and they have spelled out very clearly and succinctly their steps and their procedures on how they will conduct their review. I would be happy to share that if the members opposite would like, but it really defines the process of autonomy and independence. We will not interfere. We will conduct our *Child and Family Services Act* review in conjunction — to ensure that if there are any unknown issues or issues that come to our attention, through policies and procedures, we will make necessary amendments.

Ms. Hanson: Perhaps the most damning evidence that this is a process being led by the government versus an independent review comes from the Premier, as reported in the *Whitehorse Star* on Friday: “... the review that is going to be set up by the minister and her department...”

Even the media is questioning the independence of this review. We have a news release by this government before the Child and Youth Advocate had an opportunity to announce the review, an immediate memo directed at all Health and Social Services staff, and the Premier's statement of confidence in a review by the department. They all have served to undermine the independence of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, and at the very same time,

undermine the safety and well-being of Yukon youth and children.

Will this government back away from this government-controlled review and appoint a completely independent body to conduct a review and report on government-operated child and youth group homes?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am very concerned about the insinuations — they are actually bold statements — that question the independence of an officer of this Legislative Assembly. The characterizations being made as part of the preamble to this question are one way in which you could look at it. Frankly, in my view, it is responsible for the staff of the Department of Health and Social Services to have informed their staff about the factual information available to them at the time with respect to the fact that a review would be happening.

The timing about an individual news release — I think that if we looked closely at that, it would indicate that the minister had requested that a review take place and had appropriately given this information to the Child and Youth Advocate for her role as an independent officer of this Legislative Assembly. Presumably, we should let her do her work.

Question re: Challenge housing project

Ms. Van Bibber: In January, the closing date for the land for the Challenge housing project was extended until March 26. Would the minister responsible for housing be able to let us know how many times she has met with Challenge to discuss this project, and when did the last meeting take place?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm happy to respond to the question. Members of this government have met with Challenge on numerous occasions. We have met with them with respect to their project. The president of the Yukon Housing Corporation and her team have met with them on numerous occasions and attempted to assist in defining a solid business plan that would support their project moving forward. So, numerous times we have met with them. I have met with them. I am happy to say that we are working together to find solutions to address the housing project that they are pursuing.

Ms. Van Bibber: I didn't hear the last meeting date but, being March 26 today, I am wondering if the minister responsible for housing could tell us how much money is allocated in this year's budget toward the Challenge project.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The Yukon Housing Corporation is working with the City of Whitehorse and the Challenge project — working with the executive director — to identify the resources with which to acquire the land. We are working with them on their business model so they can acquire the resources that they need to successfully proceed with the project.

At this point in time, I can say that we have assisted them in acquiring the land that they were pursuing. We recognize that there was a timeline, and the city has worked with them as well. So we are really pleased to say that we were successful in working with all of our partners and working with Challenge to proceed with their project.

Ms. Van Bibber: Can the minister responsible for housing tell us when she will know how much money is in the budget for the Challenge housing project?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The Challenge project, as we know, is requesting quite a lot of money. The project is looking for partnerships and we have committed to the partnership. We know that they are coming to the Yukon government, they are going to the City of Whitehorse, and they are also proceeding with the federal government. We're looking at the new federal housing initiative funding and attempting to proceed with a proposal, collectively, so that they can access the necessary funding available through that initiative. We are committed to funding Challenge — we just signed an agreement with them — and they will shortly be receiving the resources to acquire the land that they were pursuing.

Question re: Macaulay Lodge closure

Ms. McLeod: Regarding the planned closure of Macaulay Lodge, can the minister tell us when she is planning on moving the residents out?

Hon. Ms. Frost: This being a new question with respect to Macaulay Lodge — we are working on the Whistle Bend facility and when we open up that facility, we will deal with the transition of the clients from Macaulay Lodge into the Whistle Bend facility. We have made note that we would do that in the fall.

Ms. McLeod: So can the minister tell us what the plans are around moving the residents out? Will they all be moved out at the same time or is it going to be done over an extended period of time? Could the minister confirm how many residents will be leaving Macaulay Lodge and whether or not all of them will be moving to Whistle Bend?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I want to say that we are working with the residents of Macaulay Lodge. On two separate occasions, I have gone over there on my Saturday mornings and sat with the elders. I had tea with them and I spoke to each one of them who was there and really just engaged with them so that they have a voice in where they go — with their families — and that we find them a suitable location.

They won't all go to Whistle Bend. Some of them are requesting other options. We are working with them to ensure that we align nicely with their requests where we can. I can say, at this point, that not all of them have requested to go to Whistle Bend but some of them have. We will work with them to ensure that a smooth transition happens and that we align the services that they have with them, whichever home they decide they want to reside in.

Ms. McLeod: The five-year capital plan says the government is planning on demolishing Macaulay Lodge in 2020. So can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us how much money the government has budgeted for that demolition?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I welcome the questions on the five-year capital plan. It's great that contractors can take a look and see where we're going with this thing and that money will be relayed in a future budget.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 17: *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 17, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. Dendys.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I move that Bill No. 17, entitled *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate that Bill No. 17, entitled *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Our government is committed to diversity, inclusivity and equality and to promoting a people-centred approach to governance.

Our government is committed to diversity, inclusivity and equality and to promoting a people-centred approach to governance. This commitment is clear from a number of initiatives that our government is undertaking. One of these initiatives is LGBTQ2S+ non-discrimination. My friend, the Minister of Justice, and I have been given the privilege and responsibility to work with our colleagues to conduct a review of the legislation, policies and practices to ensure that our government is meeting the rules and social standards for LGBTQ2S+ non-discrimination.

Updating legislation is one path toward fulfilling this commitment. Legislative changes are one of the strongest signals that we can send that our government is committed to increasing the inclusion and equality of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners in our community. We know that the way our legislation has historically been written — as if there were only two sexes, two genders and one sexual orientation — means that our laws do not always speak inclusively of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners and may be discriminatory in their application.

Some legislative changes will deal with specific issues, such as the *Vital Statistics Act* and human rights amendments that we brought forward last spring. Other changes will deal with broader issues like the *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, which focuses on modernizing legislation by addressing common themes across multiple enactments. Both of these types of amendments — specifically the broader ones — are important for helping to change the way our legislation speaks and for supporting more inclusive laws overall.

The *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* is a bill that will enable the diversity of our community to be better reflected within our laws. This legislation removes potentially discriminatory binary sex and gender language from nomination and membership requirements for Yukon boards and committees, the *Care Consent Act*, the *Child Care Act*, the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act*, and

the *Social Assistance Act*, and replaces it with language that enables and encourages cultural, regional and gender diversity in board and committee membership. It also amends one clause of the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* to add gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination.

Together, these legislative amendments will increase the representation of diverse voices on decision-making bodies that influence key areas, such as childcare, social assistance, violence prevention and provision of care. They will also affirm the importance of equality and inclusion of LGBTQ2S+ employees within our public service.

The key purpose of the amendments to the legislated boards and committees is to remove language that could potentially create barriers for trans, two-spirit and non-binary Yukoners from applying, according to their gender expression or identity.

The enactments that we are amending currently have statutory binary sex or gender requirements for board and committee nominations or membership. In some enactments, these binary requirements are explicit — for example, requiring that equal numbers of men and women be appointed to a committee. In others, the binary requirements are implicit — for example, requiring that gender balance between men and women as two opposing genders be considered when making appointments to a board.

Because these requirements are legislated, there is an obligation to follow the wording of the legislation when making decisions about nominations and appointments. With the way it is written currently, it clearly only reflects men and women. By removing this binary language and replacing it with gender diversity, it is now clear that board and committee applicants of all genders will be considered when appointment decisions are being made.

Changing our law to capture trans, two-spirit and non-binary Yukoners in addition to cisgender Yukoners — those whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth — is an important step to take in making our legislation more inclusive.

When we opened these enactments to make these changes, it was also important to take the opportunity to support increased diversity in other ways. Specifically, we have introduced language supporting the consideration of cultural and regional diversity when making appointments to these boards and committees when and where such language was not already present.

We know that greater diversity of boards and committees is associated with improved decision-making, effectiveness and outcomes. It also supports decisions that are more reflective of the diverse needs and experiences of the public. These amendments provide more consistent diversity language across legislation and are a clear reflection of our government's commitment to ensuring that the diversity of Yukon is better reflected in decision-making. Those who are impacted by the decisions of these boards and committees will only stand to benefit from these changes.

Feedback provided by the affected boards and committees, as well as from other key stakeholders, indicated clear support for the amendments that will increase diversity and support inclusion. The amendments of the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act* are slightly different from the others, as they speak to nominations put forward by women's organizations. Feedback indicated support to introduce a clause supporting increased cultural, regional and gender diversity, as well as to add gender-equality organizations to enable nominating organizations. This amendment ensures that both women's equality organizations as well as gender-equality-seeking organizations such as All Genders Yukon or White Ribbon Yukon are able to nominate people to be appointed to the board of trustees.

Based on feedback received during engagement, we have also added gender-based violence to the purposes of the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act*. This means that the subclause of the act, which lists the prevention of violence against women and children as one of the purposes of the trust, will now also include gender-based violence. In other words, we have simply clarified a purpose for which money in the crime prevention and victim services trust fund may be used in the promotion and provision of services intended to prevent gender-based violence, and that organizations concerned with gender-equality issues can nominate persons to be appointed to the board of trustees.

These amendments do not alter or undermine the reality that women experience higher rates of violence. Money from the trust can still be used for the prevention of violence against women and women's organizations can still nominate people to be appointed to the board. The changes simply reflect that more modern understanding of gender-based violence that is seen in community initiatives and public education campaigns — locally and across the country — that men have a role to play in helping to end gender-based violence, and that trans, two-spirit and non-binary people are also facing unacceptably high rates of violence.

By reflecting this full and modern understanding of gender-based violence and violence against women, we expect the crime prevention and victim services trust fund will become even more effective in preventing crime and supporting victims.

Finally, we are bringing forward amendments to the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* through this bill; specifically, we are adding sexual orientation, gender diversity and gender expression as an existing clause on prohibited grounds of discrimination. With this change, we are ensuring that no organization that discriminates against LGBTQ2S+ employees can be certified as a bargaining agent or a bargaining unit. This amendment is similar to the changes we made to the Yukon *Human Rights Act* last spring, when we affirmed that gender identity and gender expression are human rights.

These changes are a clear signal to our public service and to all workplaces in Yukon that our LGBTQ2S+ employees have a right to be treated fairly at work. It is important to us that our public service employees feel safe and respected

when they are at work, no matter their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Formal engagement on the amendments in this bill took place from January 15 to February 12, 2018, with initial letters and e-mails sent on January 15, follow-up e-mails sent February 2 to 6, and feedback accepted until February 12. We heard back from a number of community organizations, from all of the affected boards and committees, and from two Yukon First Nation governments. This feedback indicated general support for steps that positively impact diversity and inclusion and support for the amendments brought forward by this bill.

We also heard a lot of welcome feedback about our legislative and non-legislative issues. LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners would like to see further conversation or action on this.

We know that equality and inclusion for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners require more than legislation and more than this one bill. That is why we are excited to announce that our government is taking first steps in designing a public engagement on LGBTQ2S+ inclusion that will help to ensure government practices are meeting the needs and priorities of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. This preliminary work includes working with the LGBTQ2S+ stakeholder organizations to design a confidential public engagement process where all Yukoners will be safe to say what issues and priorities are most important to their daily health and well-being.

We are also exploring options to enable individuals to have their say on ways to make the public engagement more inclusive, accessible and as meaningful as possible. At the same time, Government of Yukon is creating a new internal framework for improving our coordination and collaboration on key issues of LGBTQ2S+ equality and inclusion. We know that strength lies in diversity and believe that everyone stands to benefit from the equality and inclusion of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners in our communities.

We look forward to continuing this conversation in the coming weeks and months. In the meantime, I am very pleased to be part of a process that is taking steps to make LGBTQ2S+ inclusion part of everyday life and decision-making, both in terms of the bill before us today and the work ahead of us.

Mr. Cathers: In reading this legislation, it actually seems to me to do less than what the government is claiming it does. It appears that, in the references in a number of sections to reflect on the cultural, regional and gender diversity of the Yukon, the inclusion of cultural and regional diversity appears to be a new and substantive change and not one that we have a problem with. However, in the areas as it pertains to gender, it appears to be simply adjusting legislation to reflect the current common law in this area and changing sections of Yukon legislation that, if interpreted and enforced as strictly worded, would be highly unlikely to stand up to a challenge in the court or in front of the Human Rights Commission. It actually doesn't appear to be a substantive policy change, other than the inclusion of cultural and regional diversity in this legislation.

Mr. Adel: I rise today to give my support for Bill No. 17, *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*. I would like to thank the minister, her department and my colleagues for bringing this forward.

I am proud to say that this government is committed to taking action to ensure that our laws speak inclusively of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners and are far more fair in their application to Yukoners of all genders and sexual orientation.

This is an issue that speaks to me personally through experiences in my life and interactions with those I care about. As a society, it is vital that we expand our perceptions beyond the definition of "male" or "female" to include all Yukoners. The act before this House today is the result of work that is long overdue, and the legislation that we brought forward is just one step of the process.

The review that brought us to this act took a bird's-eye view to identify potential discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. This legislation is also one step in a long process of making our laws more inclusive and modernizing language to include all Yukoners. However, this is a big task and something that cannot be done over the course of one legislative Sitting. This is in part due to the scale of work to be done and also because this is a critical issue. It is important that we take the time to do it right.

Our government started this work last spring through the amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* and the *Human Rights Act*. With this bill before us now, we continue to work to modernize legislation and to support diversity across several Yukon government boards and committees. The *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* requires that affected boards make reasonable efforts to ensure that the membership on boards and committees reflects the cultural, regional and gender diversity of the Yukon. Boards and committees, and the Yukoners they serve, only stand to benefit from a more inclusive and diverse membership. Boards and committees should reflect the diversity of our society, and Bill No. 17 makes strides to ensure that this happens whenever possible.

We know from research that boards that are more inclusive and reflective of society make more effective and informed decisions. The four enactments that we are amending currently have statutory sex or gender requirements that reflect binary sex and gender language. This act modernizes the language with our legislation to ensure that our laws speak inclusively of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. This is important work because, historically, our legislation was written to include only two sexes and two genders while excluding trans, two-spirit and non-binary Yukoners. This legislation makes strides to clearly include these Yukoners. Identification includes a male or female option — that's it. By updating this binary language to ensure inclusivity for all Yukoners, there will be a requirement to consider applicants of all genders, including trans, two-spirit and non-binary Yukoners.

Decisions around childcare, violence prevention and social assistance all stand to benefit from boards that represent the true social fabric of the people of our territory. It is also

our hope that these changes will entice more Yukoners to serve on our boards and committees. We want to hear from all members of our community and we want to ensure that all Yukoners are fairly represented on boards and committees.

This Yukon Liberal government engaged with Yukoners on this bill and throughout that process. We heard back from members of affected boards and committees, and they are supportive of these amendments that will increase diversity and inclusion in board decision-making. The results of this engagement tell us that we're on the right path.

We believe that a consistent approach across government is the way forward. Through this work, we are trying to establish that consistency.

I think it is also important to note that LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners are not one group with one set of needs and priorities. We understand that non-discrimination is going to mean different things to different people. This is why we cannot do this work alone, and we welcome the feedback needed to learn from people with lived experience and find better ways to work together as a government to find people-centred solutions that improve the lives of Yukoners.

As we continue on this journey, we are committed to remain open to suggestions on how to do this work better because we recognize that this work is only the beginning. It takes more than just legislation to work toward equality for all LGBTQ2S+ people. It takes a societal shift in the perception of who makes up this community and who they are as people.

The point of Bill No. 17 is to breach these walls. No effort is too small or too large, and we recognize that. We are listening, Mr. Speaker. We are engaging with stakeholders in the process to help to develop this legislation. We are engaging stakeholders in the process to make all reasonable efforts to ensure that memberships of boards and committees established under the acts included in this bill reflect the gender diversity of the Yukon.

We are listening because our government is committed to finding the best and most effective way to engage with Yukoners. By working together to achieve these shared goals, we have the opportunity to do the best work possible to create a more inclusive Yukon. We are also committed to working on these issues as one government, and this approach is reflected here in this bill.

I applaud the work of all departmental staff who have worked diligently to bring the *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* forward for consideration.

As I reflect on this legislation, I think of all five of my children — all different in many ways by gender identity and sexual orientation, but still members of my family and members of society who deserve to be treated equitably and fairly. I hope this legislation brings enlightenment to all Yukoners.

Ms. White: Today, I am speaking to second reading of this bill. I have highlighted my concerns before and they haven't changed, actually.

I appreciate the briefing that we got. It was great. There were people representing each of the departments where the

acts were located. In part of that briefing, we were given a page of information. It started off with the mandate commitment, so I am going to quote from that. It says: "Work with the Minister [of Justice/Women's Directorate] and other colleagues to conduct a review of legislation, policies and practices to ensure the Yukon government meets the rules and social standards for LGBTQ non-discrimination."

When it talks about the summary of engagement, it says that it took place between January 15 and February 12, 2018. Twenty-seven letters and e-mails were sent to LGBTQ2S+ groups and equality-seeking organizations; five letters and e-mails were sent to the affected boards and committees; and 15 letters were sent to Yukon First Nation governments.

What it doesn't say is how many responses were received.

It does say that stakeholders are generally supportive of steps that positively impact diversity and inclusion, but it doesn't tell us how many out of those contacted responded. I have listened with some interest to the language that is being used today.

I have a copy of one of the letters that was sent out and I am just going to quote from the first two paragraphs. This was sent to an organization on January 15. It says: "The Government of Yukon committed to 'conduct a review of legislation, policies and practices to ensure Yukon government meets the rules and social standards for LGBTQ non-discrimination.'

"The Department of Justice and the Women's Directorate began this work by coordinating a legislative review with all government departments that focused on identifying provisions that may be discriminatory to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and Two-Spirit... individuals. The legislative review identified many references to binary sex/gender identifiers (e.g. 'male' or 'female') and heteronormative terms (e.g. 'father' or 'mother') that may be considered discriminatory or exclusionary against LGBTQ2S+ individuals.

"The Government of Yukon proposed a spring 2018 bill to ensure legislation supports a diverse, inclusive society that promotes LGBTQ2S+ equality and non-discrimination."

That is just an excerpt from the letter. It goes on to say: "Specifically, we proposed amendments to support gender diversity on legislated boards and committees..." — that already exist.

Out of the entire scope that government has the ability to do, we are changing these pieces of legislation because they are legislated boards — and I don't disagree. I don't. If you look at the *Care Consent Act* in section 53(3), it says: "In making appointments to the board, the Commissioner in Executive Council shall attempt to give effect to the following principles: (a) males and females should be equally represented on the board."

I think that could have a change. We talk about gender and other issues. I appreciate that, at one point, in time the minister said that she wants to be sure that the language removes the reflection of binary language of men and women, but every time that we have talked about this — in the 33rd

Legislative Sitting, the NDP tabled motions to amend the *Land Titles Act*, the *Family Property and Support Act*, the *Marriage Act*, the *Married Women's Property Act*, the *Evidence Act*, and the *Spousal Compensation Act*. The reason we did that is that, when we were talking at that point in time about the amendments to the human rights legislation and the *Vital Statistics Act*, we said that those were pieces that also would have to change. The first time we started talking about that was in 2012; I would like to think that it hasn't been a new issue.

If we are talking about how we are concerned about removing the binary language to legislated boards, I would suggest that if you look toward the *Family Property and Support Act*, it uses the definition of parent — and it is gendered language — as “mother” and “father.” It also uses gendered language in section 7(2); it talks about the contribution of the spouse. It says “The rule of law applying a presumption of advancement in questions of the ownership of property as between husband and wife”.

Under “Pledge of Credit” in section 50(4), it says “The provisions of this section apply in place of the rules of common law by which a wife may pledge the credit of her husband.”

I would suggest that this is pretty gendered, and I would say that it follows the binary line. I would also suggest that it doesn't reflect what marriage is anymore, because you can have two husbands and you can have two wives. You don't have to be married to the opposite sex.

Under the *Marriage Act*, it contains gendered language in section 13 when it talks about civil marriage where it references “husband” and “wife”.

The *Married Women's Property Act* — I feel like that is pretty self-explanatory. It is in the title: the *Married Women's Property Act*. Everything is gendered in this act. “Married women”, “herself”, “her”, “she”, and it all talks about the response and what would fall on a woman's shoulders. I wonder if that is still applicable.

The *Evidence Act* talks about “husband” and “wife” under section 4, and section 6 includes gendered language.

When I was reading the *Spousal Compensation Act*, this one was quite upsetting for me. Where it talks about compensation for persons living common-law in section 2, it says: “Any living dependent person who had been entitled to monthly compensation benefits under paragraphs 35(1)(a) or 35(1)(b) of the *Workers' Compensation Act*... and who ceased to be entitled to compensation as a consequence of his or her commencing to cohabit with a person of the opposite sex...” — “of the opposite sex”. It turns out that, in quoting the *Spousal Compensation Act*, it says that relationships can only be had with members of the opposite sex. That one probably caught me off guard the most because it was spelled out in such a way in that it says that the only way that you can get married is if you marry someone of the opposite sex.

I know that in communications that were received from some of the groups, they asked if they could see draft legislation. That was sent on January 16, 2018. The response was: “Unfortunately, because the bill is still being drafted and

has not been finalized or approved by Cabinet, we are not able to share a copy with you.” But they want comments on these broad topics. You can't see it yet, so you can't actually make a comment on what we have.

I know that members of the Yukon women's coalition sent a letter to government and that they said: “We believe creating legislative amendments to promote LGBTQ2S+ equality and non-discrimination is a step forward. There are numerous other Acts requiring amendment in order to comply with law and practice Yukon has adopted with respect to same sex marriage and common-law relationships.”

They list the same — although they did also include the *Vital Statistics Act*, which we had amended — so that is great. I thank the government for following through with what we were trying to encourage. *Vital Statistics Act* and *Human Rights Act* changes were really important, and I don't disagree that what we are talking about here is important, but when you look at the language that is being used in those examples that I have used — especially the *Spousal Compensation Act*, where it talks about cohabiting with a person of the opposite sex — that is what is under the law. Then you have to ask yourself how we are protecting the LGBTQ2S+ population.

What I wanted to highlight was that this is a start, and I appreciated hearing from the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate that they will be doing a larger and broader consultation about legislation that does affect this community. One of the things that was highlighted to me when I was having conversations with different friends of mine in the community was that no one group represents everybody. Queer Yukon doesn't represent everyone within that community. All Genders Yukon — there are many organizations, but they don't necessarily represent all. We also know that, in some cases, groups felt really unable to participate and highlighted their concerns on the use of language and things like that.

I look forward to having a conversation about these individual changes that are being made for legislative boards, but I think if we really want to talk about inclusivity in the community, we would have looked at things that I have mentioned like the *Family Property and Support Act*, the *Marriage Act*, the *Married Women's Property Act*, the *Evidence Act* and the *Spousal Compensation Act*, because if we really wanted to do that, these ones are pretty easy to find. Word searches within those documents find that gendered language — that binary language. I look forward to when the officials are in the Chamber and they can walk us through and things like that.

I guess, even before I get to that point of wrapping that up, the work that was done was directed by government and government chose to start with legislated committees. I wish that government had directed that the scope be broader because the people within the public service know that these have been brought up, they know that these have been talked about and they know the people affected. I believe that within the public service, there was an interest and a desire to go further. My hope is that we see the consultations sooner than later and that we have the ability, maybe even by the fall, to

be changing these laws that I have pointed out that do really talk about a binary language.

Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to furthering the debate.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill on second reading.

I am proud of the work of our government with respect to bringing these issues forward and certainly of taking into account the comments made by the members opposite. I am also pleased that one of my responsibilities in the Department of Justice is in fact to work on this very important issue.

Our government is taking a one-government approach, all working together for the purposes of making Yukoners' lives better. I want to take just a moment here to thank the officials with the Department of Justice, with the Women's Directorate with Health and Social Services and all of those members of the affected boards and committees for their dedication to this work and for their tireless efforts to get this bill — a first step — to the floor of this House.

Shifting culture and practices takes time, but those shifts are often smoother and quicker when led by a change in our laws. By way of example, we saw our culture, practices and communities change in relation to same-sex marriage when the laws changed. Changing the law promotes acceptance. When we changed the laws of impaired driving to have real consequences and increased public education, we saw our culture start to shift. It was no longer acceptable to drink and drive and risk the lives of others. Ensuring that our laws speak inclusively of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners and are fairer to Yukoners of all genders and sexual orientation in their application is a big task that cannot be done in a single legislative session.

We took our first step in June 2017 by amending the *Vital Statistics Act* and the *Human Rights Act*. We are continuing this work with the *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*. With this bill, we are modernizing legislation, supporting increased diversity on several Yukon government boards and committees that will benefit from more inclusive and responsive decision-making, and enshrining gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation as prohibited grounds of discrimination under the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*.

Mr. Speaker, that is no small move and it is no small indication of what we expect of our Yukon communities, of our Yukon employees, of our officials and of this government, going forward. We know that equality for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners requires more than legislation. That is why we are currently exploring options, as you have heard from the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, to collect input on issues and priorities facing the LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners in their day-to-day lives.

How can we make real change in the lives of Yukoners?

Our government committed to undertaking a review of the legislation, policies and practices — again, as you have heard already today — in the area of non-discrimination in

relation to LGBTQ2S+ communities and people. Some of this work can be done internally, and some of this work is being done internally and being done in partnership with communities. We engaged government departments, affected board and committee members, LGBTQ2S+ stakeholders and Yukon First Nations on the proposed changes in the *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* to provide an opportunity to discuss the amendments and collect feedback.

All of the stakeholders were generally supportive of the steps that positively impact diversity and inclusion and showed support for the amendments to the bill — not unlike the Member for Takhini-Kopper King — one step more to be done.

We know that these legislative amendments are not the only changes needed, and we will continue to work — as you heard from the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate — at seeking input for our next steps.

We also continue the work for making our legislation and policies more inclusive. It is important to lead this work.

With respect to the comments made in this debate by the Member for Takhini-Kopper, I don't disagree. I think she has heard me say, as part of the commitments I made during the debate of the Justice budget, that amending additional pieces of legislation is incredibly important. I also know that she understands the priorities that often need to be set with respect to how bills get drafted, completed, reviewed, presented and brought to the floor of this Legislative Assembly.

She will also be aware of the fact — again, Mr. Speaker, not by way of an excuse of any kind, but we have a 77-page cannabis bill that is being brought in this session, among other pieces of legislation that required priority drafting.

I am very keen to make the changes noted by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King because I agree. They are practical, simple changes that we can bring forward to affect the lives of Yukoners in a very positive way.

As you have heard from the other debaters here, Mr. Speaker, there are more consultations and more legislative changes to come because changing the law — as I have noted earlier — is important. It is an important way to lead change in our communities.

This move, along with the others that have been taken by this government and the work that will be undertaken at the direction of the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate — and the Department of Justice, Health and Social Services, Community Services and others throughout the government — is in fact a substantive policy change. These are substantive policy changes when taken as presented, as one piece of a puzzle, but, moving forward, we will come to a more inclusive society, Yukon and community.

I'm very pleased to have been part of this work. I am very pleased that I will be involved as we continue moving this work forward. As I have noted, there is more work to come. We are leading this government and this Yukon into a fair and inclusive home for us all.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard on second reading debate of Bill No. 17?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I have listened with great interest, of course, to the remarks of my colleagues in this House this afternoon. I thank them for their thoughtful contribution in our discussion of this bill. I thank the Member for the Third Party, and I have heard your comments previously and I absolutely know that we have a lot of work ahead of us.

At its heart, the conversation that we're having today is about the sort of community we want to live in. Our government has a vision for supporting healthy, vibrant communities. It's one of our key government priorities. Turning this vision into a living, breathing reality will require taking steps to ensure that all members of our community feel safe, included and able to live their best lives.

Many of us here today — if not all of us — know people who identify as LGBTQ2S+. They are our friends, our family members, our neighbours and our colleagues. We know that these members of the communities are just that — members of our community — and that this status entitles them to have the same equality rights and considerations that all community members enjoy. That is why we have brought forward this legislation.

The question of whether we should support equality for LGBTQ2S+ people belongs to another decade — another millennia, I think. We know the answer. Now it's a question for making up for lost time and identifying steps for supporting the greater representation, inclusion and equality of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners in day-to-day life.

One of the ways we're doing so is through this legislation. I know we have a lot more to come before us during this mandate and beyond. The amendments to the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* will affirm the importance of equality and inclusion of LGBTQ2S+ employees within our public service. The amendments relating to the four legislative boards and committees will not only remove discriminatory language but will go a step further by enabling and encouraging cultural, regional and gender diversity in nominations and appointments.

With these changes, we expect to see increased representation of diverse voices on decision-making bodies, which will support outcomes in areas like childcare, provision of care, social assistance and violence prevention. This bill also affirms, through the amendments to the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act*, that the continued gender-based violence and violence against women in our territory are unacceptable, and it supports the incredible work that our community partners are undertaking to prevent violence, support victims and make our communities safer for everyone.

As I have mentioned previously, this last change — as well as the continued focus on violence against women — was informed by community input. I want to express our government's appreciation for all of the feedback that we received from our community partners over the past few months on the amendments that we have been discussing here in the House, as well as other ways Yukon government can

better understand and respond to the needs and priorities of the LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners.

The member from the Third Party said that we had not shared with them the types of responses and how many responses we received. As you have stated, we sent out 26 letters and e-mails to groups and equality-seeking organizations, five letters and e-mails to boards and committees, plus the 15 letters to Yukon First Nations. Ten responses were received from community organizations; six were formal letters; four responses were provided through communication with department staff; five boards and committees submitted responses, with three responding as a group and two had members who responded individually; and we received two responses from Yukon First Nations.

Changing our laws and how our society thinks about sex, gender and sexual orientation is a large undertaking, but one that we firmly believe is the right and necessary thing to do. We also know that we, as ministers and as a government, will be learning new ways to think and communicate about LGBTQ2S+ issues, and we are committed to remaining open to feedback and suggestions as we move forward. I have already learned so much from speaking with different members of the community and I am so grateful for these relationships and for this learning. I think it has made me a stronger person today.

I look forward to our continued conversations on how we can strengthen inclusivity and equality for all Yukoners in the coming months and years. This bill is just one piece of a broader, multi-faceted approach to creating a more inclusive Yukon for LGBTQ2S+ citizens, and we know there is so much more to do. We will be continuing to engage, as we said earlier, with the LGBTQ2S+ organizations, individuals, families and allies to collect input on how to make Yukon laws, policies, programs and services as non-discriminatory as possible. That is truly our goal.

I would also like to thank all the members for their comments and contributions today. I would like to express my deep gratitude for all of the officials who have worked tirelessly and carefully on this bill and on approaches as we go forward. As my colleague has already said, we look forward to introducing bills that will eliminate discrimination throughout our mandate.

I firmly believe that our territory is strengthened by diversity. I am so privileged to have the honour of doing this work on behalf of Yukoners.

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.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 17 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 206, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 206: *First Appropriation Act 2018-19* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 206, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Health and Social Services

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to invite my staff to join me today. I am pleased to speak to Bill No. 206, Department of Health and Social Services operation and maintenance and capital main estimates for 2018-19. With me today, I have

Stephen Samis, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, and Brenda Lee Doyle, Assistant Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Before I begin, I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for tabling this bill and bringing it to the floor of this Legislative Assembly for debate. I would also like to thank officials from the department, the Minister of Justice and officials from her department, as well as my officials from my Department of Health and Social Services for all the hard work that went into creating this piece of legislation. It is not an easy task, but we're all very proud of what is before this House today. We hope that we will have valuable discussion on this valuable piece of good work that is intended to improve the lives of Yukoners.

Since I was sworn in as a member of Cabinet, Yukoners and members of this Legislature will have heard me talk about how my work is part of a bigger picture. These Yukon enduring priorities have been a guiding light for me and have been instrumental in the direction that I have provided to my department. Our people-centred approach to wellness helps Yukoners thrive.

Our strategic investments build healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities. Our strong government-to-government relationship with First Nations fosters reconciliation and our diverse, growing economy provides good jobs for Yukoners in an environmentally responsible way.

With these priorities in mind, my department's work is focused on promoting, protecting and enhancing the well-being of Yukon people through the provision of a continuum of quality, accessible and appropriate health and social services. This is what I have been asked to achieve with the mandate letter that the Premier provided me at the beginning of our government's mandate, and that is what I have been working on over the past several months.

I also want to remind everyone what the Premier set out for me to accomplish on behalf of government and on behalf of Yukoners in my capacity as the Minister of Health and Social Services: work with the Minister of Community Services to regulate and fund midwifery to provide safe and more affordable childbirth options in communities; improve the provision of mental wellness services in our communities; work with Yukoners to create solutions to promote aging in place and a full spectrum of care, both public and private; examine options to improve front-line health care services through a collaborative care model; through cooperation between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Housing Corporation, increase housing for vulnerable populations using a Housing First model; and work with the Minister of Justice, the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and community partners to improve services for victims of violence and sexual assault in Yukon.

We have made significant progress to date, but there is still much work to do. I truly believe that the department's staff are some of the best in the territory and I'm thankful for the work they undertake every day on behalf of Yukoners —

and in supporting me as minister. I continue to challenge senior leaders to find new and innovative ways to continue this progress. I look forward to sharing and reporting back on how we are able to do this work in the coming months.

For the 2018-19 budget, the Department of Health and Social Services is requesting an appropriation totalling \$433.895 million — \$400.705 million in O&M and \$30.19 million in capital.

Under Corporate Services, the department is seeking \$13.416 million in O&M and \$1.712 million in capital for a total request of \$15.128 million.

Corporate Services is responsible for providing senior leadership, human resources, information technology, policy and communications support to the department, which is important for moving forward this government's work. Corporate Services also delivers financial and performance analyses to ensure that the department's work is meeting the needs of Yukoners in a sustainable and financially responsible manner.

Under O&M, the department is requesting funding to create and implement a public education campaign on substance use. With the upcoming legislation on cannabis, Mr. Chair, comes an increased responsibility for this government and my department to raise awareness with Yukoners. To achieve this, we need a public education campaign that is designed specifically to promote and protect the health and wellness of all Yukoners, something we have committed to do in every aspect of health delivery.

As my colleagues in this House will be aware, the first three phases of Yukon's public engagement on cannabis legislation recently concluded. Throughout the process, Yukoners across the territory expressed concerns about the impact of cannabis on youth and about the current lack of adult/parent understanding of the associated health risks. We also know that other issues — including mental wellness and substance use rate in general — are the cause of strong community concerns. We will work closely with the Department of Education in the implementation of this campaign in order to reach Yukon's youth and families in both rural and urban communities.

Mr. Chair, under capital, Corporate Services is requesting \$1 million for the planning and initial work to replace the child placement and client induction systems — the systems that Family and Children's Services use for case management. This funding serves two purposes: bringing the systems into alignment to meet the requirements of the *Child and Family Services Act*, and to increase flexibility, protection of personal information and client services.

Under Family and Children's Services, Mr. Chair, I know that I am not alone when I say that children are our most precious resource, not just here in Yukon but across Canada and the world. As adults, parents, guardians — and as those in government who make decisions — we must ensure that they are nurtured and cared for. We need to think about all the things we do for or wish for our own children and multiply that for all Yukon children.

As a mother, as an auntie, as a First Nation woman, and as minister responsible for the welfare of children in this territory, I know the long-term benefits of a good start in life and of strong supports at home and in the community. I also see the heartbreak and the suffering when these things are not present in a child's life.

We often say that the Department of Health and Social Services looks after Yukoners from birth to death, and we do, with a lot of emphasis on those early years, because we know how important the early years are in a child's life — how early years have such an impact throughout peoples' lives. We work diligently and continually to make sure that children are safe, healthy and have all the tools they need to nourish and succeed. We work to ensure that early childhood education and care for children ensures that our most precious resource, our youth, have a solid foundation for the future.

Under Family and Children's Services — the department is seeking a total of \$52.144 million. Of this total amount, \$46.606 million is in O&M and \$5.538 is in capital. Family and Children's Services supports the well-being of children, youth and families through protection, intervention, coordination and advocacy that strengthen family and community connections and promote a safe and nurturing environment.

How does this look for Yukoners, Mr. Chair? Let me explain. The division provides family services, child placement services, early childhood and prevention services, youth justice and children's assessment and treatment services — that is to say, this division plays a leading role in ensuring that my department is supporting children and families from across the territory in every aspect.

Under Program Management, the department is seeking \$8.287 million in O&M. Through Program Management, \$337,000 in O&M funding is requested to improve outcomes for indigenous children and youth, all of which is 100-percent recoverable from the federal government. The specifics of this funding will be developed collaboratively with Yukon First Nation governments and Indigenous Services Canada.

Under Child Placement Services, \$3.634 million is requested to continue work that promotes, coordinates and provides assessment and placement for children as well as counselling treatment for children and their caregivers to enhance the function of the caregiver family. This takes many forms, including adoption services and foster care.

Under Early Childhood and Prevention Services, the department is requesting \$12.990 million in O&M. Earlier this year, I was happy to sign a three-year \$7.2-million bilateral agreement with the federal government that strengthens Yukon's early learning and childcare system, better supports early learning educators and increases supports for Yukon children under the age of five. The agreement will support program enhancement initiatives. There are a variety of additional investments that the agreement enables our government to make, including the first increase to the direct operating grant since 2007 and the creation of an early learning curriculum. The direct operating grant will increase by approximately \$1 million, with the new federal funding

coming into the Yukon this year. This funding will enable an increase for wages for childcare workers and early learning educators, which will help recruit and retain people in the childcare field. The increase in funding will also assist with managing operating costs for licensed programs.

In addition to increases to the direct operating grant, Yukon's bilateral agreement will see increased funding for: the enhancement fund; start-up funding program; supported childcare program; and grandparents' subsidy — and new initiatives such as: the enriched grant; First Nation governments funding; enhanced bursaries for early learning and childcare students; and additional supports to increase quality childcare in Yukon. This agreement is providing \$2.423 million to the department this fiscal year.

Under Youth Justice, the department is requesting \$4.864 million in O&M to continue its core work of preventing or reducing the incidence of youth crime and promoting the health and well-being of Yukon's youth and families.

Children's Assessment and Treatment Services — CATS — is requesting \$11.751 million in O&M to continue working on community-based counselling supports within the new mental wellness and substance abuse hubs.

All of the great work in this area is delivering on our government's commitment to: a people-centred approach to wellness that helps Yukoners thrive; to healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities; and to strong government-to-government relationships with First Nations. I'm happy to say that my department's work is having significant impact on the quality of life of Yukoners.

Family and Children's Services, through the department, is seeking capital totalling \$5.538 million, and \$1.7 million is requested for the replacement of a long-term group home on Lowe and Hoge streets in Whitehorse. The buildings were deemed unsuitable for a variety of health and safety concerns, programming issues and building structure. The building repairs and expected lifespan made renovation costs not feasible. The purchase of an existing home on Wann Road in Porter Creek is moving forward. On March 12, the City of Whitehorse council approved a conditional land use change for the proposed property. If the purchase proceeds, the total cost will be \$1.7 million with an estimated cost-savings of \$235,000. This total is significantly less than the total funding that my department would have required for a new building. I'm happy to provide the support that the department requires to offer a quality home environment for this group of Yukoners.

I'm looking to the Fifth Avenue receiving home, which is recommended for replacement as well and which I spoke to earlier.

Under social supports, the department is seeking \$55.547 million. Of this, \$55.527 million is for O&M and \$20,000 is for capital.

Program Management is requesting \$3.45 million under O&M for continuation of core services for land-based healing initiatives. That will augment and support the mental wellness substance use services from the department, and we can get

into more details in the submission. This is similar to most other jurisdictions across the country.

We're looking at a social assistance increase in our submission as well. We have had an increase in clients and recipients — and that has seen a significant increase. We work with employment and training services to offer special assistance in ensuring that our recipients are ready for job training, ready for job opportunities and employment. We will continue to support all of our clients in that regard.

We will continue to provide disability services and we're seeking \$12.358 million in O&M to fund these resources. We have requests under community programs and supports and I can provide more details, hopefully, in debate on that. I won't get into the specific numbers, but we're looking at the income support as well as Family and Children's Services.

Under Health Services, the department is seeking \$133.252 million, which is a significant amount in capital being requested.

In Program Management under Health Services, we're requesting \$108.502 million in O&M.

Moving on, we have a number of adjustments. I can go through that with respect to a supportive variety of legislative programs, and we can get into details on that.

More importantly, I wanted to emphasize that we are looking at promoting and strengthening the overall physical and mental wellness of all of our communities, and the submissions that we will debate over the course of the day will highlight for us the continuing programming that we have and the resources that we have allocated.

We will look at our continuing care programs. We have had significant debate on the mental wellness strategies around the continuing care supports in our communities — in particular, the Thomson Centre and the Whistle Bend facility. We have looked at aging in place and its connection to Yukon communities. Working with our rural partners, we see an increase in data over the course of time, so we will use that to our advantage. We will use it to align our programs and services, our policies, and to adjust accordingly and work with all of our partners to address the significant pressures that we're seeing in our Yukon communities.

We have a very robust home care system and programs. We have created a home-first approach to reduce the number of clients we have in the hospitals. We have worked on getting the clients back into their homes. We have worked on supporting our transition with the Hospital Corporation as well. We have looked at expanding the programs there, working very closely with them in better aligning acute care needs. We are looking at opening up additional beds at the Thomson Centre.

The department is requesting — I noted in —

Chair: Order, please.

Ms. McLeod: I want to welcome the officials to the Legislature this afternoon to help us out with this discussion that we are going to have.

Last year, the Member for Copperbelt South had advocated on behalf of a number of families to have the government begin a pilot project to have the continuous

glucose monitoring system put in place for children with type 1 diabetes. The government was able to confirm to parents that they would initiate this pilot project, and for that, we thank them.

Can the minister please confirm the details of the pilot, including when it began or when it will begin? How many families are participating currently, the time frames for the pilot, and how a family is to apply to be part of the program if they are not already? What are the criteria for participation?

Can the minister also confirm which young individuals outside of the age range covered by the pilot program — what must they do to apply for funding for CGM equipment?

I realize that those are a lot of questions, so I will just keep getting up until we get it.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to start by saying that I personally had some really engaging discussions early on when this came to my attention. We met with the parents of these children; we looked at options and we had some really good discussions on an approach that would work for them. The staff was present as well, and we looked at some of the barriers that perhaps were in place and what we can do to assist and support the families whose children have type 1 diabetes and are using the continuous glucose monitoring.

I think the question was how many children — I don't have that number, but we would be happy to provide that information.

The program supports families with children up to the age of 18. The department has also agreed to provide financial support for young adults between 19 and 25 using the continuous glucose monitoring through the Yukon TID support network. This agreement will be time-limited. That is supported through pediatrics, but we are working on continuing that program and we hope that we will continue to see an uptake in a responsive fashion and continue to monitor it as we move forward.

Ms. McLeod: Can the minister tell us more details about the program itself, such as how long the pilot is set to run. What will be the criteria to continue the funding of this equipment? How can people find out how to apply, how they can get coverage, and whether or not they qualify? Where would the person find that information?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The department is continuing to work with the clients. If there is new uptake and if there are new clients who come forward, they work through the department to ensure that they have the funding required. The innovation fund is made available to clients who come forward and come to our attention in this project. Thanks to the families and the parents for raising the profile and bringing this forward as a key concern. One of the concerns was around children not having the supports, and I am happy to say that we have supported it and we will continue to do so. We will work with the parents and with children who have type 1 and type 2 diabetes, ensuring that we work with the department and that they constantly have contact with the current clients we have in the system to ensure that they are being supported.

Ms. McLeod: So we understand then that the funding for this program is coming from the health investment fund,

but I didn't get an answer on how people can find out if they qualify, how to apply and how they can benefit from this program.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I think that given that this was something that came to light over the course of the last year, we worked with the parents and tried to be as flexible as possible to ensure that all of the children who have this unfortunate situation in their lives — that we support them as best we can and as efficiently as we can. We request that they proceed through the director of Insured Health and Hearing Services and it is evolving. We are continuing to support that financially and, as well, to provide wraparound services for the family.

Ms. McLeod: So then we understand that any questions that people have about how to access the assistance under this program are to be done by a call to the director of Health and Hearing Services.

Moving on to mental wellness, last year, we saw a commitment in the budget from the government to have 11 mental health workers placed in Yukon communities to address ongoing issues with mental health and alcohol and drug addictions. We have been monitoring this somewhat closely; I think the minister can agree.

Now, the Premier stated on March 5 that five of the 11 mental wellness positions have been filled and the minister made a commitment to the House that all the staff would be hired by the end of March. We're almost to the end of March. Can the minister update the House and tell us how many of the six remaining open positions have been filled and which communities all 11 are going to?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm happy to say that we've worked really hard to, first off, put the plan in place, identify positions and come up with a creative and innovative solution, which was to create the mental wellness hubs to address some of the key pressures in our communities. The mental wellness hubs are situated in Watson Lake — and I'm very pleased to say we opened up that hub on Friday — Carmacks, Haines Junction and Dawson City. We're working with the department to ensure that we, as quickly as we can, ensure that the positions are filled. We now have seven of the 11 hired and we are in the process of making offers and decisions on the remaining.

We indicated that we would have that by the end of March and we are still striving to ensure that we reach that target.

Ms. McLeod: We still don't have an idea where these positions are going to be, other than one is in Watson Lake. I presume then that there will be one in each of the other hubs of Dawson City, Haines Junction and Carmacks, so that is four.

Would the minister let us know where the other seven are going to be located?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you for the question. Earlier, I tabled in the Legislative Assembly some documents and in them is a map of enhanced community wellness and substance use services. It looks like this. I would be happy to do that again. It clearly defines the positions — some are pre-existing

already in some of the communities, so it is happening to augment what is there and add additional supports.

I'm really happy to say that we are looking at — specifically to the question and how many positions are being created, we have two mental wellness support counsellors in Watson Lake; one clinical health counsellor and one mental health nurse and then a staff person to provide child and youth counselling. We noted that there are additional counsellors in Watson Lake around youth workers and focused family therapy, and that is run through Many Rivers.

So we want to ensure a good transition and ensure that every community that we work with has the supports. What I just read out with respect to supports in the hub in Watson Lake is very similar to what we are doing in the other three hubs.

Ms. McLeod: I acknowledge that the minister did hand out that paper some time ago, but as we have seen, things do change from day to day. I'm sure all of us would like to know where those positions are going to be located. If the minister does not yet know where they are going to be located, perhaps she could just tell us that.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I think we have been very clear from the very beginning where the positions are going to be located and things haven't changed day to day. I think we were committed to ensuring that we provided appropriate supports within the four hubs and that has always remained consistent. We are looking at providing supports in Haines Junction, Dawson City, Watson Lake and then individual supports in each one of the communities. For the record, that has not changed. I think our commitment to the mental wellness and substance use services and supports is really focused on prevention, education, withdrawal management, counselling services, child and youth services and looking at treatment programs and addictions programs — really focusing on a full range and a full spectrum of treatment services within the communities and ensuring that this is well-aligned with the needs of the community.

I'm really happy to say that the program has always remained consistent and that is what we have been working on with the communities. They have had direct input into the design and the development of their hubs.

As we proceed in our communities, I'm really happy to say that we are engaging with our communities and we will continue to embrace the opportunities that are presented to us. If necessary changes are required, we will continue to work on that. We want to evolve and we want to look at needs in our community.

Ms. McLeod: In January of this year, there was a formal joint request made by the Village of Teslin and the Teslin Tlingit Council for an alcohol and drug services worker in the community of Teslin. Can the minister tell the House whether or not she has considered this request and whether or not Teslin is to receive one of the 11 mental wellness workers who were supposed to be placed within the communities?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The staff complement for Teslin will see one mental wellness support counsellor. We will also have one dedicated staff for child and youth counselling. We also

have a social worker in the community. We will continue to work with the Teslin Tlingit Council and work through their health director there. If we can work with the municipality, we will. In some circumstances, however, we will work with the staff we have there and we will work with the Teslin Tlingit Council's social director on addressing the needs of the community.

Ms. McLeod: I thought that I asked a pretty straightforward question. So I can assume then, from what the minister has just said, that the letter of request made by the Village of Teslin and the Teslin Tlingit Council was not considered.

The minister identified three positions that are in Teslin. She also referenced that perhaps this was a complement of staff that are already there. So my question remains: Is one of the 11 new positions for a mental health worker going to be placed in Teslin?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Yes, to the question.

Ms. McLeod: Excellent. Thank you very much.

So with regard to the Whistle Bend place, in October, the minister said that due to staffing issues, there was a delay of over two years for the mental health wing to open. I presume that this is for reasons known to the government. Can the minister give us an update on where the staffing is for Whistle Bend place, given the — I believe it's in the neighbourhood of 156 positions that are to be hired. I understand 47 or 48 of those are going to be coming over from Macaulay Lodge. I think the number was 99 staffers for Whistle Bend place. So where is that staffing at if that centre will be opening this fall?

Hon. Ms. Frost: As indicated in previous submissions, we are opening up the Whistle Bend continuing care facility in the fall of this year. We are working hard to ensure that we have all of the staff recruited. For the record, as we close down the Macaulay Lodge facility, the staff complement at Macaulay Lodge will transfer over to Whistle Bend. Just to ensure that we provide appropriate options and flexibility, some of the staff have requested to go to some of the other care facilities, and we are trying to be as flexible as we can to ensure that we have a full complement at the Whistle Bend continuing care facility and that we accommodate the requests from the internal staff — out of respect. Also for the record, we have 201 new staff, and 52 are transitioning over from Macaulay Lodge.

Ms. McLeod: The next time she gets up, can the minister confirm that the 201 new staff are all for Whistle Bend place?

I want to move on to Alcohol and Drug Services for a minute. Can the minister tell us how long the current wait-list for alcohol and drug services at the Sarah Steele Building for detox services?

Hon. Ms. Frost: My understanding is that currently we have 44 on the wait-list for intake. We do run monthly programs at the Sarah Steele Building. The detox unit is quicker so we do try to transition folks into the detox unit and then into the broader programming. We know that we are working with the department on the whole collaborative care model, and we are working with our communities as well to

address addictions support services in our communities through our mental wellness hubs.

Ms. McLeod: I didn't get an answer on what kind of wait-list there is for the detox services that the Sarah Steele centre provides. Thank you to the minister for letting us know that there are 44 on the intake list for the regular alcohol and drug programming. How long will it take to move those 44 people into the system?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I will go back two questions. The member had asked a question about Whistle Bend. The answer to that earlier question was yes.

With respect to the detox unit — the question around how long it would take to get clients into the Sarah Steele centre — I understand that it will take approximately two months. In the interim, we are working with our departments, we are working with our partners, we are working with the First Nations on the land-based initiative, and we are utilizing the services and supports for our clients in the mental wellness hubs to ensure that they have the services they need in a timely fashion.

Ms. McLeod: I am glad the minister brought up land-based healing. I wonder if the minister could provide us some information on the \$500,000 listed in the budget highlights that are set aside for land-based healing. I have yet to see this number reflected within the budget, although I have seen \$150,000 allocated. I'm just hoping to get some clarification as to where the rest of the \$500,000 is located, and also whether this amount is going to the Jackson Lake healing centre or another initiative.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am happy to have a discussion on land-based healing.

Land-based healing is really an essential part of wellness within our communities. We oftentimes hear community members speak about pre- and post-care, about traditional supports in the communities and looking at the Dooli process — looking at the models that are available to us. Originally, the Jackson Lake project was established — I am happy to say that I am very familiar with the Jackson Lake project because I was directly involved in the northern strategy trust submission to look at the feasibility of this project and directly involved on behalf of the First Nations to decide and provide some supports — then following through on Health Canada support.

There was a separate funding allocated to that specific project, and yet nothing was given. No supports were ever given to the Yukon First Nations, broadly speaking, on land-based healing. We want to ensure that we provide equity, fairness and transparency so that all First Nations have access to resources. We are working closely with the First Nations to identify their priority area needs and work with them on a strategy and a plan to ensure that their projects in their communities are supported and sustained for the longer term. We want to ensure that we provide supports to clients who come out of the Sarah Steele Building or who come back to their communities from southern jurisdictions.

We are really happy that we have worked with the department. We have worked with our communities in

ensuring that we have resources set aside for land-based healing in our communities.

Ms. McLeod: I don't think that I actually got any answers there.

There was \$500,000 referenced in the budget highlights; \$150,000 of it is in this budget. What I heard the minister say is that they are going to continue discussions with community members to identify where and how the rest of this money will be spent. Can the minister confirm that only \$150,000 is going to land-based healing this year?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I have clarity on the wait-list currently for detox. We have no wait-list for detox, so clients come and they are provided immediate support. It's the long-term programming that we have a bit of a wait-list on — for the intake. My understanding is that it is only two months. In the meantime, we are working with the communities to ensure that we provide the supports and we use the land-based option to do that — and through the mental wellness hubs and support team.

On the question around the land-based healing initiative, the member will know that originally the Jackson Lake program was funded through Executive Council Office. The Premier in office made some support program initiatives for Jackson Lake. They worked collectively with Yukon First Nations to ensure that the program they offered, which is land-based healing, really provided options for all Yukon First Nations. This new funding that we have budgeted for — we are seeing \$350,000 moving over from THIF to provide support to other Yukon First Nations that have not seen supports in the past. We're working with them and we have \$150,000 to assist the First Nations in rural Yukon on stabilizing and designing models that will work for them, using their traditional practices and their local traditional customary practices of healing. I'm really happy about that and I am pleased to work with the communities.

Ms. McLeod: What I think I just heard the minister say is that \$350,000 is going to other First Nations as well as the \$150,000 going to other First Nations to design a program that works for them. I'm not sure at this point if anything is going to the Jackson Lake healing centre. When the minister is up next, could she confirm those numbers and where the money's going? If the \$350,000 to other First Nations is accounted for in the budget, where is it accounted for? I don't know where it is.

In the last budget cycle, I had asked the minister where one might find information on the Jackson Lake healing centre if one wanted to know about the program, how many people were attending and what the outcomes were. I did not get any answer to that last year. I'm hoping the minister has some information for us this year.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Just for clarity, the Jackson Lake healing program centre was funded out of the Executive Council Office and it wasn't funded under Health and Social Services. It was a one-off initiative. There was a decision made to provide supports to that facility.

Historically, they received a lot more money than they are getting this year, so now that they are up and running and

established, they are receiving \$400,000. That comes out of the Executive Council Office budget. It will now transfer over to Health and Social Services so we can better align the service needs of Yukoners.

If you do a calculation, we have 14 communities in the Yukon. Of those 14 communities, we have allocated an additional \$500,000 to provide support to pre- and post-care programming and land-based healing. It is significantly less than what we are contributing to the already established Jackson Lake program. We will continue to use that program and we are working well in collaboration with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and their program team. We have a very successful relationship, I would say, and we will continue to use that as a model to base the other initiatives on in other Yukon communities. However, I noted that the established process for these facilities in our rural communities is determined by the customary practices and procedures of the individual First Nation. It is very similar to the Northern Tutchone nations, for example. They follow their customary laws, commonly referred to as the Dooli process. That is one example. We want to ensure that we are supporting all Yukon First Nations and are as transparent as we can be to address people's needs in their own home communities.

Ms. McLeod: It was always my understanding of this land-based healing treatment that it was open to all Yukoners. I would just like the minister to confirm that because I am getting the idea that it might not be open to all Yukoners.

Again, I guess we are back to the \$500,000 going to various First Nations — 14 First Nations — which is somewhat different from 18 Yukon communities. Where is that reflected in the budget? I do not know which line item it comes under. I understand that \$400,000 is coming from ECO. I don't know if that constitutes part of the \$500,000, but my understanding of what the minister said was that the \$400,000 coming from ECO and transferred to Health and Social Services is being spent on Jackson Lake. I am not quite sure how that math works out.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The objective is to transfer the Jackson Lake program from Executive Council Office, where it rightfully belongs. It has historically been placed in the Executive Council Office, and we want to ensure that we continue to sustain and provide the supports that are necessary. Once we get through this budgetary process, it will be transferred over to Health and Social Services and it will be augmented and supported by the department. We will look at linking all of this to the Health and Social Services mental wellness strategies, tying it to the hubs, and ensuring that we have the clinical supports that are required.

I wanted to highlight the great work of Kwanlin Dün and the Health and Social Services team to ensure that we provide necessary supports to all Yukoners who choose to go to a land-based healing project like Jackson Lake, which is open to all Yukoners.

They have been very open to that and that is part of, we think, the breaking down of barriers and trying to provide opportunities for those who are perhaps coming forward and do not want to use a traditional option like the Sarah Steele

facility — the alcohol and drug treatment facility. The \$150,000 was budgeted last year and the \$350,000 comes out of the THIF funding. As noted, we will come back to that and ensure that we provide appropriate services very similar to the very successful initiative at Jackson Lake.

Ms. McLeod: I am just going to leave off with that for the time being. I am going to move on to continuing care.

There have been a number of changes made to the Whistle Bend continuing care centre since this government came to form government, and the plan to add on more beds when the need arose was scrapped in favour of keeping the facility at 150 beds.

The government planned at first to open 120 beds for continuing care and 30 for mental health and palliative wings. In October, the minister confirmed that those two subsequent wings would be delayed and now what we see is that the centre is going to be open this fall with 150 beds for continuing care needs.

I am still wondering how the transition from continuing care to — let's say the mental health services need — how that transition is going to take place and how interchangeable those beds are. For instance, if there is a bed available in palliative care or someone is on the wait-list for complex care — also what we might consider the mental health wing — can it be filled that way? If someone needed a mental health bed, can they use a vacant continuing care bed? I'm wondering how flexible that system is going to be.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I think the point with respect to the 150 beds at the Whistle Bend facility — the decision was made very early on that we were not going to proceed with 300 beds as was previously designed and initiated by the Yukon Party government. Why is that? It is because we really don't have — the resources were not planned for appropriately and, as well, we did not account for the O&M resources needed to run a facility of that magnitude. We have taken some careful considerations and noted that we are still going to proceed with the care need. We know there are complex care needs of clients who are in our care. We have a number of facilities, Mr. Chair, and all of those facilities that we have are managed under Health and Social Services.

As we operationalize the Whistle Bend facility, we are seeing significant pressures with our aging population and we want to ensure that we align very quickly to address the wait-lists and the pressures. The focus was to open up all 150 beds and not defer the two specialized care units, which were the dementia care and the palliative care units. We are still going to proceed as planned to have those two wings open up as required.

We had 12 complex care beds to open up in 2020, and we had 18 for palliative care — or sometimes referred to as hospice care. We are already providing those supports and services within our departments. We will ensure that any client that comes to our care — we provide them the best care possible and ensure that they have quality of life and quality of care.

In the coming months, as we operationalize the other facilities, we will bring in the additional supports that are

required in the specialized services that we need. I am happy and pleased that we have a really skilled staff on the care team, and they will ensure that the services we provide at the Whistle Bend facility are of the highest standard possible. We will hit the targets as we have initiated. That is our goal, Mr. Chair. We will open up the specialized care beds as we have targeted, but for the interim we will open up 150 of those beds for regular care beds and provide support services for dementia and complex care as they arise and ensure that we have the staff available to do that.

Ms. McLeod: Obviously, the design of the facility was for a certain type of care in each of these wings. I initially understood that these beds could not be open — the palliative care and the complex care beds — because of a combination of design and staffing. What are the costs associated with the decision to open 150 beds this year as opposed to 120?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Just for reference, given that we are opening the Whistle Bend continuing care facility in October — of course, you would pro-rate and you would look at what are the costs for that period of time to the end of the year, and we have calculated \$24 million. I have made reference in earlier submissions that we would look at perhaps an estimated number in excess of \$36 million. That is our projection based on what we know, once we have it fully occupied for the full year.

With regard to growth, we will adjust that accordingly and we will work on an aging-in-place concept that will address continuing care needs and specialized care needs, preferably in our rural communities.

Ms. McLeod: My understanding of Whistle Bend place, in its concept, was that the facility would be open to Yukoners who required that level of care regardless of who they were. I'm wondering if the minister will confirm that, as things stand today, only seniors will be allowed in that facility — those 65 years of age or older. I ask that because I was told that at an open house for this facility.

Hon. Ms. Frost: There is no discrimination. If there is a need — we have clients who are there who are very young and have specialized care. That will continue in all of our facilities. The member opposite may be aware that Copper Ridge has services for specialized younger children.

When we say "aging population" — generally, you talk about care facilities for the older generation, but we do have options and opportunities to ensure that we provide care for all people who need it, and ensure that we continue to work on care and that we are not in any way discriminating against those who require supports. We are ensuring that the specialized care unit that we're opening up at Whistle Bend will allow for those support services as well, very similar to what we're doing already in our established facilities.

Ms. McLeod: I'm happy to hear that and I thank the minister for that information. I hope that this position gets out to people who are providing information to the contrary.

It's entirely possible that Whistle Bend will be full shortly after opening its doors. I know that the minister has gone on at length about an aging-in-place model, but the question remains what the minister's plan will be to accommodate

people who require this level of care when those beds at Whistle Bend place are full.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm really happy to say that, currently, we have somewhere around 70 on the wait-list. Once we open up Whistle Bend, we won't see anyone on the wait-list. We will look at moving forward with that, moving the clients over from Macaulay Lodge and opening up the extra beds at the Thomson Centre. We will see extra space available. We will continue to think long term and we will look at aging in place. I'm really happy to note we are working — we are having an aging-in-place summit in the springtime and we will work with all of our partners in identifying some long-term strategies in addressing them.

If there are any misunderstandings in our community with respect to access to care and programming, we will be sure to note that. I would like to thank the member opposite for bringing that to our attention. We will be sure to note that for others.

Ms. McLeod: The minister is anticipating empty beds at the end of the day, taking care of people on a wait-list, the people from Macaulay and those who are currently being accommodated at our hospitals.

The Premier has said on a couple of occasions that I am aware of that he was committed to providing extended care in all Yukon communities. I am wondering if the minister is going to stand by that. I want to reference a comment that the minister made in Watson Lake last Friday regarding an elder care facility. I would like the minister to expand on what she meant by "elder care facility".

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to the relationship with the Watson Lake community and working with the elders in Watson Lake, I am happy to note that I met with about 30 Kaska elders. They really highlighted the need for continuing care — some seniors complexes that better align with their needs in their community that they don't have access to. There is the Wye Lake Manor, and there are pressures there. We oftentimes see vacancies, and the question was posed to the elders: Why are you not occupying the space when it has come available? They are concerned about having a place of their own — a place that they can call a community-based centre for themselves. I think it was just trying to work with the elders and the seniors. For me, an elder is defined by our community as someone who has wisdom, someone who comes forward and someone who wants to engage with us and participate. Our system defines it differently, and we tried to ensure that we provide affordable accommodations in our community. We try to look at Housing First initiatives and then we look at seniors complexes that provide care for the needs of our aging population. We have engaged with Seniors Action Yukon and other seniors organizations on an aging-in-place summit, and they have committed to working with us. We are doing that in the spring. We will bring representation from our communities in to address that. We are also committed to working with stakeholders and partners.

We have addressed that we are looking at an aging-in-place concept. What does that mean? That means that we want to work with communities like Watson Lake. We want to

work with communities. As my colleague from beautiful Mount Lorne, the Minister of Community Services — we know that the population growth in Tagish is exceeding — and that there are more and more seniors in that area. They really want us to align service needs where the older adults are located.

Since February, we have gone out into a number of communities and engaged with the communities of Mount Lorne, Watson Lake, Tagish, Marsh Lake, Carcross and Dawson.

We have now gone into Mayo and we have also met with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, and we're looking at identifying the types of supports and services that Yukoners need. We have also committed that we would proceed with providing care and services to rural Yukon residents. Historically, we only had these types of support facilities situated in Watson Lake, Whitehorse and Dawson City. Other Yukon communities are saying that they have an aging, growing population. We know statistically that by 2030, I think, 30 percent of our population or something of that nature — it's a significant amount — will be over the age of 55. We want to be able to think long term and be adaptive and responsive when that time comes. That means that Yukoners need to be engaged and our partners involved in that process, so we are really pleased about the engagement with the Seniors Action Yukon and other seniors organizations to better align service needs.

Ms. McLeod: I am kind of wondering if we have a bit of a labelling difference, I guess. When the minister talks about elders and I'm talking about seniors, I'm wondering if we're talking about the same people. I'm just not sure about that, so maybe we need to come up with a more generic name for folks — I don't know. I just want to make sure that we're talking about our elderly citizens, however we define that.

It was a good segue, I guess, into what I want to talk about on the topic of home care. Health and Social Services held a meeting with the Watson Lake seniors late last year. They were interviewed about home care services that they were receiving in Watson Lake. I sent an e-mail to the minister, asking for the scope of these discussions and what percentage of seniors were interviewed and whether this was done in all Yukon communities, or just Watson Lake.

I also asked for information about what the rate of return was for the paper survey that was handed out, and I have not heard anything from the minister on this. I am wondering if she has any information that she can share today. Also, I would like to know if the results of those interviews and the surveys will be made public.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Maybe just for clarity — and I apologize if I misspoke, or if there is misrepresentation — oftentimes I go to my First Nation heritage and, when we refer to elders, we refer respectfully to the older person in our communities. I will be cognizant of that going forward to refer to them as older adults. The definition of “elder” in our First Nation community is those who are over 60.

With respect to meeting seniors in Watson Lake, we did travel to Watson Lake. As I indicated, I have been there three times now.

I spoke with the seniors. I have gone into the seniors complex. I have looked at efficiencies and services and looked at what we can do differently at Wye Lake Manor. How can we provide more aligned services? I think the objective is to ensure that the facilities that we have currently are aligned to meet the needs of those individuals who are residing there. If there are improvements to be made, then we want to ensure that this happens. I'm happy to note that when we did go to do the tour, we went with multiple departments. We didn't just go as Health and Social Services. We looked at multiple departments having a look at efficiencies in that particular building.

As noted previously, as of February, we met with a number of communities. The objective is really to look at a broader collaborative care model in our communities, interviewing and engaging with all of those requiring supports and services who are of the aging population. With regard to making public the surveys and the interviews, it's really a part of our aging-in-place consultation and it will be discussed at the summit in the spring.

I would note that I would not be comfortable in sharing that at this point, until we've had that dialogue with the Seniors Action Yukon. Seniors Action Yukon really participated in identifying that there was a need to get together and have a broader discussion. We're really engaged with that and proceeding with that — I believe that it is targeted for June, but I will verify that date — and working on formalizing further community engagements over the course of the summer. I understand it's in early June, actually.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 206, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

Ms. McLeod: With respect to home care funding — and we know that the Government of Canada provided some millions of dollars to Yukon — I am wondering if the minister has an idea of how that money will roll out, in what year. I am particularly interested in what the concept is for that money. How is it going to be spent to increase home care throughout Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The Yukon home care program, combined with some of the other programs that I have previously mentioned, is really to look at addressing Yukon's care needs in rural Yukon, but also at supporting and augmenting the current home care program that exists. We focused this year on the home-first approach, and that is really to look at working with individuals and families to return them to their own homes. I am happy to note that, in the first

four months of the initiative, we had 15 individuals return to their own home. The home care program provides specialized support to individuals including health care, personal care, support services, promoting their independence, health and safety, and working with increasing front-line staff in Yukon to ensure that we provide more options to address the care needs of all of our clients.

The home-first philosophy or concept is really about aging in place, so the model of aging in place is building up on a home care program, a home-first program, to relieve pressures on our hospital beds. We have done that very successfully.

We have worked with our team to reduce the number of beds occupied at the hospital by providing home care services throughout the Yukon and enabling Yukoners to remain in their homes while being supported by a healthy, vibrant community — and ensuring that we have necessary programs and supports for them there. We do that in collaboration and conjunction with our health centres and with our community partners.

The Home Care Program currently provides services to 662 people, and we know that on our records, we have 409 who are in Whitehorse and 252 in Yukon communities. We have a bilateral agreement with the federal government and Yukon to look at increasing opportunities and programs to support continuing care funding. We are really, I think, also working with the Hospital Corporation and with our partners in ensuring that Yukoners have the right care in the right place, supporting them to remain in their communities. That means that our partnership with Yukon Hospital Corporation is really essential as well as our partnership with Yukon First Nations. We have \$6.2 million in continuing care funding over the next 10 years, and that includes Yukon home care. The funds will support aging in place by improving access and access-type programming — community-based programming.

The program really is to support people who require alternative care, rather than to have acute care at the hospital. We have them at the hospital, but the services there are not really suited to meet the needs of the client. They should really, in most cases, be in their own homes with models designed around care support. It is an initiative to help Yukoners get out of the hospital — keeping them in their homes, working on our home care program and support systems, and ensuring that we have capacity in all our communities.

Ms. McLeod: Of course, when you tell me that 15 individuals were returned home, I immediately wonder where they were. I'm gathering, though, that they may have been in hospitals and they returned home with the appropriate supports. Thank you for that.

There are a number of older adults, or seniors, in our communities who are at an age where they are not ready to go to a residence of any sort. They are still able to look after themselves, by and large, but they are looking for help in other areas. The Premier has said that he welcomes suggestions from the opposition and so, last year, I did make a suggestion that the department contract out the annual

cleaning, at least, of seniors' homes — the heavy lifting, stuff like windows and walls and whatnot. I'm wondering if any action was taken in that regard. Is this something that can be moved forward? Again and again, this is something that is brought up to me by seniors.

In addition to that, if we want to keep people in their homes, we need to help them maintain those homes — so a lot of questions around snow removal, which includes shoveling from time to time and, of course, shoveling off that darn roof in the spring. All of these things are of concern to older folks who can no longer do this work for themselves. In summer, they need help with perhaps some yard maintenance. Also, things like packing the wood in — these are all matters of concern for older folks when they want to stay in their homes. I'm wondering whether the government is open to contracting out some services that seniors could access.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to thank the member opposite for the question with respect to home care services. The objective is really to provide these specialized and supported services. As noted, as the population ages, mobility becomes a concern and really trying to adopt, with our partners through the Housing Corporation and through the Hospital Corporation, a transition plan — a really good transition plan that transitions the clients out of the hospital into their own homes. That means that we need to look at what kind of supports and care that individual requires — not just health care and personal care, but what type of support services are needed. We want to ensure that we align properly the supports that are needed to promoting independence of individuals who return to their own homes.

We are working with Seniors Action Yukon and our partners and will do that in June. They will provide guidance and recommendations to us as well. That will help to better align our policy and planning within Health and Social Services and with the Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Housing Corporation.

On September 7, the department was directed that the committee on policy and planning would direct the department together with Yukon Housing Corporation to undertake the following — to look at aging in place and ongoing services planning by addressing some of the challenges that the member opposite raised. Not everyone can shovel their walkway. Given that we've seen in the last two weeks a huge dump of snow — we saw bare ground and then the next day we saw a foot of snow. You need to be agile. Once the plow comes by your road, you have a berm and you will never drive through that berm. We want to ensure that, as we work with the client and their families, we have appropriate services.

This is really about: What does remaining in your own home look like? Not so much about the health care needs, but there is also mobility access and some of those challenges that we're working through with the Housing Corporation.

I am happy to note that we will work with our partners, look at the whole home care program, and provide supports as required. There are some unique circumstances, such as shovelling a walkway, taking the berm off the road or taking

snow off a roof. We want to always ensure that our seniors are safe and comfortable in their own homes and in places where they want to reside — not where we deem them to be in our care facilities — if they desire to be there. That is our goal and our objective. We really welcome the input from the seniors action group.

Ms. McLeod: I work pretty closely with my seniors society in Watson Lake. I must say that I have never heard of the seniors action group. I am a little bit cautious about putting all of my eggs in one basket on that front. I hope that some further outreach beyond this group is happening between government and our older population.

We have heard a lot of discussion around the term “aging in place”. It seems to be a fairly broad interpretation of what that might be. I realize that home care is a service that many of our older folks access, and they are very thankful for it. Folks in Watson Lake get about an hour a week. It seems unreasonable to expect the home care group to provide any of these extra services that make it better for seniors and the like to stay in their homes as long as possible. It is not a model that I favour personally because I am not sure that it would work out very well. I am certainly open to other options, but I still would like to see some kind of contracting opportunity for someone who can provide this kind of rotating care for our seniors.

The minister has spoken much about aging in place. Can the minister outline for us what concrete steps have been taken under the umbrella of aging in place for our Yukon communities that we can point to and say that this is what is being done?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The consultation and engagement with Seniors Action Yukon really is a representation of a number of interested seniors. They want to ensure that they have a voice.

We are also working with and hearing from the Yukon Council on Aging and, as the member noted, she is very closely connected to the senior’s society in Watson Lake. I want to note that we have taken input and, as noted earlier, we have engaged, but what was sorely lacking from that process was our engagement with the seniors from the Liard First Nation — giving them a voice and an opportunity to provide input on what they see as their core needs, what they would like to see in terms of representation that better aligns with their cultural practices and what they want to see in terms of programs that are better aligned.

We met with over 30 seniors and they raised a number of concerns that they brought to the table around navigating a system that they didn’t understand — having to travel out of the community, having to travel to Vancouver, what they do and what supports are in place. Those are concrete steps and we will ensure that we try provide support to those who have a difficult time navigating — ensure that we work with them on the non-insured health benefits program and our partners, and ensure that all residents of Yukon are given the care that they need so that they feel safe when they do travel to the program service area. Our objective is to bring the programs to them

and, if we can, that is what we will focus on through our *Yukon Health Care Review*.

What concrete steps are we taking? We have created 10 new FTEs to help with aging in place and home care in our communities, and we have looked at the facility in Watson Lake. We are really working with our partners to ensure that we have programs there — in all of our communities, for that matter. We partner with Yukon First Nations where we can to ensure that we provide those services.

The question earlier was: Why don’t you contract that out? We do partner, and we try to seek synergies where we can and ensure that we have the proper care. We have allocated \$1 million from the home care budget this year to look at further enhancements from what was there in 2017-18. We didn’t have a lot of resources in the home care budget previously, and we are seeing the uptake and the demand. As the member noted, there is huge pressure around ensuring that the seniors get supports in their own communities and in their own homes, and that is the objective of the Home Care Program.

We created a number of positions and looked at supporting our home-first initiative, looking at alternative levels of care to ensure our seniors return home, and also looking at individual specialized programming support. Part of that is ensuring safety.

I want to also note that the partnerships that we have created within the government — we have also reached out into our communities to look at services that we provide to those who have some chronic conditions in the communities, trying to maximize the support in the rural hospitals and looking at perhaps some of the rehabilitative-type programs like therapy programs or physiotherapy that we provide out of Whitehorse.

The vision is really to ensure that we look at options and alternatives for those supports in our rural hospitals — really working hard with our partners through the Hospital Corporation to ensure that the home care program and home-first program align with the client as they exit out of the hospital. That is exactly what happens.

I think that a few months ago, we had 16 clients at the hospital who really should be at home, but we had nowhere to put them. They couldn’t go home because their homes were not properly suited to home care and home access. We were able to reduce the numbers down so quickly in collaboration with the Hospital Corporation, Yukon Housing Corporation, and Health and Social Services and working with the families.

We have reduced that down and we have returned 15 individuals to their homes with supports through the home-first program, which is evolving around the home care initiative.

Ms. McLeod: In last year’s budget, there was an allowance for an additional five and a half home care workers, and subsequently, we learned that four of them were going to work in administration in Whitehorse and the other one and a half positions would also be placed in Whitehorse. The minister just said that there would be 10 new positions for this fiscal year.

Can the minister tell us in what communities, or how those 10 person-years are going to be deployed?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The 10 new positions that were created will work with our partners with the emphasis on rural Yukon supports. We are also looking at creating day-support programming and looking at programs and respite care in our communities. Having said that, respite care is very important for family members, and oftentimes in rural Yukon we don't have options for respite care and we want to ensure that happens.

We also look at Meals on Wheels as part of this collaborative or expanded care. How do we provide that type of support for clients who fall under this home care initiative program? We expanded the 10 new positions, as I indicated. We will make sure that we look at the general, encompassing lifestyles in rural Yukon. Perhaps in those particular areas, we need better supports or better community connections.

We are looking at better housing initiatives by ensuring that we have mobility access. That really involves an interdisciplinary working group or a department working group to ensure that we have representation from health, housing and hospitals in the First Nation community and work really closely with the families.

We will try our utmost to ensure that the new FTEs will go where they are needed. We will collaborate with the communities and work with the department. They are aware and they know where the pressures are. We also know that the majority of the seniors in our care are residing in Whitehorse. The demographic makeup shows that. In 2017-18, there were between 572 and 663 home care clients with approximately 38 percent living in rural Yukon communities. We really want to capture that demographic group and ensure that the demand for home care and the increased programming needs are put on those pressure areas and ensure that our budget aligns and our staff are appropriately distributed. We will ensure that home care is part of the collaborative care model.

Ms. McLeod: I can appreciate that whole warm and all-encompassing kind of attitude when it comes to home care, but if I go home to Watson Lake and they ask me, "What kind of increased supports are we getting for home care?", how many home care workers can I tell them are coming to work with them?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am happy to work with the community of Watson Lake. I am also happy to note that, after the meeting in Watson Lake last Friday, I met with Chief Morgan to align service needs for his citizens — as part of the broader community engagement and discussion that we did have with the Liard First Nation and the mayor and council of the community, we really wanted to take a comprehensive review and discussion around an integrated model for the community.

What type of services, from capital infrastructure to housing infrastructure and to seniors to affordable housing — also looking at home care and social care needs in the community. We have heard there are some critical pressures around the community of Watson Lake not having appropriate services. We are really happy to note that we have increased

support through the mental wellness hubs. We have better connection.

We just signed an agreement with the Liard First Nation on a family support worker position that will better align service needs. I'm sure the Member for Watson Lake is happy to also note that this integrated plan for community integration will really enhance the well-being of Watson Lake. I'm happy to work toward that and work with Chief Morgan and his council as well as the mayor and council. As the member opposite noted, the seniors society has their views and their concerns raised around what they would like to see. Clearly, we want to ensure that we align our programs and services well with the community. I made this note at the community town hall meeting and with the seniors group that I met with from Liard First Nation and with the political leadership there — that I would like to work with them on finding solutions to better align the needs of Watson Lake.

It is no different from any other community that we work with. We want to ensure that, in all of our programs in all of our communities, we take a holistic worldview — if you want to say it that way — or a community-based view on all of the initiatives that flow into the community — that they align very well with community needs and that they work together. I'm pleased with that. I'm pleased with where we're going and that our partners are ready to work with us and are coming to the table to provide us with their priority needs and their priority areas of focus. We will ensure that, now and in the future, we build on that. Good collaboration, transparency and open dialogue allow for that to happen.

Ms. McLeod: I just have one more question and then I will turn it over to the Third Party; however, I hope we're calling Health and Social Services back because I know that this is a third of our budget. I hope we get to spend more than two hours having a chat about it.

So that I'm clear in my mind, the family support worker referenced by the minister is one of the positions from the 10 new home care positions — if the minister can confirm that. If it is not, then where are these 10 new positions going? Thank you very much and thank you to the officials for being here today.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The family support worker position is an arrangement made with the Liard First Nation to help to enhance the support services that they need and to help the citizens of the Liard First Nation to provide guidance and support to them. It is a separate position outside of the 10 home care support worker positions. It is a really great initiative, and I am really happy to note that we're working with the health director of the Liard First Nation — so working with the leadership. They have done phenomenally well in the last year in terms of getting out of receivership and really focusing and honing in on supports that they require for their citizens. We want to be able to support and provide the guidance that they need, and so we're doing that.

As I indicated, the 10 new positions that we have identified — we will work with the communities to ensure that we provide supports to rural Yukon. The statistics I noted — 38 percent of our clients are in rural Yukon. We want to

ensure that we align our supports really well to the 38 percent of the 500-some clients noted in our home care numbers. Thank you to the member opposite for the questions.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for Watson Lake. It is fantastic to have an opportunity. I am actually just going to really get into more process questions because this is my opportunity to do that.

I wanted to know what the hotel costs over the winter months were for social assistance clients this year.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I don't have that at the tip of my fingers, but I can certainly provide that. I noted that, last winter, we did a quick assessment and summary. The circumstances we found ourselves in were unfortunate — that we had a huge client upload occupying hotel rooms. That is not our goal. Our goal is to try to get them into affordable housing and work with our partners. At this point in this time, I don't have that specific number, but I would be certainly happy to provide that outside of this question period for the member opposite. I'm hoping I can get that soon.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

Last year, there was an MOU signed with the nursing association about having a second nurse in both Beaver Creek and Destruction Bay. To the best of my knowledge, that didn't actually happen and both of these were staffed with individuals, unless there was a respite nurse sent.

What is happening with both the Beaver Creek and the Destruction Bay nursing stations — especially as we roll into high season?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Before I respond, I want to say that we now have a physician located in that part of the territory. I'm really excited about that because that provides care for the community members who don't have to travel into Whitehorse. We worked with the union last year and came to an agreement on the initiative of putting forward additional staffing in the communities of Beaver Creek and Destruction Bay during the summer months. It is my understanding that it is very difficult to find nursing staff, and so we worked out a rotational cycle with the union to ensure that the staff positions were always filled and that we have float and casual staff always on staff.

Our desire — as the member opposite is also, I'm sure, very concerned — is for the nursing stations in those communities to be always covered. Ideally, we would like to find permanent staff for the communities and we will continue to go through the recruitment process, advertise accordingly and try to recruit permanent staff to fill the position in those two communities — and all of our communities, because there are other pressures as well.

As we have the high season coming upon us, we must work with the department to ensure that those two health care centres are fully staffed, whether it is through rotational staff or casual staff. Ideally we will look at continuing to try to recruit for permanent positions. The rotational arrangement was worked out, I understand, with the union's participation.

Ms. White: I will just apologize to my colleagues as we turn off the fan behind me; it is hard to hear the minister.

Just to confirm: There are two nurses working in both of those nursing stations — Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Yes to the question.

Ms. White: That is fantastic news.

One of the things that I have talked about often is the importance of women having control over their reproductive health, and that would include the access to birth control and the choices of what works best for a particular woman.

The second thing is making sure that we have equitable access to abortion in rural communities. I have put forward a motion with this government to make sure that mifepristone, also known as RU-486, is made available and covered by Yukon health care. As of January 15, 2018, BC joined the ranks of Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to have that covered by government. It is all about the equitable access to abortion in rural communities.

I want to know what measures that government is taking to make sure that all birth control is available to women, and that it is not cost-prohibitive. The Mirena IUD is just under \$500, but if that works best for someone, it doesn't seem to be something that we should limit people's access to — so access to birth control and access to abortion services.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Yukon is currently establishing a program to provide access to the abortion pill. I am going to try to pronounce the medical term — Mifegymiso, which is the abortion pill. Otherwise the medical termination for pregnancy is up to 63 days, or 9 weeks, of gestation. The pill is, as I understand it, only offered in Whitehorse. My understanding is that part of the concern around why that happens is because of the after-care. We are working really closely with the hospital to ensure that the drug is available in the communities with resident physicians, because we should be able to offer it in rural Yukon communities — so the two hubs, Watson Lake and in Dawson City.

Ideally, I would like see that happen and that we ensure that all women receive this at no cost. There is no reason why we couldn't. We just offer it to residents in Whitehorse when we have rural Yukon residents. It is not very fair or transparent, and so we are working quite closely with the hospital to see if we can get it out into the communities to the two community hospitals.

Ms. White: I guess the biggest issue when I talk about equitable access is that in order to access a surgical procedure for an abortion, it involves coming into town at least for the pre-operation appointment and then for the procedure and then going home after that. I would suggest that is disruptive, to say the very least, and traumatizing in many ways. It is about making sure that it is accessible in communities. This would be a good plug for nurse practitioners to work in rural communities. Wouldn't that be fantastic?

There was a press release that came out while we were in the House this afternoon about the Challenge Disability Resource Group and the \$750,231 transfer from Yukon government. The minister is quoted both as the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation. Is any amount of that money

coming from Health and Social Services budget or is it from Yukon Housing Corporation?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I agree with the member opposite around the nurse practitioners. Wouldn't it be perfect if we provided collaborative care in our communities and maximized the supports in our rural health centres? We are really working hard on addressing some of that with the collaborative care model and working with the Hospital Corporation. The \$750,231 transfer actually comes out of Yukon Housing Corporation. The clients who currently run through the Challenge disability association — the support comes out of Health and Social Services. That is not accounted for in this funding here. I think the reason it defines it is that we want to take an approach where we ensure that transfer as we advance that project — that the clients are not jeopardized in any way, and that we ensure consistent and collaborative support as we expand and go into a business model for that program.

Ms. White: I was seeking clarification just because both of the two portfolios — it could have also been the Minister of Environment and I would have asked if there was money coming from Environment based on that.

There is a really fantastic organization that is funded by Health and Social Services and that is the Youth Achievement Centre. I have had the opportunity to spend some time both at the facility and with the youth. I think one thing that is most noticeable there is that with a little bit of time and little bit of effort, there is a lot of pride of ownership in what the youth are doing. My example would be the bike trail that is being built along the top of Grey Mountain ridge. This is a phenomenal process, not only because they are building this beautiful biking and hiking trail — multi-use access trail — but the fact that in some locations, it is a two-hour hike in, a day's work and then a two-hour hike out. I think one of the really phenomenal things about it has been that they are paid positions in the summertime, which is a good thing. It is job creation, but it's also, like I said, that pride of accomplishment.

I just wanted to be sure that the Youth Achievement Centre would be continuing on its path — that there is no possibility of its scope being narrow and that the facility will stay as the facility is. I just want to know that the Youth Achievement Centre is in a good place and is not going to be adversely affected in the future.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I also agree that the Youth Achievement Centre really is engaged with the community and the transition — it is a transition to provide youth with job readiness skills, and opportunities to build up their tool kit is really important to be successful. The Youth Achievement Centre is funded by Health and Social Services. It's part of our core programming.

Really, I don't see any changes there, but I really want to note that as we go ahead and look at transition units for youth aging out of our facilities, this is really a good model to look at what types of programming and services we can offer to young people in our care to ensure that they are successful. They certainly have value to add to our community. I just

want to really thank the staff at the Youth Achievement Centre for doing such a great job and hopefully we can use that model and that program with the transition unit perhaps on Wann Road, as an example.

It is in our budget. There is no change right now and we have \$4.9 million in the 2018-19 budget — it's under Youth Justice.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer.

One of the concerns that often happens — and I'm sure that others in the Chamber have had similar conversations — but if you have a conversation with a parent who happens to be a contract worker, they will talk about the difficulties of accessing the childcare subsidy. By that, I mean that the parents who work on contract and are self-employed are not able necessarily to predict when their next job is. It means at times they have to apply on a monthly basis for the childcare subsidy, which makes it hard for the daycare to hold the spot, but it also makes it next to impossible for the parent to consistently do this. I think that the one thing that has been highlighted is just the frustration and just the sheer worry that at one point in time, they may be refused, but that the next month, they will maybe have to access something like the food bank. It's the consistency of that contract — the precarious nature of that contract work. What is the department doing to make it easier for single parents who might work part-time or parents who work contract work to access the childcare subsidy?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The childcare subsidy is the childcare support that is provided to parents who have children in care in the childcare centres across Yukon. With this new direct operating grant, we provided additional supports and services to the centres to ensure that there is easier access. Really, I think the objective is not to put up barriers or put up walls, but take down the walls so that there is easier access and there are supports in place.

We are also looking at the early learning childcare initiative and the funding that we just received. I do believe there was \$1.63 million that we received in early learning and childcare. Recently, we signed off on that and we are expecting to ensure that we provide childcare programs throughout the Yukon, and that we look at the direct operating grant to provide necessary supports to all of our childcare centres. The childcare subsidy is really a big part of that, and our total allocation, I believe, for supported childcare programming was \$2.4 million for the year and that really means working quite closely with our childcare centres.

Ms. White: I appreciate those answers, but it didn't actually speak to the question at hand, which is: What is the department doing to make it easier for parents who work part-time or those who are precariously employed — doing something like contract work — to access the childcare subsidy? At times, they have to reapply on a monthly basis, which makes the care of the children precarious. There have been some suggestions in the community that it could be similar to the GST, which is calculated on previous income — either the year ahead or similar things. I'm going to move on from there.

With the announcement of the transfer of federal funding and the increase to the direct operating grant, full applause to government for indexing it to what it should be, but what I want to know is what is going to happen in the future?

So the federal funding, I believe, is on a three-year term — that is what I have heard. I want to know what happens at the end of the three years. Will we be indexing this yearly to inflation or are we going to see what has happened previously — that the daycare centres run very close to the line of loss?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The initiative actually runs for 10 years. We have received the first three years of funding — and aligning the funding to core needs in the Yukon and looking at some of the really significant points that were made about inequities and how we deal with single parents who perhaps can't afford childcare. We really want to emphasize that our focus around the review of the early-learning childcare program model better aligns with needs and better aligns with the low-income clients.

We have gone out to enhance early-learning and childcare initiatives this year. We want to increase the direct operating grant, which we did, and that was to look at increasing funding to the childcare centres and helping parents to stay in the workplace.

What is also really important is that we wanted to look at ensuring that we do have childcare centres in our communities so that parents can have the option of putting their children in daycares, because some of the communities don't have daycares so parents can't even work. It's really, I think, a broader concern.

We're working with our communities, and we are working, of course, with Yukon College to ensure that their satellite offices and campuses have that childcare training program offered in the communities.

Currently, we have a number of centres like that in our rural Yukon. The funding goes out for 10 years, and we received the first three years and we will look at a review. The member has some really good points. I welcome input on that. I think that, as Yukoners and as parents, it is really important to ensure that we provide that type of support.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that correction.

I have been in some really interesting conversations with companies that set up mining exploration camps. Mr. Chair, you may not have known this, but I used to work in mining camps as a camp cook, actually. Some of the situations that you are in are unique, and the term "remote" sometimes doesn't begin to describe it. For example, I had one camp where I drove to Mayo, took a float plane, landed on a lake and then took a helicopter to the side of a mountain — so "remote camp" becomes a completely different thing.

One of the conversations that I was having was the difficulty for this company trying to get health inspections, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services all on the same page. For example, this company had a conversation with building inspections and were doing prefab accommodations. They were doing all the wiring that was required. It was going to be plugged into the generators and they were getting rid of all the boxes. It was going to be

propane because of the nuances of oil and having to build concrete pads in an area where you wouldn't want concrete pads.

The real problem came with the water filtration system. They had proposed different things, including marine technology because that water gets dispersed right into the ocean, so it is quite a high level of quality.

What I'm just going to put out right now at the end, because I hope to have a bigger conversation about this, is what the Department of Health and Social Services is doing with both Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services.

When we talk about remote camps, they can be really remote. You're not going to fly a health inspector by float plane and helicopter after they drive to Mayo to check out these camps. It's what kind of work can be done ahead of time — just like the government has been talking about different projects being sizable like schools or medical clinics, mining camps would be similar. You would want to be able to expand them or make them smaller as required. Part of what this company is trying to do is to do those things.

I will leave that right there on the table for right now. I thank the officials for their time and I thank the minister as well.

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

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. White that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee 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. 206, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2018-19*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

All 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 5:27 p.m.

The following legislative returns were tabled March 26, 2018:

34-2-114

Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to budget debate on Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 206, *First Appropriation Act 2018-19* — provision of an itemized list of the total spending on airports (Mostyn)

34-2-115

Response to oral question from Mr. Cathers re: overall cost of ATIPP and HIPMA (Mostyn)

34-2-116

Response to oral question from Ms. Hanson re: maintenance budget for the Watson Lake airport (Mostyn)

34-2-117

Response to oral question from Mr. Hassard re: airport maintenance facility and air terminal building in Dawson City (Mostyn)

The following document was filed March 26, 2018:

34-2-43

F.H. Collins Secondary School Council letter re: Francophone High School at F.H. Collins site, e-mail re (dated June 28, 2016) from Janet Clarke and Tracy McPhee, co-chairs, F.H. Collins Secondary School Council to Doug Graham and Judy Arnold (Kent)

The following written question was tabled March 26, 2018:

Written Question No. 24

Re: physicians and nurses employed in Yukon (McLeod)