



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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## HANSARD

Thursday, March 29, 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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<b>Hon. Sandy Silver</b>	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
<b>Hon. Ranj Pillai</b>	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
<b>Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee</b>	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
<b>Hon. John Streicker</b>	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
<b>Hon. Pauline Frost</b>	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
<b>Hon. Richard Mostyn</b>	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
<b>Hon. Jeanie Dendys</b>	Mountainview	Minister of Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; Women's Directorate

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

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<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

<b>Stacey Hassard</b>	Leader of the Official Opposition Pelly-Nisutlin	<b>Scott Kent</b>	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
<b>Brad Cathers</b>	Lake Laberge	<b>Patti McLeod</b>	Watson Lake
<b>Wade Istchenko</b>	Kluane	<b>Geraldine Van Bibber</b>	Porter Creek North

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
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Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Harris Cox
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Thursday, March 29, 2018 — 1:00 p.m.**

**Speaker:** We 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 National Aboriginal Languages Day

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** Dann ch'ea. Show neneech'an zhaw daye ada. Ayenzhi Jeanie Dendys oo-ye. Agoona eech'e. Ak'an dzenu Ayennjee tasha-neethee ka dakwanje kweeshay needaw. Dagha shrawneethan Dashow dun ka dakwanje kennudan na. Shrawnithi Kwanlin Dün ye Ta'an Kwäch'än keyi ka daye daye dakedeeshru. Nigha shrawneethan Ut'akwadinche'e zhan dzenu.

How are you all? It's good to see you all here with us. My name is Jeanie Dendys. I am part of the Wolf clan. Today, I feel happy for celebrating our language by speaking it. All of us — we thank our elders for teaching us the language. Thank you, Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'än, for sharing your lands with us. Thank you, Creator, for this day.

Today, I rise on behalf of the Liberal government to pay tribute to indigenous languages. The day is formally recognized on Saturday, March 31, across Canada as National Aboriginal Languages Day.

Language is the foundation to culture and identity. Indigenous people endured attacks on their identity for decades through government- and church-run residential schools and policies aimed at taking the Indian out of the child. We see these intergenerational effects of residential schools with a great loss of ancestral language among many First Nation communities.

I, myself, grew up without my Tahltan language being spoken in my home, even though my mother was a fluent speaker. She was fearful of the repercussions and wanted to shield us from the shame that she endured growing up as an indigenous person in this country, so I grew up without the opportunity to learn my language because of fear.

One of our few fluent-speaking elders from my nation remembers a day when she went to residential school, with her father telling her not to forget her language. He told her to think in Tahltan and she did. She was resilient and is a treasure to our nation. I know that Yukon First Nation people have these same stories, which I have heard myself. In fact, these types of stories are echoed throughout this country.

This House watched me struggle through delivering a few simple statements in the language of this land. This simply should not be the case. It should be a normal occurrence and should come naturally. I'm grateful for people like Sean Smith for making language revitalization a priority and for assisting

me today — lots of pressure here with some elders in the House.

In Yukon, there are eight linguistic languages among 14 First Nations. As speakers of these languages grow older, it is critical to teach more people to speak these languages fluently, or we risk losing the language and identity.

Because of this, Yukon First Nations have identified the revitalization of their languages as a critical priority. The Council of Yukon First Nations is now in full control of the Yukon Native Language Centre, and we are grateful for that.

Yukon First Nations can decide how best to restore and revitalize First Nation languages in Yukon. Developing fluent speakers through community-based programs will help to build capacity for community- and family-driven language revitalization. Every day, Yukon's First Nation people work to keep their language alive, and we must embrace this movement and work as a partner toward this goal. Learning the language is done together with local families and community members. We know that we still have such a long way to go before First Nation children grow up learning their language at home again, in their families and in their communities. We are committed to working with Yukon First Nations toward this goal of language revitalization.

Thank you to everyone who is working to teach and share Yukon First Nation languages. Mr. Speaker, it will be a great day when our children can once again think in their language.

We have a lot of visitors here, and I will take the time to introduce each one of them when we introduce visitors, as on the Order Paper, but I want to say: shāw nithän, mahsi' cho, sógá sénlá, gūnilschish, tsin 'jj choh, and mēduh.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Well done, Jeanie, for attempting the language, which I am not going to do. I'll save everyone's ears.

I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Aboriginal Languages Day, celebrated each year on March 31 from coast to coast to coast.

In 1989, the Assembly of First Nations established the movement to celebrate and support the preservation of indigenous languages spoken throughout Canada. It is estimated that around 300 languages were spoken in North America prior to colonization. Imagine: only three are considered fluent and safe from extinction today — Cree, Ojibwe and Inuktitut.

Aboriginal languages have been adversely affected across Canada by colonization and the spread of what we now consider to be the country's official languages, English and French. A key focus of the residential schools was the eradication of First Nation tradition, culture and, of course, the language. To kill the Indian in the child was the doctrine. Unfortunately, this led to the extinction of many languages and dialects across the country and to where we have arrived today. Children returned home after lengthy stays in schools or hostels and were unable to converse with their parents, grandparents or their communities.

As was mentioned, Yukon has eight indigenous languages that are still spoken today, each with its own distinct dialect: Gwich'in, Kaska, Hän, Southern Tutchone, Northern Tutchone, Tagish, Upper Tanana and Tlingit.

First Nations across the territory are working diligently to revitalize and preserve their language. Sharing traditions, education and programs incorporating the language is a priority. The goal is to ensure that new generations are taught to learn, respect and carry on their language. Diligent work continues to protect traditional ways and language. They are often spoken in family homes and taught within the school system.

Today, we honour Yukon's eight aboriginal languages, as well as those across the country. Let us continue to preserve, protect and promote languages so they have a chance to be a birthright and, once again, become an important part of Canada.

Mahsi' cho.

*Applause*

**Ms. Hanson:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party to also pay tribute to National Aboriginal Languages Day. As we do so, I believe it is important to acknowledge the role of Yukon First Nation elders, past and present, for their leadership and their persistence against almost insurmountable odds to maintain the breath of life in Yukon's indigenous languages. They faced obstacles, not just of the modernity that has changed languages around the world, but of deliberate and exacting policies of church and state to exterminate indigenous languages in Canada.

As we pay tribute, we give credit to individuals within First Nations and the unsung community leaders in those communities who have both sounded the alarm and worked to preserve their languages. They, along with the Council of Yukon First Nations — and through the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Native Language Centre — have diligently worked to promote an awareness of the richness and beauty of Yukon First Nation languages and an appreciation of the fundamental role they play in the transmission of culture and values from one generation to the next.

Many languages around the world are on the verge of extinction. Yukon native languages, sadly, are on that endangered list. Just as we rally to protect endangered species, so too we must rally to protect and help re-establish and revitalize indigenous languages. It is through language that our world view and our cultures are transmitted.

I am often reminded of my colleague and former MLA, Jim Tredger, who represented Mayo-Tatchun. He often talked about his learning of a different world view through language as he spent time with the elders and youth during his years as principal in Pelly Crossing. He described watching and listening to an elder on the Pelly River who described and named many ways to see that river and the salmon in it. He said the elder would point to a seemingly innocuous point of the river and point out that there was a big male salmon under there, and there was a name for that. Over there, there were many salmon swimming, and there was a name for that. He

would go on patiently explaining, showing, training and naming the way the river was changing, noting variations that Jim would never have noticed on his own and would never have described in different words. This, Mr. Speaker, he learned was also true in the forest or on the hillside throughout the seasons.

Working with native language instructors became for him a lesson in culture, in paying attention, and a lesson in life of realizing the importance of seeing and, through language, culture — a world view.

It is indeed fitting that we pay tribute to all who are involved, who have struggled and who continue to strive to bring back First Nation languages from the brink. Their efforts to preserve, enhance and transmit Yukon First Nation languages and culture have made, and continue to make Yukon a richer, more diverse and sustainable place for us all.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Biodiversity Awareness Month and A Celebration of Swans**

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Yukon Biodiversity Awareness Month and our special month-long event, A Celebration of Swans.

Biodiversity can be described as a variety of living things that exist in an area. Biodiversity is everything living — plants, animals, micro-organisms, genes, ecosystems. From the depths of our lakes, to our forests, to the peaks of our tallest mountains, Yukon is a biologically diverse place, hosting quite a range of plants, habitat and wildlife — some found nowhere else in the world. Within the territory, we boast 78 mammal species, 38 species of fish, 247 bird species, four amphibians, over 2,200 types of plants and over 5,500 insect species. We rely on biodiversity for our very existence — our health, our well-being and our quality of life. Particularly here in the Yukon, the biological diversity of our environment is both a way of life and a life source.

We derive many foods, services, recreational and cultural practices from the biodiversity around us. We recognize, celebrate and learn more about Yukon's biodiversity and how to care for it. We observe Biodiversity Awareness Month every April.

A Celebration of Swans is a suite of nearly 20 public events aimed to foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat in the territory. Every year, thousands of trumpeter and tundra swans use the shallow waters of M'Clintock Bay on Marsh Lake as a stopover ground on their long migration to their northern nesting grounds.

Yukoners and visitors can go to Swan Haven Interpretive Centre and other locations in southern Yukon to relax on the viewing deck, walk the shoreline trails and learn about swans and other migratory bird species that come north each spring. This month-long spring celebration is also our kickoff to a full year of wildlife viewing programs that aim to provide free, informative and interesting events. This includes our Wild Discoveries series in the summer and winter and our Bioblitz event, which will be held in the Tombstone Park this year.

These programs offer the chance to get close up. As stewards to this land, we have opportunities to protect the land also, and all that live on the land. By doing this, we foster recognition and support for sustainable conservation practices, so future generations can also enjoy these experiences.

I encourage everyone to take some time to visit Swan Haven and to enjoy some of Yukon's biodiversity this year.

Mahsi' cho, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Istchenko:** It is a pleasure to rise today in the House on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to recognize a very important celebration here in Yukon: the Yukon's premier bird festival, the Celebration of Swans, is upon us once again, with Swan Haven Interpretive Centre opening its doors tomorrow at noon.

This Yukon celebration brings viewers to the banks of the shallow M'Clintock Bay, located at the north end of Marsh Lake where the outflow of the Yukon River runs adjacent to the inflow of the M'Clintock River. Here, trumpeter and tundra swans are able to rest at the lake and take advantage of the delta, the shallows and the mud flats, rich with pond weeds and complete with open water and sheltered by trees.

Yukoners and visitors descend upon Swan Haven from the beginning of April through mid-May to welcome the swans and take part in viewing opportunities and activities. Throughout the season, as the swans arrive north of 60, Yukoners are provided with viewing areas set up in other areas throughout Yukon; events take place at Kluane Lake, Tagish and Johnson's Crossing. We encourage Yukoners and visitors to journey out to Swan Haven and some of those other events too, but especially Swan Haven during the Celebration of Swans, especially if they have not yet done so.

Swan Haven will be open tomorrow at noon, and their grand opening will take place on Saturday, March 31. Staff will be on hand to answer questions and provide information about the swans, as well as to offer viewing and family activities.

While I am up today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the staff at the Environment and Tourism departments. When it comes to wildlife viewing, they do a great job, and there are many activities and a lot of family activities. It's a good place to go to learn about our animals.

Swan Haven is a worthwhile experience. We would like to thank all those involved in this operation and management. We look forward to the wonderful job that they do throughout the Celebration of Swans and beyond.

**Ms. White:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus and the Official Opposition to celebrate the beauty of biodiversity. Earth is a fragile and intricate place. Everything is interconnected, and what affects one thing will affect another. Biodiversity encompasses ecosystems, genetic and cultural diversity and the connections between all species on earth. Imagine a knitted scarf: when you pull on a loose piece of yarn, it might only affect that piece and those pieces closest to it, and maybe if you pull a little harder it might unravel the entire scarf. Here is the problem: We have pulled on far too

many pieces of yarn, and our scarf is unraveling. Our planet is facing a biodiversity crisis. We know that the human impacts from ongoing development, deforestation, pollution and climate change are destroying the homes and habitat of wildlife around the world. At least 16,000 species across the globe are currently threatened with extinction. This includes 12 percent of all birds, 23 percent of all mammals and 32 percent of all amphibians.

It doesn't have to be this way. Knowing how we harm biodiversity will help us make better decisions in the future, and we have been able to reverse this trend of destruction. There was a time when populations of the great whales, bald eagles and whooping cranes were in rapid decline, but strong legislation, habitat protection and international agreements have helped these populations bounce back.

In Canada alone, despite our extraordinary legacy of animals and plants, more than 500 species are either extinct or at risk of extinction. In 1996 the federal government and our provinces and territories signed an accord on the protection of species at risk. We each made a commitment to establish compatible legislation that protects species at risk in Canada. That means that each province and territory had its own obligations to protect wildlife.

Sadly, in Yukon, we have been told time and time again that we don't need our own species at risk legislation, because we can depend on the national species at risk legislation.

That very same act abandons much of Canada's iconic wildlife, such as the woodland caribou and the Atlantic salmon, leaving them off the very list that is designed to protect them. For the majority of species that are lucky enough to make it on that list, the federal government has chronically failed to identify and protect the habitats they need to survive and recover.

I look forward to the day that the Yukon government fulfills its 1996 commitment to creating stand-alone species at risk legislation that will help protect the valuable biodiversity of Yukon and of the planet.

**Speaker:** Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I have so many special guests here today. I want the House to help me welcome Duane Gastant' Aucoin, who is a Yanyedi Executive Council member and chair to the Citizenship Committee for Teslin Tlingit Council and a member of the language and cultural oversight committee. He is with elders Bessie Cooley, Pauline Sidney and Aggie Johnston — and I'm just going to go through the list, but thank you so much. It's so great to have elders in the House today.

I would like to welcome Grand Chief Peter Johnston, Council of Yukon First Nations — thank you so much for all you do for language, Peter; it's really inspiring. And council member for Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Sean Smith, thank you; mēduh. He's here with both of his parents: Ann Smith, a Kwanlin Dün elder, and Brian Walker, an artisan and

somebody who contributes so much to our community. Thank you.

We have Linda Johnson from the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association, Georgianna Low from Tagish Dene Connections Group; thank you. We have André Bourcier, who is a board member for our Yukon Geographical Place Names Board — thank you for coming. Sally Robinson is from the Yukon Historical Museums Association. Thank you so much for all that you do — every one of you.

It has just been such a pleasure to give this tribute today and for you to take the time out of your day and come and be with us. This is an important area of focus for us; mēduh.

*Applause*

**Mr. Hassard:** The minister already introduced this person, but Bessie Cooley, I think, definitely deserves extra recognition for all of the time that she has committed throughout her life to aboriginal languages. She received her degree in Alaska and she is really dedicated so much to the students of Teslin and to the Tlingit language. Thank you very much, Bessie.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** This government just recently made an announcement about ASL services, and it's nice to see Gerard Tremblay and Amanda Smith here this afternoon. Please join us in welcoming them.

*Applause*

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I missed one very important person in the gallery today. My executive assistant is Jessie Stephen, who does so much great work on behalf of all of us — especially me. Thank you so much, Jessie, for organizing everything and for all the work you do.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I'm going to ask my colleagues to welcome someone with a different hat this time. Dr. André Bourcier was with the Yukon Native Language Centre for almost 17 years, and left that position as the director. I would like to thank him for the work he did with that centre and for the passion he brought to the job.

I wish you well in your future endeavours. Thank you for being here.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** I have the pleasure of introducing Ken Edwards and Cohen Edwards in the middle of the gallery. They are the spouse and son of Sarah Edwards, our Acting Clerk of Committees. I am advised that Cohen is seven years of age, that he volunteers at the Mae Bachur Animal Shelter and loves all things related to animals, and, finally, that he is currently obsessed with penguins. Welcome to the gallery.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Thank you all for coming to the Yukon Legislative Assembly today.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I have for tabling the Tourism Yukon 2017 year-end report.

**Speaker:** 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. Hassard:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to review the annual budget for weed and brush control on Yukon highways in order to ensure it adequately addresses highway maintenance needs for the 2018-19 fiscal year, as well as future years.

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

THAT this House supports the decision by the Government of Yukon to fund the completion of the new F.H. Collins school.

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

THAT this House supports the Government of Yukon's decision to enhance public safety by making fire protection funding a permanent feature of the grants provided annually to Yukon municipalities.

**Speaker:** Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Tourism visitor statistics

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I rise today to share some exciting new tourism visitor statistics and to highlight an important funding commitment. I am very pleased to report that Yukon saw record-breaking visitation numbers in 2017 across several key areas. I would like to take this opportunity to share some highlights.

One of the areas in which we are seeing growth is in Yukon air arrivals, which were up eight percent from 2016 and 18-percent higher than the five-year average. Another area is with international border crossings, which were up four percent, as well as international overnight visitation to Yukon, which was up three percent. Year over year, growth in tourism sector revenues is estimated at 7.5 percent. These are just a few of the highlights from our latest report, but they demonstrate the strength of the industry today and its continued growth potential for the future.

This also marks the second straight year of solid growth for international border-crossing statistics and the fourth solid year of growth for air arrivals.

These figures also reaffirm the importance of our marketing efforts, specifically the Yukon Now program. I am pleased to be able to say that this government is increasing our investment in this successful marketing initiative. Yukon Now focuses primarily on Canadian consumers to help increase awareness of Yukon as a year-round travel destination. It started as a two-year partnership between Government of Yukon and the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency — CanNor. The program was extended by two years in 2016 for a second phase, with each party investing \$900,000 per year toward the program. With CanNor funding for phase 2 ending soon, we are committed to maintaining the budget for this critical program by increasing our annual investment to \$1.8 million as of this year.

This was a campaign commitment, and we are pleased to be delivering on it. One of our key industry partners, the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, has openly expressed their support for the continued investment in Yukon Now. We appreciate this support and believe that, by working together with all tourism stakeholders, we can sustainably grow tourism in Yukon. That means meaningful work for Yukoners and more revenues for businesses. There are 3,500 good-paying Yukon jobs in the tourism industry already. The industry represents almost four percent of the Yukon's GDP, and there is increasing potential, as our latest visitor statistics demonstrate.

But tourism means more than dollars and cents. It provides us with the opportunity to share our culture, heritage, people and languages with locals and visitors through authentic experiences across the territory. Tourism is an industry that, when grown sustainably, benefits all Yukoners. Related to all of this is the Yukon tourism development strategy public engagement phase, which is almost complete. I am sincerely looking forward to a strategy that builds on the industry results in 2017 and capitalizes on the investments that we are making in the Yukon Now marketing program.

With a record-breaking year behind us, the unlimited potential before us is an exciting time for tourism in the Yukon.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I am pleased to rise in response to the minister's statement regarding tourism numbers and further investment in the Yukon Now initiatives.

First, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Department of Tourism and Culture for their work, as well as the former Minister of Tourism and Culture, Elaine Taylor, for the hard work and championing that has been done to date in the creation and development of the Yukon Now strategy. That work certainly does not go unnoticed. We, in the Official Opposition, are pleased to see Yukon's continued promotion as a year-round travel destination within national tourism markets.

When it comes to tourism, our territory has so much to offer. We certainly have a robust summer tourism season that attracts visitors from around the world, and our winter season only continues to grow. Keeping track of the visitation numbers each year allows us to focus on new and evolving

trends, and often these numbers can tell us where to adjust our services or products.

Further, with these visitation numbers, we must consider the economic impact that tourism has on this region and the role it plays in our economy. It is because of the role that tourism plays in our territory that we must also consider factors that may affect these visitation numbers — namely, the carbon tax scheme that this government has signed on to. We know that the carbon tax will increase the cost of goods and services in this territory — but when it comes to tourism, to what extent?

The government was elected 17 months ago and we still have not seen an economic analysis by them on the financial impacts of the carbon tax on the tourism sector. We have seen the Premier say that this new tax will actually generate revenue by increasing taxes on tourists, but he hasn't told us by how much. We don't know how it will affect the cost of doing business for local tour operators, for restaurants, for hotels or for airlines. What impact will it have on service delivery for those businesses and tour operators, and what amount of the cost will pass directly or indirectly on to consumers?

We don't know what the government plans to do with any tax collected from the money spent by our territory's visitors. How will this government track what is being spent on the carbon tax by Yukoners, versus what is being spent by visitors? We don't know which, if any, factors will be exempt from this carbon tax scheme. Will the tourism sector be exempt?

Finally, we don't know how the increase in costs from the carbon tax will affect these record-breaking tourism numbers. If Yukon has a carbon tax and Alaska does not, will a tourist bypass Yukon or go through as quickly as possible?

These are all questions that we have asked the Liberal government before — last year — and they have not heard or will not answer these questions.

The increased visitation numbers are wonderful to hear about, and we are certainly glad to see continued funding for the great initiative that was started under the previous government, but these great announcements are exactly why we need to know what economic impact the carbon tax will have on our tourism sector.

**Ms. Hanson:** Again, I'm not sure why the government chose to use a ministerial statement to re-announce information that is already in the public domain. Perhaps the minister is rehearsing her lines for budget debate, because the fact of the matter is that the statement is proof of the reality that, although there has been a name change in government from the Yukon Party to Liberals, the government approach to tourism — this vital industry — is essentially the same.

The tourism industry — the sector, the industry operators, large and small — are the ones who are pushing growth in tourism, often despite government. The minister may try to take credit for the increase in statistics related to tourism, but I would suggest that this is a statement that is yet another example of this Liberal government's limited and timid

approach. Imagine if the Premier had been listening to the vigorous debate led by the Yukon NDP when in Official Opposition back in 2014, and the years following, to respond to the call from the Yukon Tourism Industry Association to expand the scope of tourism in Yukon.

Then, as now, the federal government CanNor program funding of the day was lapsing. TIAY called on the Yukon government to step up with a vigorous \$2.5-million contribution to the domestic marketing campaign to be matched by Canada. What we saw was neither — the diminutive amount from the Yukon Party government that now this government is going to maintain.

TIAY asked the government of the day to work with them to establish evaluation criteria to determine the value of investing in domestic marketing — \$5 million, Mr. Speaker. Imagine what the return on investment of that would be. Instead, like the previous government, this government is not investing new money into the Yukon Now program, and what is even more disappointing is, in complete contradiction to the minister's glowing self-congratulations for government support for Tourism Yukon, the stark reality is that this Liberal government has delivered two successive budgets with decreased investment, down from over \$35 million in 2016-17 to \$31 million this year. Actions speak louder than words; it's time for this government to walk the talk.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I'm a little bit surprised at some of the comments — but maybe not — coming from across the way. That's okay. Our government is very committed to diversifying our economy, to making very strategic investments in our territory, and that's what we're demonstrating today. This is a new report; it's a brand new report. We just tabled it. It is a record-breaking year and there are a lot of factors. I am certainly not standing here taking credit for anything. I'm a new minister, and I acknowledge the hard work of the previous ministers who have been in this role. There have been many.

If anyone has ever heard me speak at any event to any of our stakeholders, you will have heard me hold up industry. That is why we have a tourism industry like we have today. It's because of their investment, their time and their money. I have said that many times and I absolutely believe it.

I don't think that personal attacks are necessary here. I am a new minister. I think that our government is doing a great job —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King, on a point of order.

**Ms. White:** Standing Order 19(g), using the term "attack" — there was no attacking from this side of the House.

#### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** I tend to agree with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. The criticism was at the minister in her role as the Minister of Tourism and Culture, in my recollection.

Minister of Tourism and Culture, you can continue.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I'll just leave it.

Our government and our industry partners are really pleased with the latest statistics. In fact, the statistics across Canada show that this is a record year for Canada. It is something to celebrate, and we are able to celebrate with the rest of Canada. I do encourage people to view the full year and the report on the Department of Tourism and Culture's website, under the Tourism branch. Everything that we do in our work with the tourism industry is evidence-based, researched and backed up with statistics, like the ones I am speaking about today.

We deliver on strong marketing programs, like Yukon Now. We rely on these figures and other data that we collect to guide our work. We have a new exit survey that is underway right now, Mr. Speaker, that we will be relying on as we go forward into the future. Again, I am really pleased to say that we are increasing our investment in the successful Yukon Now marketing program. We have strong partners with our varied tourism stakeholders, and we are excited to continue our work with them to sustainably grow tourism.

We do this to share our Yukon stories with the rest of the world, but we also do this to improve the lives of Yukoners. Tourism is an industry that all of us can benefit from, and we are so fortunate in Yukon to have so many strong partners working with us.

As I was saying in my opening statements, I look forward to moving forward on the new tourism development strategy. It is setting the new course for tourism in Yukon. This government will continue to invest and take a one-government approach and look at all of the needs of this industry as we go forward.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

##### Question re: Children in care

**Mr. Hassard:** This morning, we heard the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission on the radio outlining the process that whistle-blowers should go through. He said that if you follow this process, everything will be fine. However, over the last several weeks, we have heard from a number of public servants in the minister's own departments who have followed this process to the letter, including going to their deputy minister, and, instead of everything being fine, things have sometimes gotten worse.

Over the last week, we have seen a number of brave public servants from the Department of Health and Social Services come forward with some very serious allegations. We know that there are a lot of very good, hard-working people in the department who genuinely care, but they are afraid for their jobs if they speak up.

How can these employees have faith that they will be safe if they speak up about wrongdoing in group homes, when people in the Minister responsible for the Public Service

Commission's own departments have followed the process that the minister outlined and it hasn't worked for them?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I, once again, welcome the opportunity to speak about this very important issue. This is an important issue for this government. It is an important issue for this territory, because this government cannot do its job without good information coming out of the public service.

When we need to deal with these very troubling problems like children in care — and I could go on because there are all sorts of issues. If we can't get source data out of the people delivering those services, it makes it very difficult for us to deal with the problems we face.

We have a *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*. It was passed unanimously by this House in 2014. We have a Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner. We have a lot of avenues that people can go to in order to make sure that they are heard when they are confronted by troubling issues. So, if you are a public servant and you believe there has been wrongdoing, and you make the disclosure in good faith, please approach your supervisor. If you don't feel comfortable with that, please see your deputy minister. If you don't want to go that route, please see the Yukon Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner. If you follow that process, there is no reprisal. We don't want to persecute people.

**Mr. Hassard:** Yesterday, the Official Opposition told this House of information that we have heard from a concerned whistle-blower. This individual wants to speak out about how the government has responded to the allegations of abuse in group homes that the Minister of Health and Social Services found out six weeks ago and did nothing to address. This individual told us that staff have been told not to put their concerns in writing. We asked the minister if he would investigate these claims. These are serious allegations.

Will the minister investigate whether or not public servants are being told not to put concerns about abuse in writing?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** What is important to remember in this issue is that we thank the employees who are coming forward with these issues and that we do take these issues very seriously. It is also important that anyone who observes the wrongdoing feels comfortable in coming forward, and we are encouraging people to do so. We want our employees to feel confident about raising concerns. It is unfortunate that this trust has been eroded over the years. It takes time to rebuild this trust, and we are committed to rebuilding trust and to establishing a culture of openness.

**Mr. Hassard:** Again, we hear the members opposite using their speaking notes, but no assurances to the questions that we have asked.

Another question that we asked the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission yesterday — and that we did not receive an answer to — is: Will the minister commit in this House that any investigation into who the whistle-blowers are will stop immediately, and that no one will be punished for coming forward? A simple yes or no would be great, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** This is a very important issue, and I really admire the courage of the public servants who are coming forward with these matters. It is important that we have an open dialogue. It is also very important for this government to get source data so that we can actually pinpoint and fix the problems we face.

If you are a public servant and you have seen something that you believe is wrong — some sort of problem — please bring it to our attention. We would be more than happy to try to address it. That's what we are here for. We're here to try to fix the problems we face within government. We need good data to do that.

As to the member opposite's question: of course, there will be no reprisals. We want to fix the problem. We're not interested in "who"; we're interested in "what" and fixing the problem.

#### Question re: Children in care

**Ms. McLeod:** Over six weeks ago, the Minister of Health and Social Services became aware of a specific allegation of abuse within government-run group homes. Her own website states that all Yukoners are legally required to report this information to the authorities.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the minister became aware of this specific allegation of abuse over six weeks ago, why did she not report it to the RCMP?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would be happy to speak to the issue. I have been doing that for a number of days now. I will state to the member opposite and to those members of Yukon and to our employees that when an issue of this nature comes to our attention, we take immediate action, and that is exactly what we did. The information was brought into the department and the director responsible proceeded with an action. That is what we have done, Mr. Speaker.

We take allegations of this nature — we take abuse of children very seriously — and we will act on any incidents that come to our attention and any incidents in the future, because I'm sure we have a number of concerns not yet heard. We have heard some information through the media but we have not seen any of that before us. We can't react to information that is not substantiated. I believe that this is what we're asking for: we're asking for detailed information so that we can then case manage and go out and try to resolve the concerns that are brought before us.

**Ms. McLeod:** Given the new allegations yesterday that issues regarding children in care go beyond just group homes, will the minister ensure that any review goes further than only looking at group homes?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, ensuring the safety and the health of all Yukoners and all children is our top priority. We do share the concerns about these serious allegations and agree that they do need to be addressed. The issues that we're discussing are not six weeks old. They are long-standing, systemic issues that have been building in the Yukon for years, and we are taking actions to address this. The reviews are happening inside Health and Social Services. The Child and Youth Advocate is conducting an independent review of

the transition support services, and we're cooperating fully to ensure its effectiveness. We have full confidence in the advocate's office, and I have full confidence in my minister and the team at Health and Social Services that their number one priority is for the well-being of, not only our children in care, but all youth in the Yukon.

**Ms. McLeod:** Will the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us when she is expecting the review into group homes and beyond to be completed, and will a report be submitted to this House?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The independent review of the Child and Youth Advocate — I would like to note that there is nothing more independent than an Auditor General's report that defines recommendations on how and what we need to do to address some of the systemic issues and concerns that are now coming to light and coming to our attention. The Child and Youth Advocate will conduct an independent review of these transitional support programs, looking at a period of 2015 to 2018. We shared the letter that spells that out with the members of this Legislature, and the members opposite are asking us for that report. If that's what you're asking for, when that becomes available to the Child and Youth Advocate office, she has indicated she would be happy to share that and work with us.

I imagine the members opposite would participate in that process openly, with perhaps some of the information they might have in their possession or that they have become aware of. Everyone in this House is very much concerned about the safety of the children. Together, we should address that, knowing that the recommendations that have evolved from the 2014 report set us on the right course, and we need to ensure we address that and start implementing some of the solid recommendations.

#### **Question re: Children in care**

**Ms. Hanson:** We have heard a lot over the past week about troubling information about the safety of children and youth in the care of government. The government has sent conflicting messages with regard to the review of group homes by the Child and Youth Advocate. Earlier this week, we revealed a memo that was sent to all Health and Social Services staff, stating that the Child and Youth Advocate would submit the terms of reference for her review and that the department would develop a process for staff to participate in that review.

The minister has since indicated that the information in that memo is not accurate, or may no longer be accurate. My question is simple: Has the minister directed that a new memo be sent to all Health and Social Services staff to correct the misinformation and to set the record straight as to who is in charge of the review by the Child and Youth Advocate?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The Child and Youth Advocate is conducting an independent review — and I will say again, an independent review — on transitional support services. We have agreed to cooperate fully to ensure that it's effective and it comes out with the recommendations that are much needed to address some of the systemic issues and concerns.

We and the staff have committed fully and will continue to do that. We have full confidence that the advocate's office will conduct this systemic review, and we look forward to the results and the recommendations. We will cooperate fully.

**Ms. Hanson:** We're trying to find common ground here and to give the opportunity to move forward after two weeks of fumbles and missteps, yet the government still refuses to give straight answers.

Let me try again. In both CBC reports about the mistreatment in group homes, we have heard former youth in care talk about repeated incidents where youth in care of this government were locked out or kicked out of their group home, sometimes in the middle of a Yukon winter. This has effectively forced these youth into homelessness, in one case leaving the youth to spend nights in a bank entrance.

I hope that, regardless of where we sit in this House, we can all agree that this is not acceptable treatment of youth in the care of government. Can the minister confirm that she has made it clear to the department that this is not acceptable? Can she, in good faith, guarantee that this kind of mistreatment is no longer taking place in Yukon group homes?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to assure the member opposite and all youth that our main focus — our number one priority — is to ensure that they are given shelter and they are safe and respected wherever it is that they reside within our facilities. These allegations that have come forward are very serious and we take them very seriously. We want youth to be heard and we want to take action, and that is exactly what we are doing. We are taking action. We have 100 employees working in the youth field in the child protection unit in group homes. There are a number of exceptional employees whom I want to acknowledge, because I know that they are feeling very clouded right now. They are feeling disrespected by the allegations. I want them to know that we respect their good work and that we will get to the bottom of the allegations and the issues that are coming forward. We will make the changes that are necessary.

**Ms. Hanson:** It is troubling that the minister is unwilling to stand in this House and make a simple statement, as requested, to assure Yukoners that youth in the care of this government are not getting kicked out of their homes. In his Budget Address, the Premier said — and I quote: "We will look not just at what government does, but how it does it and it will find ways of doing things better." In that same speech he also said, "We did not feel that the experience on the ground ..." — the workers, the youth — ... was having enough influence over the direction of the government."

Those are nice words but, when it comes to the youth in care of this government, we have yet to see them materialize. What specific steps have the Premier and his minister taken to walk the talk and bring immediate changes to how youth in the care of this government are treated?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I can understand from being in the Third Party that it might be frustrating when a lot of information that they are going on is from media coverage of allegations. I am very confident that the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Department of Health and Social

Services, the group home individuals and the Child and Youth Advocate are working together to solve long-standing, systemic issues in different fields. At the same time, we are being very succinct in our messaging here today because a lot of the confusion is coming from the opposition as well.

Again, we are stating here for the record that there is an independent review that is being conducted by the Child and Youth Advocate, and that is of the transitional support services. We are cooperating fully to ensure its effectiveness. These things don't happen overnight, and I know the opposition wishes that they did. We are ensuring that the health and safety of all Yukoners is our top priority, and we are sharing the concerns about these serious allegations and we are absolutely working on them. This is a top priority for this government — the safety of the youth who are in our care. I have all the confidence in the whole-of-government approach that the minister is taking to address these issues.

### Question re: Recreation funding

**Ms. White:** The kids recreation fund provides funding for children's recreational activities to low-income families. Each child is entitled to access up to \$450 a year, depending on the income of the family. This includes families receiving income assistance from the government. This program has been in existence since 1999 and has helped thousands of children participate in sports and recreation in their communities.

The last funding increase in this program happened six years ago, bringing the total amount to \$206,000. If each dependant under the age of 18 whose family was on social assistance were to apply and receive the full funding amount, it would come out to over \$150,000, or 75 percent of the government's contribution.

Is the minister able to tell us how many families and how many children access these recreation fund grants each year, and whether that amount is fully used?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to thank the member for the very specific question. I am not able to give that information here today, but I would be happy to provide that information. At the moment, I can't respond to where that number is, but I would be happy to sit with the member and give that to her.

**Ms. White:** On average, it is between 600 to 700 kids per year, and sometimes that full amount is used. \$206,000 would cover less than 500 children if they each received the full amount. There are over 5,000 children aged zero to 11 in Yukon, and over 5,000 children enrolled in grades K through 12 in our public schools.

It is clear that many children from low-income families are not taking advantage of the funding. We know that families with children rely on the food bank, we know there are families with a dependence on social assistance and we know that there are families struggling as the working poor. Not having the means for your kids to participate in regularly scheduled programs or activities over the year leaves these children and young people at a disadvantage.

Mr. Speaker, will this government increase the amount of money provided to the kids recreation fund and better promote the fund so that more children can access it?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I thank the member opposite for raising this question. I heard the minister say that we will go back to get the specifics on this.

What I would like to acknowledge is that here in this Legislature I have heard all of us stand up and talk about the importance of sport and recreation for all of our citizens, particularly for our youth. We have just had the Arctic Winter Games, where we had young athletes from the across the territory travel to the Northwest Territories. They did a wonderful job, and we see how those types of experiences are life-changing for our young people, and it is important that young people of all economic means have access to those opportunities.

I thank the member for her question. We will get a specific response. I thank her for the opportunity to acknowledge how important sport and recreation is for youth across the territory.

**Ms. White:** I would like to thank Sport Yukon, which tops up the amount to make sure that no kids get left behind.

Let us look at some of the costs of activities for children in Whitehorse. A week at a City day camp costs between \$140 to \$175 per week — a grant would cover two and a half weeks in the summer, remembering that, this summer, kids will be out of school for 10 weeks — and other day camps can go for much more. Sports like hockey or snowboarding are equally expensive when we factor in enrolment and equipment.

More needs to be done to help families and, more importantly, help children and youth to have opportunities to be involved in healthy activities in their communities. We know that physical activity and involvement in sports and recreation all have lifelong impact on a person's health and well-being. If there are no plans to increase the kids recreation fund from this government, what is this government doing to ensure that all children — all kids — have easy access to healthy sports and recreational activities in their communities?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I am going to have to go quick. The government does support funding opportunities for many organizations, programs and services for all of our youth.

They contribute to a variety of different programs involving youth centres, support centres, cultural activities, sport and recreation programs, environmental programs, youth camps and education. My department, the Executive Council Office, provides money to BYTE, to the Boys and Girls Club of Yukon, to the Heart of Riverdale community centre and to the Youth of Today Society — \$102,000 to support the youth investment fund, \$60,000 over three years to support the Yukon First Nations Chamber of Commerce and the Singletrack to Success project, just to mention a few.

This is a question that we can go through each department on, because I'm taking a look at scholarships programs, Skookum Jim Friendship Centre's training allowances, Yukon awards — there is just a complete list, and it's a whole-of-government approach from the Youth Directorate to the Tourism and Culture department, Justice department,

Environment, Health and Social Services. Again, the list goes on and on. We are very, very supportive of these youth programs, and if the members opposite would like to have a comprehensive list, we can go through it in Committee of the Whole, or we can talk to them off-mic to address this specific issue if there are some specific concerns.

**Question re: Government contracting**

**Mr. Hassard:** The government promised to tender \$46 million in seasonally dependent contracts by March 31, 2018. I'm curious if the minister would be able to update us on this promise today.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As the member opposite knows, this government is committed to helping vendors by providing them more certainty when they're planning their schedules for upcoming seasonal work. We worked very hard — I've worked very hard with my colleague from Community Services to get seasonally dependent contracts out the door. The data for 2013 through 2016 shows that an average of 18 seasonally dependent construction tenders worth an average of about \$27 million were posted before April 1. On average, 34 tenders were posted after April 1, worth about \$81 million. This year, we are going to get out in excess of \$46 million, and we're more than happy to have done that. That's what the contracting community was asking for and we're happy to deliver on that promise.

**Mr. Hassard:** Would the minister be able to table a list of all the tenders that are part of this promise, which includes their values and the date that they were tendered?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Our main goal is to tender at the right time, not necessarily before a certain date, such as March 31. However, March 31 can be used as a benchmark for tracking earlier tendering, as I have indicated. This year, before the end of March, we expect to tender 48 contracts worth approximately \$51 million, and we expect to post an additional 16 tenders after April 1, worth about \$16 million.

**Mr. Hassard:** It's interesting — I think the minister should remember that benchmark was in their own platform, so it wasn't from us. Since the minister didn't actually answer the question, I do hope that he would consider tabling that list of tenders that I have just asked for.

We have heard that a lot of the contracts are being rushed out the door to meet this deadline — a self-imposed deadline, I might add — and they're being rushed out without being completed in order to meet the government's political deadline. People are worried that this means that they may be incomplete, and so there may be a large number of addendums and closing dates being adjusted in the coming weeks to actually complete the tenders, even though they are posted.

Can the minister confirm if this is in fact the case?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can assure the House that we have been gearing up over the last year to implement early tendering. This early tendering allows contractors to take maximum advantage of the full construction season. This is what we said we would do. We're actually delivering on that promise. Promise made — promise delivered.

For 2018-19, we will have a number of major projects tendered before or shortly after March 31. I said that earlier. Not all seasonally dependent projects, particularly the smaller ones, need to be tendered at the same time. We want to spread out opportunities to the vendor community so tenders don't all close at the same time, so we will stagger closing dates for public tenders to minimize negative impacts on bidders.

**Question re: Cannabis regulation in Yukon**

**Mr. Istchenko:** On the day before the long weekend, and in an attempt to try to bury the news, the government has cancelled the tender for the government-run cannabis warehouse and retail store. We know this government has promised to grow government through the creation of a government-run warehouse and retail store, so can the minister update us on their plans please?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am very happy to update the members opposite and Yukoners on the plans. We issued an RFP in 2018, seeking a lease or purchase option for approximately 4,500 square feet for cannabis retail and storage in the Marwell area, as per the zoning requirements of the City of Whitehorse, and we only got one bid. It was, unfortunately, for about three times the square footage and about twice the price that we were budgeting. We didn't get any bids submitted for a lease option, so we have made the decision to cancel that tender, as it is over budget, and we are working on other options to continue to ensure that a retail location is up and running by the time non-medical cannabis is legal in Canada. We will be doing that as an interim measure until such time as the private retail is established, once regulations and licensing procedures are in place.

I'm happy to announce that the corporation is planning to use its existing liquor distribution centre and warehouse for storage, wholesale and e-commerce distribution. We are continuing to work on the retail outlet.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for the answer. So the minister has given us a bunch of different numbers on the number of employees who will be hired for the new government-run warehouse and retail store. I'm wondering if the minister is able to give us an updated number on how many will be hired as part of this government's plan to grow government?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Absolutely no plan to grow government, Mr. Speaker — I disagree with the formation of the question, but that's fine. I gave an answer previously and it's still the same answer. I stated in this Legislature that, in terms of regulation and enforcement, we would have to have some new employees — I said fewer than would fit on one hand, and that is what I anticipate still.

There will be some term contracts in place for dealing with the retail side of this. That is because we're keeping it as an interim measure. We are fully anticipating getting out of the business of doing business and giving it over to the private sector, and we look forward to working with them.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I guess this begs the question: Will the minister then agree to amend the cannabis act so the government does not get into the business of retail and

distribution of cannabis — and, instead, focus government efforts on regulation and enforcement, while leaving the business side entirely to the private sector?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm not sure about process, Mr. Speaker, but, here in Question Period, I'm not going to amend legislation.

I will tell the member opposite that I'm not interested in amending the legislation. It was designed specifically to allow flexibility so that we could pivot, as we are doing. We knew that it was going to take a little bit of time to get regulations in place. I would like to acknowledge the tremendously hard work done by the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Liquor Corporation in preparing this legislation.

We had more input from Yukoners than ever before on any other piece of legislation — thank you, Yukoners, by the way. Thank you for all of that input. We have been working through it. We have the legislation now introduced before us in this House. It will come here for debate soon, I'm sure. That and the budget are what we're working on. At that time, we will consider, if the members opposite have amendments, but our whole purpose was to allow for getting retail in place so we could displace the illicit market and work with the private retail sector to get them up and running as well. We're happy to be moving in that direction.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

#### Motion No. 256

**Clerk:** Motion No. 256, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does remove Geneviève Chabot from the Yukon Human Rights Commission, effective immediately.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I will not take much time today. This motion has been moved to revoke Geneviève Chabot from the Yukon Human Rights Commission. Ms. Chabot has tendered her resignation, as she has moved away from the Yukon to take on new challenges. We are very grateful for the time and energy that Ms. Chabot committed to the Yukon Human Rights Commission, and we wish her every success as she takes on her new role as deputy chief commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for those remarks. The Official Opposition would also like to thank Ms. Chabot for her work on this committee and congratulate her on her new job and wish her well in her future endeavours.

**Ms. White:** I will echo the voices of my colleagues in thanking Madam Chabot for the work she has done in Yukon and wish her well in her future endeavours on a larger scale.

**Speaker:** Is there any further debate?

If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I just wanted to thank my colleagues for the opportunity to bring this motion forward, and I hope that it receives unanimous consent.

*Motion No. 256 agreed to*

#### Motion No. 257

**Clerk:** Motion No. 257, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(1) of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Gavin Gardiner to the Yukon Human Rights Commission for a term of three years, effective immediately; and

THAT Russell Knutson be reappointed to the Yukon Human Rights Commission for a term of three years, effective April 30, 2018.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, this is the second motion that I brought forward today with respect to the Yukon Human Rights Commission. The commission consists of up to five members. Currently there is one vacancy, and the term of another member is due to expire at the end of April 2018. The two open positions were advertised. The all-party Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees reviewed all applications received and recommended that Gavin Gardiner be appointed to fill the vacancy and that Russell Knutson be reappointed to the commission.

Both of the recommended applicants possess a variety of skills and experience. I look forward to them being appointed and bringing their expertise to the commission for the benefit of Yukoners. Mr. Gardiner is currently employed as a lawyer by Woodward & Company, a local law firm that is exclusively focused on representing First Nation governments. He has an extensive background in negotiations, management, policy analysis and the creation of legislation. Mr. Knutson is the current chair of the Yukon Human Rights Commission and has served as a member since 2015. In addition to his extensive career in journalism, he has over 20 years of experience working in conflict resolution.

Thank you to all those who put their names forward to serve on this commission, and thank you to the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees for their recommendations that form this motion today.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for her remarks. We would like to congratulate Mr. Gardiner on his appointment to

the Yukon Human Rights Commission and congratulate Mr. Knutson on his reappointment to the Human Rights Commission. As the minister mentioned, these appointments went through the all-party committee, and I would like to thank the Yukon Party members of that committee and all members — specifically, the Member for Watson Lake and the Member for Porter Creek North, who participate on behalf of the Official Opposition with that committee.

**Ms. White:** I have the good fortune of sitting on that committee, and it is great to work with the colleagues I have in the room. I am really happy to know that Gavin has been appointed and that Mr. Russell Knutson is being reappointed. That commitment to the good work that the Human Rights Commission does is a testament — and the fact that he asked to be reappointed. I thank them both, and I look forward to seeing the good work that they do and look forward to the vote.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am rising as the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes just to acknowledge Mr. Knutson — Russ — for his career in the media, with CBC, an outstanding career, and also for his contribution to Autism Yukon. We just stood in the Legislature yesterday to talk about Autism Acceptance Day coming this weekend. I would also like to acknowledge his later career with the Lorne Mountain Community Association. Mr. Knutson drives a mean Zamboni.

*Motion No. 257 agreed to*

### **Motion No. 258**

**Clerk:** Motion No. 258, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Vincent Larochelle to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective May 26, 2018; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2.01) of the *Human Rights Act*, does designate Vincent Larochelle as chief adjudicator for a term of three years, effective May 26, 2018.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** This is the third motion that I will speak briefly to today. I appreciate the opportunity.

The Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators is comprised of six members of our Yukon community, one of whom is designated as the chief adjudicator. The term of the current sitting chief adjudicator is due to expire on May 5, 2018. This position was advertised and applications were reviewed by the all-party Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees. The committee has recommended that Vincent Larochelle be appointed as member and the chief adjudicator of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators.

Mr. Larochelle is a Rhodes Scholar and holds degrees in both mathematics and law. He has extensive experience working with Canadian and international law, is the sitting president of the Canadian Bar Association Yukon branch and currently works as a staff lawyer for Yukon Legal Aid. Mr. Larochelle is an active member of our community, participating and volunteering for a wide range of outdoor recreational activities. He has also served in numerous roles on a variety of boards and committees here in the territory. Mr. Larochelle brings a variety of skills and experience and will be an asset to the panel and as chief adjudicator.

I wish to express my personal thanks, and on behalf of the Yukon government, to the outgoing chief adjudicator, Penelope Gawn, for her dedication and service.

I also wish to thank those who put their names forward to serve on this panel and to the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees for their work on behalf of this House and Yukoners.

**Mr. Kent:** To echo the minister's sentiments, we in the Official Opposition would also like to congratulate Mr. Larochelle for his appointment as chief adjudicator of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators — again thanking colleagues from all three parties in this House for their work on the all-party Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, and as well I thank Ms. Penelope Gawn for her work as outgoing chief adjudicator.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, it may surprise you to know that I am in full support of both this appointment and the retiring of the chief adjudicator. Again, thank you everyone for putting their name forward, and I thank the outgoing chief adjudicator for the hard work and dedication that she has put in for the last three years.

*Motion No. 258 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I believe that's the end of government motions today.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel):** Order, please.

The matter before the Committee is Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 206, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 206, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

Is there any general debate?

**Women's Directorate**

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I would like to welcome our officials to the Legislature today. We have our deputy minister, Valerie Royle, and acting director, Taryn Turner. Thank you very much for coming.

It is my pleasure to present the Women's Directorate budget for the 2018-19 fiscal year. During the last budget debate, we were unable to debate this budget, so this will be my first time for the Women's Directorate — so thank you very much for allowing the time for this to happen.

The work of the directorate is to promote gender equality outcomes in government policy-making, legislation and program development, to support critical action on addressing gender-based violence in our communities and to support local organizations in their essential equality work and programming for Yukoners.

The work of the department is also crucial to supporting many of this government's goals and performance measures, particularly around more inclusive and equal communities. We take a people-centred approach to wellness that ensures all Yukoners thrive. We make strategic investments by way of funding to equality-seeking organizations that work tirelessly to build healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities.

We work with our governments and community partners on important shared initiatives, like the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which furthers our shared goals while also improving government-to-government relationships with First Nations to help foster reconciliation.

One of the key ways this government plans to foster safety, equality and inclusion is through efforts to reduce all forms of violence against women. This year the Directorate has taken important steps to addressing many of our mandate items. The Women's Directorate is leading the coordination and response on behalf of the Government of Yukon to the commission for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The Women's Directorate has the full support of all government departments and is working closely with Yukon indigenous women's organizations, family members and Yukon First Nations in this work.

We are also working to support the commission for the national inquiry in activities that directly affect Yukoners, such as the recent statement gathering that took place in Lower Post, BC. There we saw many Yukoners take the courageous step to share the stories of their mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts and friends who are missing or have been murdered. I raise my hands to all Yukoners who have come forward with testimony to the commission. Many friends and family members of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls had the opportunity to have their voices heard at the recent gathering — people who weren't heard before, who couldn't attend the Whitehorse hearings or who needed these months before they were ready to tell their stories.

I am so grateful to the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society for all of the work they did to support the statement gathering for the initial invitation, and for supporting and reaching out to family members. I am confident that this event would not have taken place without their dedication to these families and this important work.

I am so pleased that the Women's Directorate was able to provide some support for this event by way of funding and logistical support from the directorate's senior advisor for the national inquiry. I was honoured to attend this event as well and to have an opportunity to share my own truth with many family members and friends who attended the community feast.

The 2018-19 budget for the Women's Directorate includes \$130,000 for continued work in Yukon to respond to the national inquiry and the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls — specifically with funding for legal and record management work that is required to respond to questions or requests for information from the commission. This important institutional work of the inquiry will examine systemic causes of violence and begins alongside the family and the community hearings. It is vitally important work, and this financial allocation will allow the Yukon government to be ready when the commission calls upon us.

We also continue to fund the position of senior advisor for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls — 0.1 FTE at \$97,000 within the Women's Directorate. The senior advisor works alongside indigenous women's organizations, First Nation governments and all Yukon government departments to ensure that the important mandate of the inquiry is addressed in Yukon.

I now want to speak about the directorate's work in improving services for victims of violence and sexual assault in Yukon, alongside the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Services.

We are taking a one-government approach on this issue because we know that it is only by working together across boundaries that we can meet the needs of those who have been harmed by violence. A key way that we are aiming to address this commitment is by providing resources to develop a sexualized assault response team. The team will provide coordinated, victim-centred, low-barrier services to victims of sexualized assault as of spring 2018.

An important goal of this team is to improve coordination so that victims receive the services that they need, when they need them and on their own terms. Victims will have access to comprehensive care and support as they navigate social, medical and legal systems. This includes emotional support, health care and evidence collection, as well as assistance with reporting assaults to the RCMP, if desired. I believe this work will go a long way in supporting victims so that they feel safe, supported and empowered.

We have been working hard together at community and government tables to begin this work to provide the response victims need and deserve, no matter where and when they choose to come forward. I am really proud of this initiative. The \$320,000 budget is included in the budgets of the departments of Justice and Health and Social Services. It will include victim support coordination, navigation and training in victim care, after-hours assistance and support and health system improvements, including updated policies and procedures, to ensure victims receive a high standard of care. As this is a shared initiative with the majority of the budget allocation coming from Health and Social Services and Justice, I will leave my comments there, with the anticipation of further discussion by ministers responsible for those departments.

The Government of Yukon provides funding to many of the incredible grassroots organizations that have a profound impact at the community level. Positive relationships, increased dialogue and collaboration with non-government partners are something that I recognize as crucial to supporting community-driven health and well-being. That is why we are proud to continue to support many community-driven initiatives in this budget, such as \$95,000 for A Safe Place at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, which offers low-barrier, after-hour weekend services to marginalized women and their children experiencing housing or food insecurity and/or mental illness in Whitehorse. \$65,000 of this budget is contained in the Women's Directorate 2018-19 budget. The remainder is contained in the budget of the Department of Health and Social Services.

There is \$93,000 for women's legal advocate services, which is housed in the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. This program develops and delivers support services to women involved in the legal or justice system, including criminal justice, victim support, child protection, landlord and tenancy issues, Wellness Court and family legal matters. There is \$42,000 for the Whitehorse affordable family housing program, managed by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, which provides programming and services for tenants of the 32-unit complex in Riverdale. The programming helps families maintain a successful tenancy, fosters independent living and provides a safe and healthy environment.

The Women's Directorate is continuing to work to build safer communities by increasing government's efforts to reduce violence against women. This includes working to develop responses that improve community safety and address key concerns by ensuring efforts to reduce violence against women are informed by local needs. Making existing program

funding for the prevention of violence against women more readily accessible to communities is another key commitment. In its 2017 report, *Women and the Criminal Justice System*, Statistics Canada reported that indigenous women in Canada are 2.7 times more likely to face violence than non-indigenous women. I know from my personal experience that a preventative approach to community safety and safety at home will be a foundational element to addressing the violence that still occurs in our communities and in our homes.

This is work that indigenous women's organizations have been doing for years. Our government wants to further enable their critical work. To support local organizations that we partner with on both of these initiatives, we are revamping current funding programs to make funding more readily accessible to communities outside of Whitehorse, as well as supporting continued efforts to meet the needs of community partners. The result is that we are implementing a new fund to support indigenous women's organizations in the community-based safety and wellness initiatives that they are uniquely suited to carry out.

As my colleagues from the Official Opposition recently pointed out, we have decreased the amount of funding available in the women's equality fund by \$80,000 in this budget. What they weren't so quick to point out is that this budget contains a new fund, the indigenous women's equality fund, with a budget of \$230,000 — \$80,000 moving from the women's equality fund — which will now provide operational funding to five women's organizations instead of eight and \$150,000 in new funding for the three indigenous women's organizations.

The indigenous women's equality fund replaces the one-time funding for aboriginal women's initiatives included in the 2017-18 budget. By shifting this previously allocated project-based money into operational funding, we are assisting to build up our indigenous women's groups in Yukon, easing their capacity issues with staffing and reporting, and meeting a consistent demand for acknowledgement and stable support for the long-standing work of the three indigenous women's organizations in Yukon.

Five non-indigenous women's organizations will remain under the women's equality fund and will see a small increase in their funding at \$220,000.

In addition to these reorganized funding sources, we also continue to provide \$200,000 in prevention of violence against aboriginal women funding, which supports initiatives such as land-based workshops on the traditional territory of our partner First Nation governments and a Yukon-wide speaker series that will profile indigenous women who are working toward reconciliation.

This government is committed to reducing the rates of violence against indigenous women. We are putting funds where they can make the biggest difference — into the hands of grassroots indigenous women's groups. Overall, the Women's Directorate will continue to empower equality-seeking organizations and support their important work at the grassroots level through transfer payments and program funding of close to \$1 million.

We hope that all of these efforts contribute to reconciliation between Yukon indigenous and non-indigenous people, and we're also seeking to ensure that these reconciliation efforts reach the most marginalized among us — the women, the youth and the LGBTQ2S+ members of our community. Reconciliation must make things better for all of us, and the Women's Directorate is committed to ensuring that no one gets left behind.

On that note, and specifically referencing our commitment to the LGBTQ2S+ community, the Women's Directorate, with the Department of Justice, has been heavily invested in our commitment to conduct a review of legislation, policies and practices to ensure Yukon government meets the rules of social standards for LGBTQ2S+ non-discrimination.

You all have seen our recent bill, the *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*. That is one piece of the important work going forward on this initiative. Changing laws is one of the strongest signals we can send that our government is committed to increasing the inclusion and equality of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. We know that equality for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners requires more than legislation, and this legislative change is one piece of a multi-faceted approach to create a more inclusive Yukon. Continued engagement with LGBTQ2S+ organizations, individuals, families and allies will help in collecting input on issues and priorities for making Yukon laws, policies, programs and services as non-discriminatory as possible.

It is my goal to continue to support the Women's Directorate and highlight the important work they do by strengthening the directorate's role within Government of Yukon and supporting increased training and policy advice internally to help ensure that gender and diversity issues are considered throughout our government's work.

One of the ways we have done this in the past year was by developing a training series for the Yukon public service on gender inclusive diversity analysis. We invested \$30,000 in content development for this training series and will continue to offer this training to members of Yukon's public service in 2018-19. Building on a gender and diversity action plan that is in its second year of implementation, the Women's Directorate will be beginning department-by-department implementation, with Tourism and Culture up first in 2018-19.

This is a big step in integrating GIDA work throughout all of Yukon government and ensuring that all of our programs, policies and services have more equitable outcomes.

In addition to the training, the Women's Directorate actively works with other departments to help ensure employees are supported in making quality considerations part of their everyday decision-making.

Finally, we are proud to co-host the upcoming federal-provincial-territorial Status of Women ministers meeting in fall 2018, with Status of Women Canada. We will emphasize the importance of addressing the practical issues facing women in the north, especially gender-based violence and meaningful engagement with our indigenous partners.

As minister, I will continue to advocate on behalf of Yukon to ensure that new federal initiatives serve the particular needs and experiences of Yukoners, including northern and indigenous women. We have allocated \$50,000 in the 2018-19 budget to support this work. I look forward to welcoming my national colleagues to our incredible territory and the significant work that we will accomplish together.

Mr. Deputy Chair, as I'm sure is clear, the role of the Women's Directorate in advancing a more equitable, inclusive, culturally relevant and respectful government — and by extension, an entire territory — cannot be understated. We help Yukoners lead happy, healthy lives by promoting LGBTQ2S+ equality and non-discrimination. We contribute to reconciliation by reducing violence against indigenous women and supporting the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry and findings. We work with community partners to make a positive difference in the lives of Yukon women and their children. We promote gender-equality outcomes in government policy-making, legislation and program development.

We look forward to continuing our work in 2018 by leveraging every penny of our \$2.247-million O&M budget. With that, I will conclude my remarks in order for members to proceed with questions.

**Ms. McLeod:** I want to welcome the officials here to help us in the debate today.

I don't have a lot of comments with regard to this directorate, but I want to acknowledge the work that is going forward in services to victims of violence. I am assuming that it has been well-received. I'm wondering what the yardstick is for the directorate as to whether or not this spending is a success.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I just want to clarify the question. Are you speaking of the new sexual assault response team?

**Ms. McLeod:** Of course, I am speaking in part to that, but there are other monies that are devoted to supporting victims of violence and sexualized assault, so I am looking at this as a little bit broader than that.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I will start with the sexualized assault response team. In December 2017, we announced new dedicated resources to develop a sexualized assault response team in Yukon. We are putting resources toward a team approach to ensure that wellness, medical and legal supports for victims can be easily accessed. The goal of the new SART resource is to provide the services that victims need, when they need them and on their own terms so that they feel believed and supported. We are working to build this team, which will include new dedicated services and an improved team approach with those who are already working with and for victims. We have contracted a medical expert in the sexualized violence field to update Yukon's policies, protocols and training for medical and forensic services for victims. We are also putting resources toward coordination of new victim service supports, particularly outside of business hours. The sexualized assault response team will support all victims of sexual assault, regardless of gender.

In terms of outcomes, this is a new program. We will be evaluating, monitoring and working through a one-government approach. This is partnership. The Women's Directorate is very involved in assisting with the coordination. We will be working with many Yukon partners to see the success of this. Of course, the majority of the funding for this sits within the departments of Justice and Health and Social Services.

The prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund has been allocated \$200,000. This was very well-received. We have recently had some training with the recipients in developing outcome-based goals and plans. We have received some really great feedback and are reviewing that now. This is a well-received fund. It funds grassroots, community-based types of projects and initiatives that go a long way toward reaching women where they are in their communities. It also expands out to families. I have worked on the receiving end of that fund for a very long time, and it is definitely a fund that we will be continuing to assess for its effectiveness, and we will look at ways to enhance it.

**Ms. McLeod:** With the supports and services in place for the victims of violence — and the minister has told us about programs that are in place to encourage or promote the reduction in violence against aboriginal women — I am wondering how non-aboriginal women fit into that picture.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** To be clear, the sexual assault response team is for all Yukoners, all genders, so that is certainly an overall program for Yukon.

I spoke about forming the indigenous women's equality fund and I spoke a little bit about the fact that we continue with the women's equality fund, which provides \$220,000 per year — and will continue into 2018-19 — to fund the Elizabeth Fry Society for Yukon, Les EssentiElles, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Yukon Status of Women Council and Yukon Women in Trades and Technology. That funding will continue. These organizations do a tremendous job in working with women who are fleeing violence and who are experiencing those types of hardships in their life, so that will continue.

Our government supports all of these equality-seeking organizations at different levels. I am speaking about the Women's Directorate. Our budget is one of the smallest budgets in government, and we leverage our money as far as we can. I know that all of these organizations receive various levels of funding from throughout our government and will continue to receive that. There are many other programs and services that our government supports that will continue to be supported, because it is a need.

I am not suggesting in any way that only indigenous women experience violence. We are simply pointing out that indigenous women experience violence 2.7 times greater than non-indigenous women — particularly in the north, we have higher rates of violence.

This budget includes \$95,000 for A Safe Place, which is through the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, and that is an organization that is open to all.

We also support \$93,000 for the women's legal advocate through the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, but it is for all women as well. We have allocated \$100,000 for the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre for a women's advocate. In terms of the funding that we make available through the Women's Directorate, it is, again, a very small piece, but it's very significant in terms of strategically supporting organizations to do work on behalf of all Yukoners.

**Ms. McLeod:** I'm curious to know — what I picked up from the minister's discussion when she first stood up is that programs in place to reduce violence against all women in the Yukon Territory are left primarily to community organizations through the women's equality fund. Would that be correct?

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I started out by talking about SART. Again, my colleagues will speak more in-depth on that in Justice and in Health and Social Services because that's where the funding actually lies, but it is YG services that will be coordinating other grassroots services within Yukon to ensure that we have a very whole service to victims who are experiencing sexual assault.

The indigenous women's equality fund is funding at the grassroots level. This is something that we heard time and time again — that we need to be supporting organizations that are doing the good work that they do on behalf of all Yukoners. That doesn't mean though that we, as government, are not funding and providing other services to victims of violence. My colleague with the Department of Justice will talk about all of the good work that her department is doing in terms of services to all victims within Yukon, as well as with Health and Social Services. There is a tremendous amount of funding that is going out to various organizations, but there are also services that we are delivering on behalf of all Yukoners to reduce violence against all women in the Yukon.

Again, I think that women's organizations and other equality-seeking organizations are absolutely best placed to deliver these services. When you are dealing with situations of violence, it is deeply personal and it's extremely confidential. What I know from my work in these fields and working at the community level, is that trust is certainly something that you have to work really hard to gain. Many of our grassroots organizations are very in tune with the needs of our community, and so is government, but government is a bit of a different level. We also have all of our First Nation partners who we work with and who provide tremendous services at the grassroots and community level and are very responsive to the needs of their communities.

Again, we have small amounts of funding in terms of the overall scope within government, and we do our best to ensure that the organizations that are delivering services and are responding to communities alongside government services have the resources to do that.

**Ms. McLeod:** Yes, certainly I can appreciate that the Women's Directorate is one of the smallest departments that the Yukon government has, and I absolutely appreciate the work and effort to provide services to victims, but in our discussion today, I am just sensing not as much importance being placed on prevention — I guess because I would rather

see violence prevented than deal with the aftermath, and I'm sure we all would.

I'm just picking up on a little bit of an imbalance there, so I'm wondering if the minister has considered — or perhaps it's in the works — a review of the programs that are offered throughout Yukon to prevent violence against all women and to gauge the effectiveness. I guess the only way you are going to gauge effectiveness is if you have some numbers that one can look at to see if there is a decreasing incident level.

I'm curious to know how we are measuring success here.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** Of course, both prevention of violence is key — and we absolutely must respond in both ways in terms of prevention of violence and being able to respond to violence. What we know is that we have a culture of silence where a lot of women who are experiencing violence in their homes or communities. The community can sometimes be silent on that and not be responsive to what is happening. What we do have are statistics. We have RCMP statistics and a lot of reports that come our way to indicate what types of charges, offences or investigations are going forward. We do rely on the data that we have at our fingertips.

I would reflect a little bit on some of the work that I have done previously within a community where I worked. Those statistics were very helpful, and they do tell a story. The RCMP, if you work very closely with them — which a lot of our community organizations and First Nation governments do — they are able to work with our enforcement agencies to determine what the trends are and to be able to be aware of the situations that are unfolding in communities. Awareness is a very big part of reducing the violence that is occurring in our communities. We do have very high rates of violence in our Yukon communities. We are exploring some different initiatives and will work with all of our partners on them going forward. My colleagues and I will be able to speak about that more as we go into this next fiscal year.

Violence is one of the end results of inequality — it really and truly is. All the work, funding and supports for equality and violence prevention — either directly or indirectly — will go a long way toward changing the reality of our communities.

I just want to reflect a little bit as well on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I know that this is focused on indigenous women and girls, true, but it is definitely a move forward within our country to look at what the systemic issues are and why we do have these high rates of violence leading to the very worst possible outcome — the murder of women and girls in our country. That is why we're putting a lot of focus into the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, because we know that it is going to tell a story. It will be a chapter of history in Canada that will point to violence against all women and violence against all Canadians, because we know that if there is violence against women and children in our communities, there is also violence against men. Our goal needs to be reducing violence against all people, because that really is creating equality.

In terms of public education, each year we commit to several public education campaigns that promote inclusiveness, gender equality and respect for diversity in Yukon. We will continue to run these important campaigns to recognize the crucial role we all play in preventing violence and discrimination and supporting victims.

The Sexual Assault Prevention Month, Bare Essentials, Women's History Month and 16 Days to End Gender-Based Violence are fundamental campaigns that sustain our commitment to meet people's needs at all stages of their life. There certainly are a lot of really key campaigns and types of work that we do, again with our partners, because Government of Yukon must be a partner at all levels. I've said this in a lot of places and I will say it again here: Government of Yukon is not an island. We are a partner, and creating opportunities to come together in partnership is a strength of a community. That's something that we are working very hard to accomplish and build — those strong relationships with all of our stakeholders. We will continue to do that. That's really one of the key roles of the Women's Directorate — that we work with all of our stakeholders, we work in partnership and we work with all of our departments within government on legislation, policy and the development of services in ensuring that we have that equality voice reflected.

The Women's Directorate website is another place that has a lot of indicators — publications that show the indicators in Yukon regarding violence.

If you haven't had a chance to have a look at that website recently I would encourage you to do so, because there is a lot of data and evidence contained there that shows a very clear picture of where we are at in Yukon, what the gaps are, what the needs and options are — an example is legal advocacy for Yukon women. There are a lot of examples within that website. I really encourage the member opposite to explore that website, and I would be happy to have further conversations with you. I know that there are a lot of other budgets coming forward and that our time here may not be enough time to have these in-depth discussions, but I would absolutely welcome having a conversation with any of the members opposite at any time to get your good ideas and suggestions.

**Ms. McLeod:** The minister mentioned that awareness is a big part of the picture when we are talking about prevention, and I agree absolutely. However, I don't know where the information is. Is it buried within the department — in government? Is it buried within the various organizations that are funded by government? I can just look at my own community. We, of course, have a women's shelter. I could not tell you if it is well-used. I don't know anything about the numbers. How can anybody who is not actively involved in that organization understand the scope of a problem? You cannot understand it, therefore you don't even have to think about it.

I think it is important to have all of that data collated somewhere so that it gets out to the public or is somewhere where the public can have a look and understand the scope of the problem, because as long as we are hiding the numbers

and as long as we are not sharing the information, then people can gaily not acknowledge the problem. I don't think that is where we want to be. I think we want to have it in the front and foremost of people's minds so that we can all do our part to reduce violence against women and children, and that would serve us all well.

With that, I am going to conclude my remarks.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I hear what the member opposite is requesting here in terms of wanting to have more data and wanting to have more access to reports. With all of the organizations that we fund, we receive reports from them, we receive statistics and we do have information on our website, but I understand what the member opposite is getting at in terms of really wanting to put your finger on what the problem is.

I get that. I worked my whole career in community justice right at the grassroots community level, and I know that it is difficult because you feel like you are always chasing the problem. You can't quite get your finger on it, but I know that in my last position I had an opportunity to create programs and do community-based assessments that really helped us to put our finger on it. We knew exactly what the problem was in that particular community and we put very strategic initiatives in place to address them. I can tell you that it was very community driven — so it is possible.

I was in a meeting in Watson Lake — the MLA for Watson Lake was there — and I spoke a little bit about that assessment process that happened in the community where I recently worked and how effective it was. I know that there is keen interest. I can tell you that we have recently had discussions like that in Watson Lake with the chief and council, with the Town of Watson Lake and with the chamber of commerce.

I know that we are here talking about the Women's Directorate, but in looking at that whole-of-government approach, we are looking forward to working with Watson Lake on some significant projects in terms of that type of assessment. You can actually put your finger on it, and everyone who wants to be a partner in it can be a partner. It does shift the community because the community is where the strength is, and all of our communities are very strong. They have a resilience that is like no other. I think I have said this in the past that, in terms of my commitment to work with the Town of Watson Lake and to really effect some change there, it is because I believe in that community — like I do in every other community in the Yukon — and that there is a tremendous potential, a lot of infrastructure and a lot of potential for services.

I think that, regardless of whether you are on the government side or the opposition side, the desire really is to make a change and to help our communities be successful. That is entirely why I am here, and I thank you for the questions that you have asked today. We can follow up with any types of statistical information that you require. We can bring that to you or provide it as a legislative return.

**Ms. White:** I welcome the officials to the Chamber in, I believe, new roles — well, maybe the first time appearing in the Chamber in those roles.

Before I get started, I just want to tell the minister that if I had the ability to change the numbers, this department would have substantially more money.

I believe that the Women's Directorate has a very tough job to do with the amount of money within the directorate. I believe that if it had more funding, then some of the questions that I am going to ask right now would actually be things that the directorate could do. So I am just going to put it out that way.

Just to give the Deputy Chair an idea, I have said just about the same thing since 2012 — I think it was the first time I spoke about the Women's Directorate. In my mind, if it had increased funding, it would be really fantastic for all government departments.

In that vein, one of the things that the Women's Directorate does is they do the classes for other departments about how to look through the gender lens when they are, for example, writing proposals or doing advertising or doing anything like that. The one question that I have asked since 2012 is — it's great to be able to do the education and to do the training, but there is no one within Women's Directorate who takes a look at the information before it goes out from those departments to say, yes, this has been looked at through the gender lens and yes, this will work in that way. That is my understanding — that it hasn't changed.

If the minister could talk a bit about the training that happens through the Women's Directorate — the guarantee that the Women's Directorate has that, once that gender and diversity training has been given, the information coming from other departments meets those requirements — that would be great.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** Thank you for the question. When I first came on as Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, this was one of the first briefings that I received from the Women's Directorate, and I quickly realized how significant it is. It is incredibly significant and can have a tremendous impact. I believe that when you look through that lens of gender inclusivity and diversity — so having that full lens on any issue — it changes the outcome. I believe that. The Women's Directorate has prepared a three-year gender-inclusive diversity action plan to help government employees consider the needs and experiences of diverse Yukoners in their daily work. This action plan offers a framework for a coordinated government-wide approach to inclusion, cultural relevancy and diversity.

Gender inclusive and diversity analysis — and I will just explain, because maybe some aren't following it fully. I know that the member opposite is very aware of what this is, but I'll take my opportunity to speak to everyone who is listening. It's an evidence-based policy practice that enables diversity and inclusivity to be considered throughout all levels of decision-making.

The Women's Directorate is currently developing resources. We have training and tools to help ensure that

employees are supported in making equality considerations part of their everyday decision-making. Department-by-department rollout, as I have said, will begin with Tourism and Culture in this fiscal year and will continue to move through department by department. We'll certainly learn from our experience in bringing it through the first department.

As you've said, the resources are limited and they are overall for government, so the Women's Directorate does not have the resources to review absolutely everything. We don't have the people power there to do that, so that's why we're going by a department-by-department approach right now. There are some really great things happening in Canada right now. This analysis was applied to the federal budget recently. Their budget now has a whole gender inclusivity and diversity lens to it, which is really unique and something we would all aspire to put in place.

This is certainly a tool that I really believe in. I will continue to advocate and work toward full implementation within Government of Yukon, and work with our partners outside government to promote. I have had some First Nation governments talk to me about it recently, about the gender-inclusivity and diversity analysis and how they can apply it to their government. There is a lot of potential for partnership there and I think we have really great expertise. Just the very few people we do have in the department do an amazing amount of work and I'm really proud of the work that they do. Thank you for the question.

**Ms. White:** I have just two short things: Would the minister be able to share the gender-inclusive diversity analysis with us, and the framework, once it is developed, that she mentioned?

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** Yes, absolutely we will do that. As things evolve, I will be happy to bring forward the information to all Members of the Legislative Assembly and work with our partners across the way to ensure that they are fully aware of the work that we're doing within government around GIDA.

**Ms. White:** When the minister just said that the Women's Directorate doesn't have the resources to review, I absolutely agree, but I think there was almost the mention that some stuff did get reviewed by the department. Could she tell me a bit more about what that was?

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I believe I had mentioned — I was talking about the federal budget.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** Not that one? Okay, so I'll sit down.

**Ms. White:** I will try to be clearer. One of the things that I wish the Women's Directorate could do is to review stuff that the other departments were putting out with the gender and diversity lens. I thought that the minister intoned that the department did look at some stuff, and I was just trying to get an idea of what kind of stuff the Women's Directorate does get to review before it's released.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** Yes, the Women's Directorate has seats to review various levels of policy communication. We do have a GIDA lens on the legislative template when we are developing new legislation or we are reviewing. There is the

GIDA lens on that. We do have questions and considerations in Cabinet submissions as well, and any committee that we sit on — and there are a number of ministerial committees that we are a part of, and we certainly bring the GIDA lens into that as well.

**Ms. White:** Again, it is the superhuman work that gets done by a very small number of people within the department, so I appreciate that.

For a lot of years, one of the questions I had was about the Yukon gender-equality website, and it was because it was promised for a long time and it wasn't there, but now we have it. It is the website where a lot of the numbers and a lot of the figures that the minister was talking about exist. It is an impressive collection of information and data, and it seems to be very current.

One of the questions I had is: How often does information on that website get updated? Is it in-house, or is the directorate able to access outside help?

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** We actually work with the Bureau of Statistics with this particular website. We try to review everything at least once a year, but some of it is more frequent than that, depending on the area that we are updating and the importance of having up-to-date data.

It is a really impressive amount of information. Again, we absolutely are open to suggestions or anything else that the member opposite may want to bring to our attention.

Just so we have it on record, the Women's Directorate developed the gender equality indicators website as an evidence-based tool to help departments tailor programs and services to meet the needs of all Yukoners and to help government to track our territory's progress on gender equality. The inclusion of community level information is of particular benefit for areas without statistical data. For example, the website's timeline and sound stories were updated in the summer of 2016 to reflect the achievements and experiences of trans and two-spirited Yukoners, which are not yet captured in statistics. That certainly is an area that we are committed to continue to work on.

**Ms. White:** I will put in the pitch that we have one more woman in the Legislative Assembly since the 2016 election — it says 2011. I am just going to put it out that we are doing a bit better.

I did appreciate the minister's comments about the mention of gender in the federal budget. I would also like to highlight — although it wouldn't fall directly under the Women's Directorate — that there are still pay inequality issues in Yukon where men and women do the same work and women are paid less. Tourism is one that I would highlight for that — not the government department, but definitely in operators.

The *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, I think, has been well-publicized and well talked about. I appreciate that this was the first step. The one thing that I heard when talking to organizations and individuals is that you don't know what you don't know. Asking a person what legislation should be changed to better affect their lives is bit of a complicated question. To be honest, there are — I would

guess — hundreds of pieces of legislation and I read them as required. I have never gone A-through-Z to read every piece of legislation to see how it affects people. I have highlighted the pieces of legislation that we have been identifying — we as the NDP — since 2012, and I was really happy. So, congratulations on the announcement about the next phase to make sure that legislation changes.

One of my questions is: How can you ask parts of the community to identify what they might not know? I want to know if, when this process starts, for example, my favourite five or six pieces of legislation that I have listed dozens of times are going to be highlighted as part of it. One of the things we have been told is that, if you are not an organization that looks at legislation, you would not know, for example, that the *Married Women's Property Act* exists. That's a weird one — the *Married Women's Property Act*. You would not know that in spousal compensation it said that when you move in with a member of the opposite sex — because why would you read that legislation? There is quite a ways to go.

I just want to know if the intention was to highlight legislation that government knows doesn't meet what I would consider to be non-discriminating language and how they plan to proceed from there.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** We are really aware of that conversation that we want to have and will have with Yukoners. The pre-engagement is really important and we need to ask absolutely open-ended questions about experiences in Yukon. I think that's really key and one of the reasons why we're hiring someone with experience in working in this community. So it is about asking the right questions, and maybe highlighting some of what you have brought forward on the various acts that we know have significant issues so that people, like you have said, who don't know what they don't know are able to consider that and give us the answer — their experience around trying to navigate that act. Again, they may not be aware that within some of the issues they may be trying to navigate, they're coming up against a piece of legislation that is contradicting what they want to achieve.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the concept of open-ended questions. It was the one thing that was just highlighted over and over again with the gender diversity — and I think that's why the women's coalition sent the letter that they did. Unless you're an organization that specializes in legislation, you wouldn't know what you don't know.

I also really want to focus on the importance of hiring a contractor who has experience working with the LGBTQ2S+ community. I think if there is anything that I have learned in the last number of years — what I don't know in language, I don't know — there are massive voids, oceans of times. If it weren't for people showing and teaching me the way, I would misspeak quite often because two years ago it was 2S-asterisk and now it's + and there are more letters than there were five years ago. I just really want to congratulate both the Department of Health and Social Services and the Women's Directorate for acknowledging that it requires a very specialized level of experience. That is important, and I hope

that when the community reaches out to me this time, I am told that they feel like they are included and heard and that there is not that distance and that gulf. I am just going to leave that there. I just want to say thank you for that.

There have also been times where, over the years, the Women's Directorate has had kind of an advocacy role within other avenues of government. For example, the Women's Directorate helped push for the women's Sexual Health Clinic, so there have been opportunities where the Women's Directorate has helped push things.

For a number of years I asked about access to contraception and also — the same thing on the other side of the coin — access to abortion services. I really do believe that there is a space for the Women's Directorate to be championing with the Department of Health and Social Services and others to make sure that those services and products are available equitably across the territory, so maybe if the minister wants to respond to that.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** Yes, absolutely, we are involved in advocacy roles. In terms of the particular issue that you brought forward around the abortion pill, we really rely again on the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues and other groups that work with Health and Social Services to bring our voice into it. We absolutely work toward when it is appropriate for us to be involved in advocacy. The one issue that you raised around the access to the abortion pill — we know that it is currently an established program to provide access to the abortion pill in collaboration with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The abortion pill is for medical termination of pregnancy up to 63 days or nine weeks gestation. This pill contains two different types of medication. I know it's controversial. There is a lot of controversy around access to these types of options. I think that the Whitehorse General Hospital physicians and the Health and Social Services staff are working together to ensure the access for Yukoners.

This initiative certainly reflects our government's commitment to offer coordinated programs and enhance quality of life for Yukoners. It is definitely an issue that impacts women directly, so we are, of course, working with our partners to ensure that this is a service that is available to Yukoners.

**Deputy Chair:** Would members like to take a short break?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 206, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for engaging in the conversation. At times it has been much longer and it has been

a conversation that, for two years, I couldn't get a minister in the previous government to actually use the same words to talk about it. If I brought up women's sexual or reproductive health, the conversation ended, so I do appreciate the engagement.

The one thing that I do hope that the Women's Directorate continues to do is to champion for the choice of women. Regardless of what anyone's personal thoughts are about the matter, this is actually a legal right of women to make the choice about their own reproductive health and sexual health. I will just leave it there.

On April 20, 2016, in this House, we actually debated a motion that I put forward — Motion No. 1142 — and I will just read what the first wording was and then what it got amended to, because it got passed with unanimous consent. My original motion read, "THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce amendments to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* to allow domestic violence victims to: (1) terminate a lease early and without penalty; and (2) remove an abuser's name from a lease." It was amended by the then-Minister of Community Services to read: "THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consult with stakeholders about whether the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and regulations should be amended..." for those same reasons.

This was based on Bill No. 204 out of Alberta and put forward by MLA Deborah Drever. The reason why we brought it forward was for all of those reasons that the minister talked about before. Women face a disproportionate amount of violence, often from domestic partners. What this motion tried to do was acknowledge that — and so that we would remove penalties.

The amended motion received full unanimous support from the Chamber. Women's organizations sent letters of support and I had been contacted to find out if there was anything that had happened.

One of the questions that I have for the minister right now is what the status is. It was agreed the government would go back and do consultation and research. I know that women's organizations did send letters of support to government, and I just wanted to know if the Women's Directorate has been looking into the issue further.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I will have to do some more investigating on this one and get back to the member opposite. I do have some notes and some awareness around what the issue is, but I would much prefer to give a full answer to the member opposite.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that answer, but what I will ask is that, in her position as the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, she has this conversation with her colleague, the Minister responsible for Community Services and her colleagues in Cabinet, because — although it has fallen off the side of my desk until it gets resurfaced by someone who is asking me questions — it is not an issue that we should walk away from, and that was shown by the importance of the unanimous support in 2016, including by the now-Premier.

When I was looking at the difference between last year's budget and this year's budget, I just have some questions. I wanted to know what — and I am not sure if the minister will be able to do this, because I was looking in the briefing notes from last year, but last year there was the women's equality fund for \$300,000 and then there were the aboriginal women's initiatives for \$150,000. I wanted to know, at that point in time, how much the three aboriginal women's organizations received in the 2017-18 budget.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** During 2017-18, the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society received \$30,000 for operational under the women's equality fund, because we were establishing the indigenous women's equality fund this year. The Whitehorse aboriginal women's council received \$38,000 and the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council received \$35,000. The \$150,000 that is going over to the indigenous women's equality fund was one-time funding. It was scheduled to end at the end of 2017-18. That wasn't a permanent fund, so we have taken that now and placed it in an indigenous women's equality fund, so it becomes an ongoing fund for the \$150,000. That is new; it was previously project-based funding, so it required separate reporting from the amounts that were operational, and it was based on special projects. It is now coming over to become a fully operational fund, so it will require one report and it is not based on a specific project. We will still have work plans and outcomes, of course, but it doesn't require separate reporting because that was scheduled to end this fiscal year.

**Ms. White:** Can the minister tell me — again, just asking about last year's budget and the aboriginal women's initiative, the \$150,000 — we're just being told that it was project-based. Could she please tell me how that was divided between LAWS, the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council and the Whitehorse aboriginal women's council?

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** Thank you for the question. The \$150,000 obviously was just straight equal portions, so \$50,000 each from the \$150,000 that was allocated, and then it was based on the three organizations getting equal funding, based on what we have in the indigenous women's equality fund now.

**Ms. White:** Just looking those numbers, for example, LAWS last year would have had \$80,000. From the briefing, I am to understand that they have \$76,000, so it's less funding this year. One of the questions I have is: What kind of consultation happened with those three organizations prior to the indigenous women's equality fund being developed?

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I had direct conversations with the organizations early in the mandate. What I was told is that there are difficulties in terms of reporting, and that indigenous women's groups have always received less than the other groups, in terms of operating funds.

I did not go back to them just prior to establishing the IWEF fund. That being said, I have received some communications from the indigenous women's organizations and fully intend to have a discussion about some of the concerns that they have. The shortfall from last year to this year will be absorbed through the department. That's our

intent, to have that discussion with the indigenous women's groups and that we will be absorbing the shortfall, based on what they received last year and what they're receiving this year, because our intent is to really empower indigenous women's groups to do the good work that they're doing, reduce the burden of reporting and to really work with them around outcomes, helping to reduce the incidence of violence in our communities and to help them to meet their mandate.

That's still a conversation. I suspected that would be a question here today and I'm happy to give that answer — that we're going to continue working with all of our equality-seeking groups and address whatever concerns they may have.

**Ms. White:** Last year, like other members in the Chamber, I had the pleasure of attending the Carcross/Tagish First Nation General Assembly in Carcross. There I got to meet, by chance actually — I'm not exactly sure how we ended up at the same table, but I got to meet Doris Anderson. She is fantastic and she's a force. She is the executive director of the Whitehorse aboriginal women's council.

In talking with her, there was actually a lot of hurt from that organization, and it was based on the work that they had done for the inquiry for the missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls, to the point that it was pointed out to me that, during the comments and the thanks, they actually didn't get recognized for supporting victims. They felt hurt — is the best word I could use. Then when I did the tribute to the inquiry, some of the language that I used actually came directly from her because of the experience that she and the organization had. It may be a surprise for people to know that the executive director volunteers an awful lot of time, and that it's not a fully paid position and that a lot of the staff volunteer a lot of time because they're not paid positions.

I had a conversation with someone recently who was at the last women's coalition meeting last week, and it was pointed out by a representative of LAWS that they were receiving less funding this year than they were last year. I was sent a letter today and it was a letter that was sent to the Premier and to the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate on March 19. One of the things I was told today was that they have received acknowledgement of receipt, but there hasn't been a confirmation for the meeting that they've asked for on April 17.

There are two ways I can do this, Mr. Deputy Chair. I could read the letter into the record. It's pretty intense; it's a tense letter. I will let the minister answer first about the response they might get for the April 17 meeting, and then I will see from there.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** Thank you for the question. As I stated a few moments ago, I suspected that would be brought forward. My office is working with them to set a meeting. We are probably going to meet earlier than April 17, because I said I would like to meet earlier if that is possible. Our officials are away during the week of April 17, so that was the issue we had — officials are away. We are really trying to land on a time and a date the week before that.

I can assure you that we are taking the steps, and I have said here today in the Legislative Assembly that we will be

absorbing the shortfall and working at the Management Board level going forward into the next fiscal year to address that shortfall. I believe it was more of an oversight than anything else, because that was not the intent. The intent is to empower our indigenous women's groups to do the work that they do.

I am fully aware of the content of that letter and that is something I will work directly with the organizations on.

I wanted to go back to a comment that you had made previously with Ms. Anderson. I absolutely value the work that she has done at the helm of the — it is the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council that she is president of. She attended here during the tribute of International Women's Day, and it was great to see her here. My intent is to continue working in the most respectful way with all of our equality-seeking organizations. I believe in the work that they do, I believe in the mandates that they have and I am looking forward to resolving the issue that they brought forward.

I appreciate the question today.

**Ms. White:** I thank you for the correction. I should have looked down at the signature. I said "Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Council" and I should have said "Yukon".

The thing that is highlighted in the letter — it is not about \$4,000, it is not about a small-change shortfall. The issue of the letter is talking about fully funding the organization so that they are able to do the work that they can do. I don't think this is a new conversation; I think this has been an ongoing conversation and I think that this is an ongoing conversation with this government.

The really important point is that, as it stands right now, it says that: "We regret that accepting your current funding offer would only have us acquiescing the colonial treatment of Indigenous Women in the Yukon..." and that is when they are asking for a meeting. They are saying right now that they will not be accepting that money, come April 1, because of how they feel.

I appreciate that the minister said today that there have been efforts to organize that meeting, but I had a conversation today at 12:15 p.m. when I was told that there had been no word back.

I am going to leave that there, except for that one line, and hopefully even outside of the Chamber we can have a bigger conversation about it. It is an important issue, and this is probably where the Member for Watson Lake and I will differ, because there are differences. We are different and there are different challenges.

Initially during the briefing, I was really excited that the women's equality fund and the indigenous women's equality fund were two separate pockets of money, until I had the conversations with indigenous women. They highlighted that maybe I should cool my jets a bit about that celebration. I am happy to know that it is going to be addressed and I look forward to hearing how it will be addressed.

I think that is it, Mr. Deputy Chair. I thank the officials and I thank the minister. I am looking forward to the contractor being hired to do a sensitive review of LGBTQ2S+ issues, and look forward to a further conversation later on.

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

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate starting at page 18-5 of the estimates book.

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

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

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

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Deputy Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$2,247,000 agreed to***

***On Capital Expenditures***

***Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to***

***Total Expenditures in the amount of \$2,247,000 agreed to***

***Women's Directorate agreed to***

**Deputy Chair:** We will proceed to Vote 2, Executive Council Office.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Deputy Chair:** Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate in Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 206, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

**Executive Council Office**

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I am pleased to be here to do the Executive Council Office in Committee of the Whole. I would like to welcome Jim Connell from ECO, here with me today. I do want to give a shout-out to the Executive Council Office and all the good work that they do, not only preparing us here in the Legislative Assembly, but also the national and international work that they do through Intergovernmental Relations, Aboriginal Relations, et cetera — representing the Yukon.

Anecdotally on that, in my first year as Premier, the position of chair for the Council of the Federation was the Yukon, and so we spent the first year with IGR going around and having an elevated presence of Yukon in the

organizational stratus of these meetings, both nationally and internationally. We have been told right across the country how professional the individuals — the public servants from the Executive Council Office and Intergovernmental Relations — have been, so it's definitely worth noting that today and I want to again thank them for making Yukoners look very professional right across Canada and also internationally.

I do want to touch a bit on the work that the Executive Council Office does. ECO — which I will be using as opposed to Executive Council Office each time — acts as a central agency for the Government of Yukon and provides support across all government departments to the Cabinet office. Within the territory the department offers effective and timely communication of government information to the public. We also spearhead and guide the government public engagement efforts, building on our commitment to better involve Yukoners in decision-making.

Another focus is strengthening of government-to-government relationships and reconciliation with First Nations, which is led by ECO's Aboriginal Relations division.

Finally, the department also includes Intergovernmental Relations, Major Projects Yukon, Youth Directorate, the Office of the Science Advisor and Government Audit Services, and we administer the Yukon Water Board Secretariat and the Office of the Commissioner. All of these represent quite a range of services but, more than anything else, ECO is a department of relationships. Our role is to form and sustain meaningful connections with Yukoners, respectful and durable partnerships with Yukon First Nations and other governments across Canada and First Nations across Canada — also advancing a Yukon-focused agenda in national and international forums, which we spoke of. This budget seeks to support all of these important efforts, recognizing the value that they bring in supporting the needs of Yukoners and the commitments this government has made to the public.

In 2018-19, the ECO budget estimates an operation and maintenance budget of \$21.3 million, which represents a net decrease of \$2 million — or nine percent — from the previous year and can be seen in the operation and maintenance budget overview. This decrease is mainly attributed to having fewer funding commitments in place with First Nations. Also removed was the one-time funding for the Western Premiers' Conference budget that was included in the previous fiscal year.

Two branch reorganizations also took place on September 1, 2017. The Yukon Water Board moved from the deputy minister's office to the Corporate Programs and Intergovernmental Relations division; and Major Projects Yukon, formerly known as the Development Assessment Branch, moved from Strategic Corporate Services division to Corporate Programs and Intergovernmental Relations. Finally, many of the small differences between the prior fiscal year and this budget are staff wage adjustments resulting from the collective agreement.

Now I would like to discuss each division and their work. We're going to start with Strategic Corporate Services. This particular division provides policy, planning and

communications leadership across all government. The division is a liaison between Cabinet and the departments to ensure that my ministers and I are supported and have complete, relevant and balanced information and advice. It also works to ensure that the government is transparent and true to the one-government approach, which aligns our decisions as we develop programs and policies to improve Yukoners' lives.

The division is also responsible for providing timely and effective communications to Yukoners across a range of channels, such as our website, which received more than 2.2 million visits last year alone, also by managing the hundreds of news releases that go out every year and by working with other departments to ensure that our communications across government are integrated, inclusive, outcome-focused and supportive of our goals of openness and transparency.

The O&M budget for Strategic Corporate Services is \$4.3 million, which includes \$353,000 for advertising and program materials, travelling and training, communications, membership and printing for the branches. The balance of the cost is personnel related, and represents a \$270,000 overall increase from the prior fiscal year. Included in that figure is a new position — a public engagement senior advisor — as a one-year pilot program. This new role will help us fulfill our public engagement promise to Yukoners and allow us to enhance our approach to meaningful engagement across government to ensure that we are involving Yukoners in decisions that we make.

We are still in the very early stages of developing a more integrated and focused approach, working to ensure we engage early and authentically, reducing barriers to participation, sharing the results of the engagements, and currently highlighting which decisions the public helped inform. Having this dedicated resource and specific expertise in-house at ECO is helpful and it helps us to advance this important and necessary work.

Mr. Deputy Chair, we are in the process of identifying performance measures related to this new public engagement position, and we will use these to evaluate the effectiveness of the role after the first year. So far the work has been strong, driven in large part by the launch of our new EngageYukon.ca website. EngageYukon.ca offers a single point of access for Yukoners interested in participating in government engagements. This includes everything from shaping new policy direction to designing new programs or services and, above all, participating more fully in civic life.

Since 2017, this site has hosted nearly 23 public engagements. Going forward, we will ask the public to rate their experiences engaging with us, using a scorecard created as part of the Talking Together Yukon project. We will track this information to measure our success and target areas for improvement as well. We plan to continue the conversation with the public now that we can improve the way that we do public engagement.

It is all about meeting Yukoners where they are, which increasingly means taking a digital-by-default focus, and increasing our reach to citizens using online channels.

As many of you know, last month we introduced a new website from the Government of Yukon, which is yukon.ca, which was led by the Executive Council Office, with support from Highways and Public Works, eServices for Citizens division. This mobile-enabled, citizen-centred website is a major step forward in our promise to improve access to government services for all Yukoners, especially Yukoners living outside Whitehorse in the communities. Our old website was designed to meet the needs of government, not necessarily the needs of Yukoners, and it was long overdue for a complete overhaul. The new design is built around the tasks that visitors most frequently seek to accomplish. This is what good governments everywhere are doing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century — offering citizens straightforward and easy access to the services and opportunities that they depend upon. It is through all of these initiatives and work, both within government and in communications outreach with Yukoners, that we are forming a stronger connection with our citizens whom we serve.

I will now move to Aboriginal Relations. Mr. Deputy Chair, as you know, we recently celebrated the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, and this year also brings the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the first four of Yukon's final and self-governing agreements. These anniversaries mark how far we have come and remind us there is work ahead to continue reconciliation. We continue to collaborate with First Nations to craft a better future for all Yukoners. Across the Government of Yukon, we have been working hard to build strong partnerships with First Nations, and the work of ECO's Aboriginal Relations division is a cornerstone of those efforts. They lead negotiations and discussions on behalf of the Government of Yukon with First Nations. They build relationships with First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations and manage collaborative initiatives that emerge from the Yukon Forum and other agreements.

The government is also engaged in discussions and negotiations with transboundary First Nations regarding their interests in Yukon through Aboriginal Relations. In fact, a change reflected in this budget is the reallocation of a position from within this department. This change bolsters the department's capacity to engage with non-settled and transboundary First Nations and highlights the importance our government has placed in advancing reconciliation, while simultaneously remaining fiscally responsible and reallocating resources wherever possible.

The operation and maintenance budget for Aboriginal Relations is estimated at \$6.7 million. This is an almost \$2-million decrease, as there have been fewer funding commitments for negotiations and consultation in place with First Nations compared with the previous year. Funding to support negotiations and consultations, if required, will be brought forward through supplementary estimates. Of the \$6.7 million, \$2.6 million goes toward Aboriginal Relations

staff. Another major initiative supported by the Aboriginal Relations division is support for the Yukon Forum. This is where the second reallocation senior advisory position will be focused — specifically upon supporting the joint-priorities actions that were generated from the forums.

Another community development priority is the Jackson Lake healing camp, which will receive \$400,000. The camp is a land-based addictions treatment facility open to all Yukoners that blends First Nation culture and cultural ways of healing with clinical approaches. Our financial support to the healing camp is representative of both our commitment to the value and importance of traditional knowledge, as well as the provision of land-based healing treatment.

It is not just Jackson Lake that receives this funding. As outlined by the Minister of Health and Social Services, the mental wellness fund allocates resources to all Yukon First Nations in support of land-based healing programs.

In terms of impact and outcomes, we will be working with First Nations to develop an evaluation framework to help measure the results of these programs. Beyond health and wellness funding, the bulk of the Aboriginal Relations budget is earmarked to support the boards and the committees established in the final and self-government agreements, which include the Yukon Geographical Place Names Board, the Yukon Heritage Resources Board, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the Yukon Land Use Planning Council.

These funds are just part of the efforts reflected in this budget that will help this government fulfill our commitments and enhance collaborations with First Nations for the benefit of all Yukoners.

Moving on — the Corporate Programs and Intergovernmental Relations division recently incorporated some new branches with the transfer of Major Projects Yukon and the Yukon Water Board Secretariat. The division's other branches are the Office of the Science Advisor, the Youth Directorate and Intergovernmental Relations. The division also provides leadership to other departments on how to fulfill the government's responsibilities under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* through Major Projects Yukon.

The division's operation and maintenance budget is estimated at \$6.36 million — a \$577,000 overall decrease from the previous fiscal year.

The Intergovernmental Relations branch itself has a budget of a little bit over \$1 million, and this represents a \$544,000-decrease from the previous year as a result of removing the one-time funding for the Western Premiers' Conference.

Over the past year, we have undertaken a new approach in our meetings in Ottawa by twice inviting the Yukon First Nations to join us there for Yukon Days to meet with the federal government together. We are, together, showing the importance of speaking for Yukoners with a single voice wherever possible, across all governments. Most of all, our shared commitment and respect gives us the strength and the latitude to disagree, but binds us together — binds us through

our mutual determination — to do what is right for Yukoners and to find solutions together.

The ECO operation and maintenance budget also includes \$2 million for operations of the Water Board Secretariat, consistent with previous years. The Water Board Secretariat supports the Yukon Water Board, an administrative tribunal established under the *Waters Act* that operates at arm's length from the government.

The majority of these funds are allocated to board expenses, including staff, operations of the board and public hearings.

Mr. Deputy Chair, if I may, I would like to briefly touch upon the work of the Office of the Science Advisor.

The Science Advisor is committed to advancing research in the territory and making sure that the territory benefits from that research. In addition to gathering and storing scientific knowledge, the advisor is working with Yukon First Nations to develop a government-wide policy to support the respectful use of traditional knowledge in our actions and decisions. The Office of the Science Advisor also provides support to the Arctic Inspiration Prize to the tune of \$30,000. This year we were delighted to see two deserving Yukon groups receiving support for that prize. One of the winners in the youth category was the Whitehorse-based Rivers to Ridges program. This educational initiative, which was awarded \$100,000, will develop a forest school to give preschoolers an opportunity to learn outside and to develop a deeper sense of empathy, awareness and community. The school will also incorporate First Nation knowledge and teachings by involving elders.

It is possible that we will see some more innovative Yukon projects win in the next year's competitions for the Arctic prize. Should that happen, we will have the privilege of congratulating them here in Whitehorse next February, when we welcome the awards ceremony to Yukon for the first time.

As part of our commitment to the younger generation, we provide funding to a number of organizations, programs and services for youth throughout the Youth Directorate. Currently the Youth Directorate is providing more than \$1.5 million in combined funding support to a variety of organizations, including BYTE — which is an empowering youth society — Boys and Girls Club of Yukon, the Youth of Today Society and the Heart of Riverdale community centre as well. With this support, these organizations are better positioned to advance their community-focused goals. For example, thanks in part to this funding, the Heart of Riverdale has been able to offer programming centres with dedicated youth worker staff.

I'm running out of time for my opening comments. I do have some more that I would like to go over as an overview, but I will reserve that for my first rebuttal, my first answer from questions from the member opposite, if that's okay.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Do you have a lot more to go? Because I'm quite willing to let you — please, be my guest.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Yes, just 80 more pages. Thank you very much to my colleague and the Yukon Party.

Just moving on, I just wanted to outline some of the dollar values here and finish up the overview. \$320,000 is earmarked to the youth leadership and activities program —

16 Yukon communities and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation benefit from programming from the funding for this program. The youth leadership and activities program is about supporting positive youth development in rural Yukon communities. One sponsoring organization from each community is supported with these funds.

Thanks to the youth leadership and activities program, the recreation board in Carcross, for example, has been able to support the highly successful Hiroshikai Judo Club. Members of this club have done extremely well in competitions here at home and recently two youth from the club, Dalton Penner and Kenai Bryden, participated in the 2017 Canada West Tournament in Burnaby, British Columbia. Both of them gained incredible experience when they were there, and Dalton brought home a bronze medal, so congratulations to these youth and thank you for representing Yukon so well.

We are very pleased to continue to support the youth investment fund, which is application-driven and focuses on funding programs dedicated to marginalized youth 18 years and younger.

Applications under \$500 can be received at any time; otherwise, applications for projects of more than \$500 but less than \$5,000 are accepted in April and also in October of every year. Investments such as these are so vital to the well-being of youth in Yukon. They offer mental, physical and emotional dividends for our youth that far outweigh this expense.

Moving on to the Office of the Commissioner — of course, independent of the Yukon government — its staff and its operational costs are funded through ECO's budget. This year's budget for the Office of the Commissioner sees only a minor adjustment from the previous year, coming in at \$281,000. These operating costs include all events hosted by the Commissioner, including the Commissioner's Awards, the amazing Commissioner's Ball and Tea in beautiful downtown Dawson City, the New Year's Levee and the youth showcase and others. The Commissioner's Office also receives a subsidy of \$5,000 from the federal government, which is included in the \$281,000 total budget.

We recently tabled legislation to create the framework for the Order of Yukon, which will allow us to recognize exceptional Yukoners with an award that is among the order of precedence, alongside the 10 provincial orders that are currently included. Once in place, the order will be administered through the Commissioner's Office and any additional expenses will be absorbed within ECO's budget.

Moving to the Cabinet Office, the budget there is also included in ECO's budget. This year's estimate for the Cabinet Office is \$3.09 million, which is a net increase of \$212,000, reflecting an annual market adjustment for salaries. This funding is primarily for staff within these offices and includes travel and communication expenses for ministers and support staff. Also under the ECO department umbrella is the Government Internal Audit Services branch, which receives \$588,000 in funding in this budget, which is a small decrease from the previous year. This branch supports our commitment to Yukoners to offer openness and transparency, as well as accountability for our actions.

In conclusion, the Executive Council Office plays a key role in fulfilling our commitments to openness and to good governance. The department gives us the tools to reflect Yukoners' values. Through the engagement efforts, we undertake to understand more about their perspectives and concerns. Through the partnerships that ECO fosters and nurtures with the First Nations and other governments, it allows us to speak with the voice of our territory to the rest of Canada and to put our best foot forward on the international stage as well. It also allows us the opportunity to best express our role in serving the public. This budget will allow the department to continue in those efforts.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Chair, I look forward to answering any questions that my colleagues have for the 2018-19 budget for the Executive Council Office.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Welcome to the official from ECO. I don't ask a lot of questions in a row. I ask a question and I sit, so we should be able to get through a few in the 10 to 15 minutes that we have. I am wondering if the minister could expand on what projects would be included under Major Projects Yukon within the O&M allocation under Corporate Programs and Intergovernmental Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Major Projects Yukon provides the corporate leadership and facilitation to Yukon government departments in administering the development assessment regime. It provides policy advice as well to Yukon government departments on how to fulfill their responsibilities under YESAA and represents Yukon government on matters relating to YESAA as well — the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*. The branch responds to assessment recommendations of the YESA board for major projects submitted to the Executive Council Office. As we said earlier, in that line item there is \$886,000 allocated this year. Out of that line item, \$796,000 is personnel costs. That would be six positions in the branch: one director, four major projects managers and one senior planner. Another \$90,000 is for operating and support costs, which include travel, contracts, supplies, program materials, communications and training expenses for the branch.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** With respect to the Yukon government website recently launched, how many pages of information still need to be uploaded to the new site? Can the minister confirm how much it will cost overall and when it is expected to be completed?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** It is always a pleasure to talk about the yukon.ca website. Our new, mobile-enabled, citizen-centred website is a major step forward in our promise to improve access to government services for all Yukoners, especially Yukoners who are living outside of Whitehorse in the communities. As I said in my introductory statements, this is about a less-government approach and more of an approach for those people who are looking for services — taking a look at what has been asked for the most over the years. That is how it has been arranged.

As we roll it out, it starts with those pages that are most accessed by the public and then, as we move forward, we are going to continue to draw down so that the complete website

is all under the new visual identity. The website — we have identified again the most popular tasks, and Yukoners are going to use that to accomplish online activities through our website statistics and citizen feedback and user experience testing. That process flows into how we are going to, over the year, get all the rest of the pages into the new visual identity.

The Executive Council Office 2017-18 contracts with our contractor — just to set up some background here, the contractor was Yellow Pencil — and that was valued at just over \$32,000 starting off. Then I know that Highways and Public Works spent about a quarter of a million dollars in the 2017-18 fiscal year for planning, design and development and assessment of the yukon.ca website.

I don't have at my fingertips right now the number of complete pages that are currently up, because it is an ongoing process. We will get back to the member opposite with an update from today. My values would be about a month old and, as we go over the year, the plan is that within a year's time we should be reaching 100 percent.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Can the minister please let the House know whether there are currently any secondments of staff in place to First Nations or municipalities whose salaries are still being paid by the Yukon government?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We would not have those numbers for the Executive Council Office, but I would ask the member opposite if she or her party could ask that question to the Public Service Commission. They would be able to draw down on more specifics than just a number. We could get that number for you, but it is probably a better idea to ask through the Public Service Commission. Just for the record, the number that I have for the pages of the new yukon.ca is currently around 10,000 pages. But again, we will see if that number has been changed recently.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I just assumed it would be under Aboriginal Relations. That is what I was thinking of with aboriginal secondments. Can the minister confirm the government's plan for holding his Yukon Forums this year? Approximately how much each forum — what was the cost last year? I know \$100,000 was committed annually last year. I am wondering if this will remain the same for the current fiscal year.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** For the public service, that would be the Public Service Commission and would be government-wide. Currently nobody in Aboriginal Relations is seconded to any First Nation government, and so the \$100,000 was from last year — the member opposite is correct — and that's to hold the Yukon Forum four times a year. We don't have the actuals yet, but we're assuming again for this year it will be still be \$100,000, and again, if you hold it four times a year, then that will be \$25,000 per forum, according to my calculations.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I was holding my breath there. Are the travel expenses for First Nations to attend such things as the Yukon Forum and trips outside the Yukon for meetings and events covered by Aboriginal Relations, perhaps under implementation and reconciliation?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** No, not for the Yukon Forum, although with the new approach of Yukon Days having the First Nation chiefs coming with us and attending meetings in Ottawa, we do provide funding there and that would be under Intergovernmental Relations.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Within the last budget, there was \$130,000 to fund a temporary, full-time position in the Office of the Science Advisor to support reconciliation. I'm wondering if this is still a temporary position and if it has been extended. Can the minister confirm whether this position is funded through the Office of the Science Advisor or through Aboriginal Relations?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Yes, it would be funded through the Office of the Science Advisor. What we have done is extend that funding for one year. Currently we have a First Nation liaison officer in that position.

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Silver that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Mr. Adel:** 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 Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

**Speaker:** I wish all members safe travels and a relaxing long Easter weekend.

This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m., Tuesday, April 3, 2018.

*The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.*