



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 240

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33rd Legislature

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## HANSARD

Monday, November 30, 2015 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre**

**DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake**

## CABINET MINISTERS

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

## GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

### Yukon Party

<b>Darius Elias</b>	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
<b>Hon. David Laxton</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Patti McLeod</b>	Watson Lake

## OPPOSITION MEMBERS

### New Democratic Party

<b>Elizabeth Hanson</b>	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
<b>Jan Stick</b>	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
<b>Kevin Barr</b>	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
<b>Lois Moorcroft</b>	Copperbelt South
<b>Jim Tredger</b>	Mayo-Tatchun
<b>Kate White</b>	Takhini-Kopper King

### Liberal Party

<b>Sandy Silver</b>	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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## LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Floyd McCormick
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Rudy Couture
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Doris McLean
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Monday, November 30, 2015 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to work with First Nation governments, NGOs, the private sector, social agencies and other stakeholders to implement the three-stage housing continuum — housing with services, rental housing and home ownership — that are identified in the housing action plan for Yukoners and to make land available for Yukoners.

**Ms. Stick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to improve palliative care in Yukon by:

(1) developing and implementing accessibility policies, practices and standards which eliminate visible and invisible barriers to access palliative care services across all settings of care;

(2) facilitating the integration of these accessibility policies, practices and standards into the operations of hospices, hospitals and home and community health care services; and

(3) ensuring that experts and marginalized communities that may be made subject to these accessibility policies, practices and standards are consulted during their development.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to inform Yukoners:

(1) what services are being provided under a \$50,000 sole-source contract to a company called Temple Scott, a company that specializes in crisis planning and lobbying, according to their website;

(2) why the project manager for the contract, according to the government's contract registry, is the Premier's chief of staff;

(3) why a contract issued by a public service is being managed by the Premier's chief of staff; and

(4) if any product has been received by the government as a result of this work.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Investment in infrastructure development

**Ms. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week, the Minister of Highways and Public Works could not point to any business case analysis prior to the decision to make the \$45-million investment for the south Campbell Highway to benefit Yukon Zinc's Wolverine mine. Typically, when a business invests money in a project, it conducts an analysis to ensure that there will be some return to the investor.

I have a simple question for the Premier: Does the Premier believe that governments should conduct business case analyses, demonstrating that investing in infrastructure will benefit Yukoners before spending millions in public money?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for her question.

This obviously gives us an opportunity to highlight the many investments that we make in infrastructure across the territory. Not only are we investing in housing projects and other building projects, but we continue to invest in highway projects throughout the Yukon. In fact, our Transportation budget is between \$60 million and \$70 million and has been consistently in that range.

We make improvements to roads throughout the territory. The Campbell Highway project that the member referenced last week, and has brought up again today, not only benefits industrial clients that are in that corridor; it also benefits Yukoners who travel and use the Campbell Highway for commuting between the communities of Watson Lake, Ross River, Faro and Carmacks, and even beyond that.

We feel that these are excellent investments. They are not only investments in our future and future opportunities, but they are investments in the present, by putting Yukoners to work when it comes to the projects that we continue to invest in, in each and every budget that we put forward.

**Ms. Hanson:** This government — and indeed the Minister of Finance — has shown time and again that they are willing to invest millions of dollars in public money without conducting a business case analysis to demonstrate that the investment will benefit Yukon. In the case of the Robert Campbell Highway, this government authorized millions of dollars in spending of public money specifically to support a project that they assumed would be successful. They had no evidence that the money, which their own feasibility study said was — and I quote: "... made necessary by the

development of a single mining project” would ever benefit Yukon as a whole.

This kind of blind support with no guarantees would have no place in the business world, and it certainly should not when public money is on the line.

Why were tens of millions of dollars invested to support a project without any demonstration of how and when it would benefit Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** As I mentioned last week, there are two extremely important corridors for the Yukon when it comes to moving our resources to market. One of the primary ones — and the longer existing one — is the Klondike Highway — so the south and north Klondike Highway — and the port of Skagway.

Becoming equally as important is the Robert Campbell Highway and the Stewart-Cassiar Highway into the port of Stewart. Again, we’ve seen significant investments on the British Columbia side in that infrastructure corridor — not only improvements to the road, but also the extension of the power grid to the Red Chris mine in northern British Columbia as well.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to investing in infrastructure, I know that the members opposite — the New Democratic Party — are certainly against infrastructure investments. We feel that these are necessary to improve our economic opportunities right now and also future economic opportunities. Contrary to what the member opposite is asserting, this is not a driveway to a particular mining project. It is infrastructure upgrades that are taking place in an extremely important area of the Yukon.

It is something that has come up in discussions with the Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce and we certainly support investing in infrastructure throughout the Yukon, whether it’s our highways or airports or buildings or other opportunities. So Mr. Speaker, the members opposite will continue to vote against those improvements, but we’ll continue to make them.

**Ms. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, the State of Alaska follows a process to ensure that investment of public money for infrastructure development benefits the state and its citizens. Successful projects must demonstrate a return on investment and the financial viability of the proponent. A key principle is that the process is free from political interference. To date, this government has refused to disclose what evidence Yukon Zinc provided to show their economic viability or the benefits to Yukon before the government committed to millions in public spending. Without this information, the fact that the Yukon Party received \$2,500 from Yukon Zinc the year work began on the south Campbell raises questions about how this government prioritizes project funding.

When will the Premier follow established processes so that public money invested in infrastructure provides maximum return to Yukon, free from political interference?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Mr. Speaker, certainly I am disappointed in the approach that the NDP leader continues to take in the creation or the insinuation of actions that are less than honourable.

There’s a big difference between this government and the two parties on the opposite side and that is vision, Mr. Speaker. As we continue to put forward a vision — a long-term vision for this territory, with a goal of becoming a net contributor to this country; with a goal and a vision for new hydro — we are an envy in this country and indeed, the world, with 95 percent of our energy consumed — electricity consumed — from renewable energy in the name of hydro, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to focus on a vision for education. The difference between this party and the parties opposite is that we have a path forward. We’re doing it responsibly. Sadly, the other two parties have no vision and no plan.

#### **Question re: Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport maintenance**

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works a question about recent upgrades on the apron panels at the Whitehorse airport. The minister acknowledged the upgrades had not gone according to plan and that the contractor was responsible for the deficiencies. The minister then went on to state that the government and contractor were working together to — quote: “...find a solution that is mutually acceptable to address this problem”.

For most Yukoners, a mutually acceptable solution would be that the contractor fixes the deficiencies at no cost to Yukon government.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister assure Yukoners that Yukon government will not be on the hook for the cost to fix the deficiencies in the airport apron panel upgrades?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned last week, the Government of Yukon is in discussions with the contractor as well as the bonding company. Of course we believe that there are a number of deficiencies with respect to the apron panels that are in front of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport and we’ll continue to work with them and come up with a mutually acceptable solution. Members will be aware of some of the challenges that we faced with chipseal on the Alaska Highway near the Whitehorse airport last summer. We worked with the contractor and those are now corrected. I’m anticipating an outcome — I don’t want to prejudge the outcome, but I’ll anticipate an outcome where we have these deficiencies corrected and we can move forward.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Yukoners expect that this government will ensure the public is not on the hook for a contractor error. The minister has said that the government is negotiating, but he has not said how much correcting the deficiencies in the original upgrades might cost. When the minister says the government is negotiating with the contractor, it implies that the government is considering bearing some of the needed repair costs.

Could the minister answer this: Will he inform the House whether the government has paid out the contractor in full and released the security bond on the airport apron panel’s project?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The first part of the member's question is purely hypothetical. It's not something that I would be in a position to answer until we have further discussions and negotiations with the bonding company and the contractor in question. The bonding company is assessing its position. Transportation Engineering will continue a review of critical project issues that may strengthen our position in any negotiation, so we'll continue to work — this is another example of the opposition members being ahead of themselves when it comes to making insinuations as to what's happening. As I've mentioned, we're working with the bonding company and the contractor, so that this can get corrected.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Mr. Speaker, it's important that this government is up-front and transparent with the Yukon public when it comes to matters of public safety. This is not simply a question of another mismanaged infrastructure project; it's also a question of transport safety. Transport Canada funded a large portion of the apron panel project through its airports capital assistance program and has reported on that project and its deficiencies.

Will the minister commit to tabling the Transport Canada report on the apron panels so that Yukoners know the extent of the deficiencies and who is financially responsible for the repairs?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, we are working with the bonding company and the proponent to find a mutually acceptable solution to the deficiencies with the panels that were installed in front of the terminal building at the Whitehorse International Airport. Again, when it comes to the report that is referenced by the member opposite, I have not had an opportunity to review the report and, until I do, would not be in a position to commit to tabling it in the House. I would also need to follow up with officials to talk about any proprietary or other information that may jeopardize our situation in negotiating with the bonding company and the contractor.

We feel that these deficiencies are the responsibility of the contractor and will continue to work to ensure that they are corrected at no cost to the taxpayers.

#### **Question re: Yukon First Nation reconciliation agreements**

**Mr. Silver:** When the Premier set out new mandate letters this summer, he gave himself a to-do list. On that list: negotiate reconciliation agreements with non-settled Yukon First Nations and the Kaska Dena Council. This is a welcome change for the Yukon Party, who spent years ignoring unsettled First Nations, as opposed to finding partnerships outside of the UFA framework.

In the spring, the Premier said — and I quote: “Yukon government has recently begun preliminary negotiations for a reconciliation agreement with the Kaska ...” — “The goal of these early discussions is to move into detailed negotiations in the coming months.”

What is the current status of negotiations with the Kaska Dena Council? Is the government now in detailed negotiations and when does the Premier see an agreement being reached?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course we're not going to talk about negotiations on the floor of this House. What I can report to the House is that we continue to speak with and negotiate with the Kaska Dena Council. It is still in the preliminary stages, but there are conversations that occur between the negotiators and there are conversations that occur at the leadership level as well.

We will continue to work together to address all of those needs that exist for the Kaska Dena Council and Yukon government and chart a path forward to the benefit of the Kaska and all Yukoners. As more information is ready to be announced, we'll make sure that the House and all Yukoners hear it.

**Mr. Silver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move from the southeast to the northwest and ask about negotiations with the White River First Nation.

This summer, an official from the Premier's office said that reconciliation talks with the White River First Nation are more advanced and could be concluded in a matter of months. It has been a matter of months, and then some, since those comments were made. When does the Premier anticipate these negotiations wrapping up?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are in fact into detailed negotiations with White River First Nation on a reconciliation agreement. That work is ongoing and continuing. We will continue to work with their negotiators, and we will continue to have conversations at a political level when necessary. I would also like to reiterate that I in fact met with Yukon First Nation leadership just last Thursday as we got together to discuss important issues. I look forward to meeting with the leadership again in the very near future as we continue to work together, much to the disappointment of the members opposite.

**Mr. Silver:** Since the first announcement on these reconciliation talks, the government has been very reluctant to inform the public of what's on the table in these negotiations. It has left the public completely in the dark regarding what is being discussed.

These are clearly more than just reconciliation discussions as the Premier has said that a priority is to ensure the people of these First Nations share in the economic benefits of economic development that occurs within their traditional territories. All of this doesn't have to be done behind closed doors. Yukoners deserve to know what's on the table.

For example, is access to the Kotaneelee fund being discussed? Is more category A land or an asset construction agreement on the table? Are separate resource royalty agreements being discussed?

The Premier has still not given sufficient reason as to why Yukoners are being kept in the dark about what is being negotiated.

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** I find it rather humorous that the Leader of the Third Party continues to criticize for not

meeting with First Nations and then criticizes for meeting with First Nations, but again, what is consistent is his inconsistency on practically every issue.

We'll continue to work with the Kaska Dena Council and with the White River First Nation on reconciliation agreements. We'll continue to honour that relationship. We won't negotiate on the floor of this Assembly, and it is certainly out of respect that we continue to have these conversations, and we don't prejudge and we don't publicly talk about all of those items that we are working on.

What we are working on — and is clear — is a path forward to ensure that those First Nations without a final self-government agreement are able to benefit from economic opportunities that exist within their traditional territory and that they have a say as well in all of those aspects that occur within their traditional territory. This government is committed to continuing to work with them. We aren't going to set an artificial timeline for those negotiations. We will be respectful of those negotiations, and we will be very excited to report progress, when the time comes, to this Assembly and to Yukoners.

#### **Question re: Greenhouse gas emissions**

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, Yukoners came together on the bank of the Yukon River to send a message to the world leaders who are gathering in Paris for the COP21 climate conference. They want the world to know that we, along with the rest of the planet, are watching. Meanwhile, Yukon is preparing to travel to Paris to participate in the talks, except that we won't be armed with the facts. Last week we asked about Yukon's outdated emissions data. The Climate Change Secretariat and government reports show that Yukon's emissions have been consistently under-reported.

What is the government doing to ensure that Yukon's COP21 delegation is going to this important international climate conference with accurate data on Yukon's own emissions?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do thank the member opposite for the question. The progress report on our action plan will be ready for distribution in time for the trip to COP21 for all the delegates to have available as they take part in this important discussion in Paris.

I do want to say that the importance of climate change is something that is important to this government. We've had the Climate Change Secretariat since 2009. We've done so much work collecting data and all the other stuff we see that affects us. We have a history of looking at climate change. Our *Climate Change Action Plan* is a made-in-Yukon document, and our progress report will be released this week — the most recent one. We have worked with a lot of different stakeholders when it comes to that — over 40 participants. We worked with Yukon College, Yukon Energy Corporation, the Yukon Conservation Society, the City of Whitehorse and the Council of Yukon First Nations. We look forward to all three political leaders and the Grand Chief going to tell Yukon's story.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to hear that the delegates for Yukon will have accurate information. Yukon's emissions may seem small, given our population, but even when the government recognizes that our emissions reporting might be 70 percent too low, we know there is a lot of work to be done. Yukon cannot claim to have a realistic climate change action plan or an energy strategy if we don't even know how to measure our progress. If this government is serious about climate change action and a greener future for Yukon, it would be making the collection of accurate emissions data a priority.

What is the government's plan to collect reliable, up-to-date information on Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since developing the *Climate Change Action Plan*, our Yukon government has demonstrated leadership and commitment to the issue of climate change. I spoke about the progress report, and our focus still remains on greenhouse gas emissions and on increasing adaptation efforts in response to the impacts of our changing climate. That's why we have a progress report. That's why we have an action plan with 33 priority actions to support our four goals: enhance our knowledge and understanding of climate change; improve our ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change; reduce our greenhouse gas emissions; and to lead the Yukon action in response to climate change. I look forward to working on climate change for years and years to come, and look forward to hearing what the world has to say and what comes out of COP21, and I am looking forward to our delegation moving forward to tell Yukon's story.

#### **Question re: Community dietician**

**Ms. Stick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nutrition is a fundamental component of overall health and wellness. It has an important role in disease prevention and management.

Since 2007, Yukon had a community dietician who provided valuable services to Yukon's communities. This position was funded through the federal-territorial health access fund — transfer dollars that were supposed to be spent developing sustainable health programming for Yukon's future. Now that funding has dried up and this government has no known plans to continue the good work set up over the last eight years. As of 2015, Yukon has no dedicated community dietician.

Mr. Speaker, why did this government not plan for a fully funded, permanent community dietician position when the Yukon is the only jurisdiction in Canada without one?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member opposite for her question. Certainly the dieticians we've had in the territory have been valuable with the department. We will certainly continue to work with the dieticians on a contractual basis, as I understand it, but as far as future recommendations and how we move forward, we are still working with the department and with the dieticians on that. I can commit to the member opposite that I will certainly look into this matter and report back.

**Ms. Stick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dieticians working through the hospital and continuing care do not fill the same role as a community dietician. This government was presented with an opportunity to keep the funding for the community dietician position through the public health alliance of Canada. The department declined and the funding went instead toward the active living strategy through Community Services. Now active living is important, Mr. Speaker, but it has to be combined with healthy eating habits and access to healthy food in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, why did this government choose not to make nutrition a priority when the Yukon healthy living strategy shows that Yukoners, especially those in the communities, want increased access to nutritious foods?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addressing the member opposite, this government continues to work on campaigns, just as the member opposite had indicated, on the active living strategy. Those campaigns, along with bringing to light for Yukoners the importance of eating healthy and being active and how those activities at this point in time in their life, will be of great benefit to them in the future. But we'll continue to work with the department, we'll continue to have dialogue with the dieticians, and I'll continue to discuss with the department what the plan is moving forward.

I indicated to the member in my first response that I will look into it and will get back to her.

**Ms. Stick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, community dieticians are health experts with the resources and know-how to help people make healthier choices, where they live and where they work. The Dieticians of Canada says the Yukon needs a regional community dietician working at the local level. The need to focus on the determinants of health through healthy eating was also reflected in the Yukon Nutrition Framework in 2010. We have a Yukon wellness plan that would support a community dietician position, but it's a plan on paper only.

Mr. Speaker, will this government follow the example set by every jurisdiction across this country and support a community dietician position?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in her first question, the member opposite noted some of the great work that we're doing with the Public Health Agency of Canada through the northern wellness project to provide funding to rural communities for training community leaders for programs to encourage physical activity and active and healthy lifestyles throughout the territory.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, this does include providing information about nutrition to Yukon students, to Yukon community members and to our recreation leaders throughout the territory. Through a number of the funding opportunities that we have in the department, we have focused on a particular area with regard to nutrition and recreation and activity funding, and that is the after-school period. Our focus, Mr. Speaker, needs to be on children, and it needs to be on that critical area of the after-school time period.

We have after-school action grants — which include nutrition as well as games and sports — to provide opportunities for young people throughout the territory, especially in the rural communities, with information about recreation, information about being active and information about nutrition and leading a healthy lifestyle in that critical after-school period.

We also provide classroom action grants to teachers throughout the territory to help encourage students to be healthy, to eat healthy and to live healthy, and to participate in recreation activity throughout their lives.

Of course, we have a number of other grants, Mr. Speaker, too many to name today, more focused on the health and well-being —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

### **Question re: Robert Campbell Highway improvements**

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Mr. Speaker, while the Yukon Party government defends its politically motivated road upgrades to support a now-closed mine on the Robert Campbell Highway, Faro and Ross River residents are left in the dust. For Ross River residents, the road to Faro is the most travelled part of the highway. It's a vital link to the community's neighbours. For Faro and Ross River, this highway is a lifeline and, for years now, the Yukon Party government has failed to do what it takes to support them with adequate road access.

Mr. Speaker, this government has spent over \$40 million on the Robert Campbell Highway between Watson Lake and the now-closed Wolverine mine. How much has it spent to improve the highway between Faro and Ross River during the same time period?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As all members in this House know, it's important to do planning when you're talking about infrastructure upgrades. When it comes to that stretch of the highway that is between Faro and Ross River, it was part of a broader functional planning exercise that we spoke about in the spring with the current budget for Highways and Public Works.

I believe that functional plan is nearing completion, so we'll have a chance to review it and then, from there, we'll be able to make the necessary plans to improve that section of the road. Of course, I hear on a regular basis from the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin about the importance of that stretch of highway to his constituents, and I can assure them that he is very active on their behalf in ensuring that not only those roads, but all the roads within his riding, are addressed.

Again, we'll continue to make strategic investments in our transportation network throughout the Yukon and spend Yukon taxpayers' dollars not only for the opportunities that exist today with construction jobs, GDP increases and those types of activities, but we will make investments for the future as well so that future industrial projects and the safety of the travelling public can be respected.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition has been asking for a plan and, more to the point, for upgrades to the road between Faro and Ross River for the last four

years. If the minister was truly concerned about Yukon's communities and visitors to the territory, the road between Faro and Ross River would be wider and in better shape and we wouldn't be having this debate.

We have seen the state of infrastructure in these villages. The long saga of Ross River bridge repairs remains a thorn in this government's side and the cracks in the crawl space of the Ross River School forced the closure of a major community space for months. When will the government finally act and make the necessary road improvements between Faro and Ross River to bring it to the same standard as the Faro to Carmacks portion of the highway?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** I am glad the member opposite has mentioned the Ross River bridge, because of course we have continued to work on that project over the last few months and years. As I have noted previously, we have spent almost \$1.5 million on that project to date to stabilize the bridge to meet the needs of the community with regard to preserving that historic bridge. As I have noted previously, we are considering moving forward with an application for whatever comes out of the discussion with regard to federal infrastructure funding. I'm optimistic that we will be able to find a path forward that will see that bridge repaired in its second phase, which will include replacing the deck and improving the safety of the bridge by replacing the necessary cabling on that bridge. I look forward to moving forward with that project and I know that there are a number of other infrastructure-related projects that are going on in that area as well, so think it's good to see that investment going into our Yukon communities.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** The Ross River bridge is yet another example of this government's failure to take action when it's needed. The facts on the ground speak for themselves.

A Ross River elder recently went public saying — I quote: "I wrote letters to Highways and Public Works [and Public Works], telling them that it's very dangerous — the most awful gravel road — and sometimes tourists get stranded on there because they get flats. And no one will fix that road. They do brushing from Frances Lake down but they haven't done nothing on our part of the road."

Mr. Speaker, Ross River, Faro and Watson Lake residents have been waiting for the government to listen to them and make these necessary road upgrades beyond the point of access to the now closed Wolverine mine.

When will this government listen to Yukoners who drive the Campbell Highway, do the right thing and invest in these badly needed road upgrades between Ross River and Faro?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** I would just rise as I quickly note some of the recent investments by this government in the community of Ross River, such as investments in solid waste, building of the arena — replacing the arena — and the investments in ensuring the stability of the school from the unstable permafrost, which I spoke about to my colleagues in Ottawa; also the bridge stabilization, the new fire hall, water treatment and huge investments in terms of the roads within the community of Ross River. Of course we are working on

functional plans before we do the improvements, because that's how we do it efficiently.

What is also very worthy to note is that all of these investments that we've made in the community of Ross River, the people opposite — both parties — voted against all of those investments in those communities — in that community. We continue to invest in Ross River. We continue to invest in all of our communities because certainly the communities are key to the success of this territory. We will continue to work together with the Minister of Community Services and indeed all the ministers to work to ensure that all of our communities are very healthy and happy places to live. We will continue to focus on economic development to create prosperity and to build the populations in those communities.

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

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** 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 Deputy Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair (Ms. McLeod):** Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 91, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### **Bill No. 91: Act to Amend the Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 91, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act*.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I won't be very long in my introductory remarks here in Committee of the Whole, as I have already spoken to this at second reading. I believe members are quite familiar with the content of the *Elections Act*. I'll just briefly summarize the content for Yukoners who may not have been aware of this and may be either reading or



tuning in to discussion of the *Elections Act* changes for the first time.

Late last year, in December 2014, Elections Yukon shared a report, entitled *Recommendations for Amendments to the Elections Act*, with Legislative Assembly members and the Yukon public. I would like to thank Chief Electoral Officer Lori McKee for her work on that, and to also welcome her — joining me today in the Assembly — as well as Lawrence Purdy, the legislative drafter of the bill. I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming them here today, as well as thank them both for their many hours of work on this.

This legislation has also had discussion on several occasions at the all-party Members' Services Board and was unanimously recommended for tabling by Members' Services Board. I would like to thank all of the members of MSB for their work and discussion on this legislation.

With that, I will simply summarize a few of the high-level changes that are made through this, which include modernizing the Yukon's legislation to move into the more modern world by allowing electronic lists. Some of the provisions that were in the previous act — or, I should say, the current act — were very specific, referring to the paper-based system. This legislation changes that. It also enables the move to the permanent registry of electors, or permanent voters list.

The principles in this include consolidating and expanding the opportunities to vote with a simplified special ballot process and modern methods. It modernizes election administration and makes the roles for elections officers more consistent and establishes the independent office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Within this legislation, it has also expanded the opportunities for Yukoners to vote and allows for the provision of requiring identification during elections, but also providing flexibility in that and ensuring new identification rules have to be approved by the all-party Members' Services Board and that, in the interim, there will be the ability for someone who has no identification to swear in at the polls. I think it's fair to say that all parties in this Legislative Assembly and all members are very interested in ensuring that any changes that are made to identification requirements do not disenfranchise anyone at the polls.

Additionally, there are provisions for 16- and 17-year-olds who meet the criteria to participate at polling places for educational purposes and as poll attendants. There are provisions for remote electors who are simply unable to vote by special ballot at all to contact the Chief Electoral Officer and, subject to the Chief Electoral Officer's approval, potentially be able to vote through means including Skype and satellite phone.

I believe that has addressed the high-level issues contained in this that I did not previously address at second reading. With that, I will cede the floor to members opposite for any comments or questions that they may have or that we have not dealt with previously at Members' Services Board.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I too would like to welcome the Chief Electoral Officer, Lori McKee, and thank her for her time, both in preparing a very thorough report with

recommendations for amendments to the *Elections Act* and for having conversations with me, as I tried to understand all of the provisions in these amendments. I would also like to welcome legislative drafter Lawrence Purdy, who has been here in the House a number of times over this Sitting with different bills that he has worked on.

I want to correct the record on a couple of matters that I spoke about on Thursday at second reading. When I was speaking about the provisions regarding voters presenting identification, I indicated that identification was needed, and I want to thank the Chief Electoral Officer for clarifying that for me. If a voter is already on the new permanent voters list, they do not need to present identification. They only need to present identification if they are not on the voters list, and that list of the identification required will be flexible and will hope to ensure that people can register.

In addition, an elections officer, a deputy returning officer or a poll clerk will no longer be able to vouch for any elector in order for them to be put on the voters list to vote. However, there has been a change made so that any elector who lives in the same electoral district as the person who is trying to get on the voters list can vouch for the person who is being added to the voters list. In the current act, an elector could only vote for someone who lived in the same poll. Even with our small ridings, the way they're divided up into polls — I may live in poll 2 and someone across the street lives in poll 3, and I wouldn't have been able to vote for them because they were in a different poll. That has been changed so that, as long as the elector is in the same riding, they don't have to be in the same poll.

The second item I wanted to refer to was that I had spoken about the amendments and about the fact that now candidates can have their \$200-nomination deposit refunded after the election, even if they do not receive at least 25 percent of the number of votes required by the candidate who wins the election. There is an addition to that. A candidate can receive their deposit back; however, the candidate is required to file an election financing return by the deadline of 90 days after the return of the writ in order to receive their deposit refunded to them.

I think that all candidates, parties and MLAs in this Legislature are glad to see that the voters list will now be available electronically, and that there will be a permanent registry of voters. As I said at second reading, we're also glad to see that the special ballot provision has been simplified, and I'm looking forward to the time when the proxy votes have been phased out as well.

The office of the Chief Electoral Officer has been considered as an independent office, but I'm glad that is now in the act. The question I would like to start out with for the minister is to explain how the permanent registry will be collected, what participation other governments may have in providing information, where the information will come from for the permanent registry, and how that is different from the electors list. The voters list is different from the registry.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I thank the member for the question and the opportunity to explain this section to Yukoners who

may be interested. I would also like to note that I know it was simply a slip of the tongue by the member in her remarks referring to the ability for someone to allow someone else to vote. She mentioned that someone living at a different poll within the same district would not be able to vote for someone. I know she meant “vouch” for someone, and I know that was merely a slip of the tongue.

The section relating to the revision of the register — the permanent voters registry does allow for some additions to be made to it during an election period. The permanent registry section, for Yukoners who are interest, will be in the new section of the act that is part 1.01, entitled “Register and Lists of Electors”.

It begins with explaining what an electoral authority is in providing provisions for the maintenance of the permanent voters list, allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to take reasonable measures to ensure that a register only includes information in respect of people — beginning at the age of 16, if they are expected to be at the age of majority during the next election, any information stored in the registry does include date of birth to prevent someone from voting before they are eligible to. It provides that the register contains limited information, including the person’s surname and given names, their date of birth, their gender, their residential address and, if different, their mailing address and any unique identifiers assigned to them by the Chief Electoral Officer or by another person who provides information under sections 49.06 or 49.07, and that’s the only information that can be stored in the register in the interest of protecting information.

There are also provisions for someone to request that their name be stricken from that permanent register and, under the revision of the register section, the registry can be revised by a number of means including using information provided by a public body listed under section 49.06 of the act, provided by another electoral authority in accordance with an agreement under section 49.07, or otherwise obtained by the Chief Electoral Officer.

There is also a requirement that states that it is intended to protect personal privacy and provide someone the ability to have to consent to information sharing and — while from a purely registered maintenance perspective — that does pose some challenges. That is in keeping with the same principle as included in the federal *Income Tax Act* forms where someone is provided the opportunity to opt in or opt out of the opportunity to have their name included in the permanent voters list. The advantages to opting in include ease of voting — but recognizing that there are some Canadians, including Yukoners, who may be concerned about that. It does provide them the ability to choose to have personal information not included there.

When a person consents to information sharing in accordance with section 49.08, the Chief Electoral Officer may, for the purpose of revising the register of electors, require each public body that the person identifies in the consent to provide any information described in section 49.02(4) in respect to that person in the public body’s custody and control, and that, of course, includes a government public

body. For those who are not clear on it, it does include departments such as Health and Social Services and Motor Vehicles — including, but not limited to, those departments.

It provides for — once that consent of the individual has been given, the public body must provide that information. It allows as well for the Chief Electoral Officer to enter into an agreement with an electoral authority to allow the Chief Electoral Officer to receive information to assist in revision of the list of electors that would primarily and notably allow us to continue to receive information from the federal government accessing the federal permanent voters list.

The Chief Electoral Officer may enter into an agreement under this section only if the Chief Electoral Officer considers that the agreement reasonably ensures the personal information that the Chief Electoral Officer provides to another electoral authority is only used for the purposes described in paragraph 1(b). That is specifically information that assists that electoral authority in compiling or updating a register or list of electors in their jurisdiction.

An agreement under this section with a municipal election authority must not require the provision to or by the Chief Electoral Officer of the personal information of any person who has not consented to the provision of their information in accordance with section 49.08.

I think that has addressed part of the member’s question — the part about the list of electors and that someone can have their name added to it after the finalization of the permanent voters list, including the ability to swear in at the polls if their name has been missed. As the Member for Copperbelt South is well aware, the ability to swear in at the polls was actually not allowed for many years in the Yukon. It had been allowed at one point and then eliminated. The last territorial election was the first one where Yukoners were able to do that since, I believe, the 1980s, which was the last time that had been permitted.

There were a few issues with that, including, as the member noted, the specific restriction to requiring someone from the same polling division to vouch for someone being added to the list. In some cases, that literally might mean that a neighbour across the street who knew the voter quite well would be unable to vouch for them, and the voter would have to find someone else who didn’t know them as well. It slowed up the swearing-in process and caused unnecessary delays.

Another thing that had been missed during the last amendments to the *Elections Act* and did not become noticed until around election day during the last territorial election, was that in the current act, there had not been the provision for scrutineers to be present when someone was added to the list. This new legislation does provide for that ability for the same reason that scrutineers are allowed at polling divisions, which is about transparency and oversight. In my personal opinion, I think that oversight by individual parties in campaigns improves the confidence not only of candidates and political parties, but of the public, that the process — I believe it improves public confidence in the election processes, knowing that there is oversight of the elections process to ensure that it is not subject to either fraud or error.

With that, Madam Chair, as you've probably noticed I have a frog in my throat and I'm going to sit down and turn it back over to the Member for Copperbelt South.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Yes, an elector can vouch for another elector who lives in any poll in their riding. I certainly did not intend to say "vote" when I meant "vouch."

I thank the minister for his response. He indicated that federal governments maintain voters lists and that public bodies can share the information from their voters lists with the Yukon's Chief Electoral Officer, with the permission of the electors. Perhaps the minister spoke to this and I missed it, but I also wanted him to indicate whether a municipal voters list or a First Nation government's voters list is contemplated as being information that the Chief Electoral Officer could ask those governments to share, in order to maintain an accurate and up-to-date permanent voters list.

I also wanted to follow up on the remarks about protecting personal information. I would like to know what the recommendations were of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the use of information that is kept, such as personal records maintained by other departments of the Yukon government, such as Motor Vehicles or Health Services branch.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I don't actually have a copy with me of any comments that the Information and Privacy Commissioner had submitted, and I'm not actually 100-percent clear on which parts of her comments were put in writing and which were expressed verbally.

As has been the case across the country, it's common that, in the preparation of voters lists and the creation of a permanent voters registry and the compulsion of personal information being provided without someone's consent, there ends up being a debate and a difference of opinion between the chief electoral officers' offices wanting to have access to the most reliable and current information to improve the voters list and between the information and privacy commissioners, who have often expressed concerns with compelling the release of personal data. That was why the choice was made to attempt to strike a balance.

Since we are just moving toward creating a permanent voters list — recognizing that, first of all, we will have access to the federal data from Elections Canada and, in adding Yukon public bodies to the list of sources for information — at least for implementing this legislation — a consent-based model similar to federal income tax forms would be used to avoid creating a situation where someone's personal data might be released by a public body without their permission and, perhaps, subsequently shared with another electoral authority.

In this section of the act — in answer to the member's question, certainly this does provide the ability for sharing with a municipal electoral authority. It does not, at this point, provide information for sharing with a First Nation electoral authority because at this point there are a few complications, including that First Nations have in the past been very reluctant to release that information about who their citizens are to government. Because they are not geographically based

in the same way as another, maybe they were thought not to have the same information that would be as useful in this, but I would think it fair to say — although I won't put words in the Chief Electoral Officer's mouth — that this type of thing is not out of the question in future should a First Nation raise that issue — that it could perhaps be considered by Elections Yukon and, ultimately, by Members' Services Board and the Legislative Assembly. It was not provided for because it was not seen as something that, to the best of anyone's knowledge, First Nations were interested in at this point in time.

I hope that has answered the member's question with regard to that; however, yes, in summary, this does allow for sharing information with a municipal electoral authority and vice versa, though at this point in time, as the member is probably aware, a number of Yukon municipalities don't use a permanent voters list system or a voters list system, so that is not something that would occur in all cases. Should other municipalities move to models similar to what Whitehorse uses, that would allow for them — and the specific relevance at this point in time would most likely be to the City of Whitehorse, although — to my understanding, I don't believe that this agreement has actually been entered into yet, so that is not a certainty at this point in time, but it is certainly contemplated.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I thank the minister for those responses.

On special ballots, I made mention in second reading of the fact that special ballots will all be reported together, so that there won't be very small polling stations for one or two people in a hospital or one or two people in a correctional centre or, for that matter, a poll with only four or five voters living in a small community, such as a highway camp, which would make it easier to identify how an elector had voted, so that is a good change.

I wanted to make mention of section 100, which is the section about electors requiring confidentiality. The change that is made in these amendments is simply about the schedule of distribution of the special ballots, but I wanted the minister to just confirm that the provisions remain that any elector who believes that disclosure of their name or address would expose them to personal risk may apply at any time to vote by special ballot, even though their name does not appear on the list of electors. There are people who may be in transition homes or people who may for other reasons need protection because of personal risk, and so their name would not appear on the voters list, but they would still be eligible to vote.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The answer to the member's question is "yes", and I believe the wording of that with the amendment would have the act reading, as revised, in section 100(1): "An elector who believes that disclosure of the elector's name or address would expose the elector to personal risk may apply at any time after the issue of the writ to the returning officer to vote by special ballot even though the elector's name does not appear on the list of electors in the electoral district in which the elector is qualified to vote."

Section 100(2) says: “An application under subsection (1) shall state the elector’s reason for applying to vote by special ballot under this section.”

Section 100(3) says: “Special ballots shall not be issued under this section ... after nine o’clock in the afternoon of the twenty-eighth day after the issue of the writ.”

Subsection 4 then reads, “If a special ballot is issued under this section, particulars of the elector shall be omitted from (a) the list of electors; and (b) lists and documents delivered to any candidate or registered political party.”

Just for the convenience of Hansard, that is largely the same as the current section 100 of the act.

It simply has the deletion through this bill before the House of the expression that is currently in subsection 100(3): “... before the fourteenth day after the issue of the writ or...” — which is being repealed by this legislation.

There are also provisions that, in the information that is provided to candidates, the name and address of an elector to whom section 100 applies, or to someone who is held in the young offenders’ facility, must not be provided under that section. That would apply to someone in the young offenders’ facility who was under the age of majority at the time when they had committed their offence, were old enough to vote but, since they were in a young offenders’ facility, listing where they were would breach their identity and would also, as a side note, be in contravention of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

I hope that has answered the member’s question.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I would like to turn to enumeration. With the creation of a permanent voters list, it’s a very significant change and so there are a lot of new provisions dealing with enumeration. In the new section 84.01(1) of the Elections Act, as revised, it states: “The chief electoral officer may at any time order the enumeration of all or part of one or more electoral districts.” Then when I turn to part 4 of the act, which is about application and transitional, there is section 159 of Bill No. 91, which speaks to transitional enumeration that begins in the electoral district before the earlier of two different dates.

I would just like the minister to indicate what plan the Chief Electoral Officer has said she will pursue in beginning to create the new electronic registry and, from that, a permanent voters list, to be available at or before the next election.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The Chief Electoral Officer has advised me that she is planning to have Elections Yukon do a comprehensive enumeration, beginning April 15 and ending May 2 of 2016, and that is in preparation for the anticipated fall 2016 territorial election. As a side note to Yukoners who are listening to this or reading this, if you start to see enumerators coming around in the spring, that is a preparatory enumeration — the last full comprehensive enumeration — to aid with the preparation of the permanent voters list and to prepare for the anticipated fall 2016 general territorial election.

It’s also important, at that stage, that Yukoners who miss the enumerators don’t ignore the tags left on their door, as I

know has been the case in some situations, and that if they are missed during that enumeration period between April 15 and May 2, or are not sure if their name or those in their household have been captured, that the people who are eligible to vote take the time to contact Elections Yukon and ask what they need to do to find out whether they’re on the voters list, rather than reaching the point where, although they can swear in at the polls, it does complicate things and potentially delay the process. I would certainly encourage people to be aware of that planned enumeration from April 15 to May 2, 2016 and to take part in that process and ensure that their name is on the list.

The transitional provisions that the Member for Copperbelt South was referring to at the end of the bill in part 4 are based on clarifying the intent that there is one large enumeration intended prior to the first permanent voters list being in place before the 2016 general election.

The sections earlier in the bill, in section 84, will continue to be in the legislation. They’re not just transitional and, for that reason, they don’t speak to and require a territory-wide enumeration. They simply are enabling and allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to, at any time, order the enumeration of all or part of one or more electoral districts. That is to allow flexibility for her office to choose to identify if there may be issues — if the Chief Electoral Officer believes there are issues in a Yukon community or a new area of growth — for example, a new subdivision — not to make commitments on behalf of the Chief Electoral Officer, but hypothetically this could include something like the Whistle Bend development. As future phases come into development and a new neighbourhood springs into existence, if the Chief Electoral Officer believed there had been significant growth in an area and people who might not be captured by the voters list, that would allow her the ability to choose to conduct an enumeration solely in that part of that electoral district if she did not believe that a general enumeration in that district or territory-wide was necessary at that point — but to enable either updating or clarification of the list.

Other examples could include if there was significant growth in any other neighbourhood or significant population increase, that is the type of thing — again speaking hypothetically — that would allow the Chief Electoral Officer to respond to that. If a population of a community had been seen as growing significantly or changing significantly, it would allow her office to choose to do an enumeration to update the permanent voters registry.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I would like to thank the minister for his responses. I think it is important that the public knows in advance that the Chief Electoral Officer is intending to conduct a full enumeration across Yukon with the target dates of April 15 to May 2. I have no further questions in general debate.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I would just like to thank the Member for Copperbelt South for her questions and comments on this and her work both in the Legislative Assembly and in discussions at Members’ Services Board. Although the

member is not a part of the MSB, she did play a role in those discussions.

I would like to thank her for her attention to this important piece of legislation and for her comments and contributions to ensuring that the end product is one that is a solid improvement to the Yukon's *Elections Act*, but also one that is done in a way that — beginning with the work of the Chief Electoral Officer and including input from political parties and candidates — together we've done our level best to ensure that we have a good piece of legislation and an excellent system for Yukon citizens and Yukon voters. I would be remiss on that list if I did not also acknowledge Lawrence Purdy, as the legislative drafter of this, for his work on this legislation.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 91, entitled —

**Chair:** We have a couple of matters before we can entertain clause-by-clause debate. We need to ensure that we are finished with general debate.

Does any other member wish to speak in general debate?

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I must not get ahead of myself here.

Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 91, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act*, read and agreed to.

#### **Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses of Bill No. 91 read and agreed to**

**Chair:** Ms. Moorcroft, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, has requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 91, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Clauses 1 to 160 deemed read and agreed to*

*On Title*

*Title agreed to*

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I move that Bill No. 91, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act*, be reported without amendment.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that Bill No. 91, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act*, be reported without amendment.

*Motion agreed to*

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 20, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2015-16*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

#### **Bill No. 20: Second Appropriation Act, 2015-16 — continued**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 20, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2015-16*.

#### **Department of Health and Social Services — continued**

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I would like to take this opportunity, once again, to welcome the officials from the Department of Health and Social Services to the Legislature today.

During our last budget debate on the Department of Health and Social Services, there were a number of questions that were asked that I committed to getting the details on for the Member for Riverdale South. I'm pleased to provide that information now.

With respect to the newly formed adult FASD clinical assessment team, the question was asked about how many team members were on this new project. There are six individuals working together on the FASD project. One is an FTE with Yukon government, the adult assessment coordinator, and the other five members are under contract — three psychologists from two local organizations, one physician and two consultants. This is the team that is to provide training and support over the first 10 assessments.

The member also asked about the number of children in foster care in Whitehorse and the regions, how many First Nation children are in foster care, and if we have children coming from the communities to Whitehorse to receive foster care. As of October 31 of this year, there are 56 children in foster care in Whitehorse and 36 in the region, for a Yukon total of 92 in foster care.

Fifty-five of the children in Whitehorse are First Nation and 35 from the region are First Nation. Three out of 36 in the region are placed on adoption probation. Children in care in the region do not typically get placed in foster care in Whitehorse. They do, however, occasionally require residential treatment. In this case, they are placed in the residential treatment group home network in Whitehorse.

There are three youth from the region placed in group home care in Whitehorse and two of these three are currently transitioning back into their home community. The third, and remaining, youth from the communities is not in the transition home phase at this point in time.

The member asked about the Young Offenders Facility and for an update on the numbers who are incarcerated or in remand, and a breakdown between males and females there. As of Tuesday, November 10, there were two in secure

custody, two in open custody, three on the community portion of a custody sentence, and one on deferred custody. Deferred custody means serving a sentence in the community with the consequence of custody for failing to abide by the court-ordered expectations.

On income support, the member asked about the 691, and the number of clients and a breakdown of that number from last year in terms of how many of those cases were actually families, how many of those cases involved children, how many were seniors, single-parent families or individuals, and single persons. I can indicate that the supplementary number provided in the budget book was for Whitehorse only. Social Assistance has provided the following detailed statistics for 2014-15 for all of Yukon, Whitehorse and region. Please keep in mind that these numbers exclude all social assistance delivered by First Nations and Canada on behalf of First Nations. An average number of paid cases per month would equal 796; the number of paid cases with male head of household would equal 491; the number of paid cases with female head of household, 306; the number of adult one-person household cases, 610; the number of adult two-person, no-children household cases, 29; the number of single-parent household cases — so one adult plus children — would be 129; the number of two-parent households cases — so two adults plus children — would be 28; the total number of children in single-parent households, 231 — for example, some households have multiple children, so it's not the same as the number of households with children; the total number of children in two-parent households, 62; the total number of seniors per month, 19; the total number of recipients, 1,146.

The member opposite indicated that she would like to know how many adults are currently placed Outside in services that have already — six months in — amounted to \$1,413,575. I can tell the member that currently we have six individuals residing in Outside facilities: two Yukon Review Board clients and four non-Yukon Review Board clients. The member opposite further asked if any of these have gone beyond five years or 10 years of service. I can tell the member that one individual has resided in Alberta since 2004; another has been in Alberta since 2008.

Madam Chair, during the budget debate on November 17 that was on the Women's Directorate, a number of issues were raised that relate to Health and Social Services. Perhaps I can take a moment now to respond to some of those issues and inform the members of some important information. With respect to sexual health and education, I can tell the members that Health and Social Services takes the sexual health of our young people very seriously and we take our responsibility as one of the many partners involved in educating our young folks just as seriously. Sexually transmitted infections can have lifelong repercussions, as can teen pregnancy, and we are doing our part to give people the information to make good choices.

Since assuming the responsibility for health promotion from the federal government in 1997, Health and Social Services has undertaken a number of campaigns and engaged in numerous educational activities with the public and through

the schools. In fact, one of our earlier campaigns, YK Style, won an award from the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada for its creativity and relevance to the youth population. Since then, we've published three handbooks on sexual health education — the first two aimed at both parents and youth, and the third aimed at young people entering high school.

From 2009 to 2012, SEX, a healthy sexual resource information book, was printed and distributed through schools to Yukon youth entering grade 8. From 2010 to 2012, a sexual health Q-and-A book was made available to health centres, counsellors and other locations where adults worked with youth. It was made available to youth and parents upon request. Both of these resources are also available in French. From 2010 to 2012, birth control methods books were distributed to community health centres and physician offices to distribute to youth and adults inquiring about contraception.

Madam Chair, we have created SHARE, which stands for sexual health and relationship education — a comprehensive sexual health education resource — for grades 4 to 7. This Health Promotion unit sexual health initiative was created in consultation with Yukon educators and with Dr. Julia Sanders, an expert in sexual health education. Dr. Sanders has been to Yukon several times and made public presentations to parents and youth.

This updated resource allows teachers, counsellors and nurses to provide consistent research-based education to empower students with the knowledge and skills needs to navigate the challenge of healthy sexual relationships in today's culture. The SHARE resource, for the most part, replaces the need for Health Promotion to provide sexual health information directly to classes in schools, as it gives teachers language and step-by-step lessons to provide that themselves — which historically, HPU has provided in the schools.

Health Promotion, with Yukon Education, will be contracting with Options for Sexual Health to provide training for elementary lead teachers, grades 4 to 7, and Planning 10 teachers to better prepare them for teaching SHARE, and increase comfort levels and reduce barriers in working with sensitive materials.

We have partnered with Blood Ties Four Directions on some of their campaigns and have introduced a number of specialty condoms that have garnered national attention and support. Two examples of these were in the Canada Games in 2007 and the last Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse.

We have worked with many of our partners over the years. Specialty condoms have been developed to promote the usage and create familiarity with condoms. They are distributed free of charge to numerous public locations in Whitehorse and throughout Yukon. They also contain a sexual health message and inform where more information on STIs can be found.

We're aware that condoms may not be the best form of birth control if not used appropriately, but, at the very least, our campaigns have permitted conversations about birth

control and protection to begin between two partners, which is a huge step forward.

Birth control is available in rural Yukon through community health centres. Physicians travel to communities on a regular basis and are able to provide a variety of birth control, including oral contraceptives, IUDs, patches or injectable forms. If in town, young women can attend the sexual health reproductive clinic to also request birth control.

Madam Chair, for women in rural Yukon seeking an abortion, community health nurses can make a referral to a physician in Whitehorse who will confirm the pregnancy, provide some counselling on options, and then refer to the physician who performs the therapeutic abortions. At that point, the patient will see the physician, again have some counselling, discussions around birth control, and they'll be sent for an ultrasound and then have the procedure. Follow-up will be provided in the community by that health centre.

Where and if possible for rural Yukon women, all health care professionals make concerted efforts to stack services so that a person coming into Whitehorse on a TA referral doesn't have to wait or return to Whitehorse at a later date. Every effort is certainly made to minimize the impact on women's lives. Women without a family physician can visit either the reproductive health clinic or a walk-in clinic. The ER is suggested only as a last resort.

I should add that abortions are performed up until 12 weeks in Yukon. After 12 weeks, patients would be sent to BC. While our rural health nurses do practise an expanded scope, the health centres are not equipped to enable them to perform abortions or to have visiting physicians perform while in that community. It is important to note that ready access to abortion is not just an issue here in our territory. Young women in PEI, for example, must travel to another province to receive this service. In BC, some smaller communities refer to larger cities that can be hours away in order for women to access abortion services.

Yukon's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Hanley, did speak to the increase in STIs in our territory, and if our campaigns to encourage young people to find out if they are infected are successful, we should see the numbers increase even more, which is a good thing, and then we will see them drop.

In 2009, Health and Social Services launched the campaign "Get a Test" to inform youth and young adults about STIs and where they could get tested. This was focused on driving youth to Yukon Communicable Disease Control for testing and included tactics aimed at youth — bus ads, posters, theatre advertising, web ads and wallet cards.

In addition to the campaigns, we also developed *Yukon Treatment Guidelines for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) in Adolescents and Adults 2010* — a quick reference guidance document for physicians and nurses.

This guidance document is based on the PHAC STI guideline. It has been updated on a regular basis by Yukon Communicable Disease Control to reflect changes in testing and treatments of STIs.

In 2010, we began the "Get Tested — It's Easy as 1, 2, Pee" campaign aimed primarily at young men, advising that getting tested for chlamydia and gonorrhoea was as easy as peeing in a cup to get tested.

In 2012, we began the Better to Know campaign to inform Yukon youth that a website has been developed that is full of up-to-date information on sexually transmitted infections, symptoms and testing locations. It also includes other sections on how to build healthy relationships, mental health, bullying and substance use information. The website also offers a section where an individual can e-mail or call a sexual health and relationship information line and have a question answered by Options for Sexual Health. Information was also targeted to seniors, as it was determined that, nationally, this age was experiencing an upswing in STIs and it aligned with additional departmental work taking place with seniors at the time.

In 2013, we introduced "Easy as 1, 2, Pee" online, and this year, in 2015, we have launched the hashtag #nobigdeal, a campaign to inform Yukon youth and young adults that getting tested for STIs is no big deal. It is easy, free and confidential. Messaging includes the high rates Yukon is currently experiencing. This is aimed at both men and women, as testing for both sexes can be as simple as peeing in a cup, so no big deal.

Our campaigns are developed by individuals with expertise in many different areas, including health promotion, communications and communicable diseases. I cannot stress enough how important it is that education of our young people is a shared responsibility between parents, health care professionals, government and educators. Testing and treatment for STIs in Yukon is free and available in all communities. Condoms are also available at no cost. In addition, this government has provided funding for the Yukon Sexual Health Clinic that is available to all genders in Whitehorse. I trust that this information addresses concerns and questions raised by the member opposite, and I am pleased now to continue with other questions that they may have related to Health and Social Services.

**Ms. Stick:** I welcome back the officials from the department here today. I thank the minister for those responses on issues for which he had agreed to come back with information. It was very thorough, and I thank him for that. I have more questions and I am going to try to group them under topic areas, so there might be a couple of questions I will put together, but it will just come from one area of the department.

The first one I would like to talk about today is the pioneer utility grant. Last year, we saw a change in the legislation, in the method of application and who would be eligible, as well the sliding scale. Since that time, I've had a number of constituents from different parts of the Yukon calling our office or talking to us about some of their concerns that arose out of the pioneer utility grant.

I have a couple of questions I would like to ask the minister to respond to. One of the first ones I heard about was from an individual whose landlord was not willing to provide

a letter. Even though this individual had rent receipts and the other bits of information, they could not get their landlord to agree to send a letter. My question on that one would have been: Is there any other option for an individual when that's the situation they're faced with, with their landlord? They can only ask their landlord so many times. They had called the pioneer utility grant help line but were told, no, they needed that letter.

Other questions I have with regard to the pioneer utility grant would be the numbers who have applied. We're coming up to the end date for the last year. Are we seeing an increase in the numbers who are applying? Are many people who are applying being turned down because their income is too high?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite. We've certainly heard a number of different stories from individuals who have applied for PUG, but if there are individuals who are having difficulty with getting letters from their landlords, I would recommend that those Yukoners reach out to our departmental staff. Those individuals can work with the landlord and the individual who is facing the challenges. I should add that I've heard from a number of seniors who have applied for the pioneer utility grant and are working with our departmental staff that they can be so helpful and that, in fact, departmental staff found other pots or other areas of funding those seniors were eligible for, other than the pioneer utility grant.

So I tip my hat to those departmental officials working with seniors on a daily basis. For the member opposite, I would encourage the individuals she has spoken with and other Yukoners who are perhaps having difficulties — or having difficulties with landlords in getting letters — to reach out to our departmental staff. I would like to recognize that, in fact, all members of this Legislative Assembly voted unanimously in favour of the PUG act and I want to extend my thanks to all members for that.

**Ms. Stick:** So just the one question that I also had in there is the numbers who have, to date, applied for this program. Are we seeing an increase in those numbers?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Changes to the pioneer utility grant, as we know, were introduced just in June of 2015.

These changes included an earlier application date and the introduction of an income test and increases to rural grant recipients. A steering committee has been formed to oversee all facets of the implementation and it continues to meet regularly to monitor progress.

A new computer system was developed to facilitate processing and over 1,200 PUG applications have been paid out within 30 days of receipt of application. The transition has been successful and, as a result of income testing, staff is now able to identify and offer support to seniors who may not be in receipt of their maximum pensions.

Currently the department is reviewing all those numbers. They will be moving targets, but I'm going to have to commit to getting back to the member opposite on those numbers specifically.

**Ms. Stick:** I look forward to that information. I'm going to move on to services to persons with a disability,

which is under the income assistance part of the department and is focused on adults with disabilities, not the children. We're talking about the adult section of services to persons with disabilities. I'm just wondering if I can get an update on the number of individuals receiving support through that department. How many of those individuals, if it's available, are receiving the Yukon supplementary allowance? How many are in the — I know there's a range of residential programs, but what's the number of those receiving residential supports, whether it's a group home, supported independent living or approved homes?

I'll start there and come back with more.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for her question in this area. This is an area, being the father of a child with autism, that I pay attention to fairly regularly.

I can tell the members that the Social Assistance caseload average — from April 2014 to March 2015, in Yukon there were 796 paid cases. The breakdown is: 702 in Whitehorse and 94 in the regions. This Yukon supplementary allowance caseload is a Yukon social assistance disability benefit of \$250 a month, and that would be on top of basic social assistance. Thirty-six percent of the SA caseload is currently in receipt of the Yukon supplementary allowance, and that's as of March 2015.

We're always reviewing the program and new stats should be coming forward soon. Sixty-one social assistance cases resided for part or all of the month in a hotel, at a cost of just over \$50,000; 85 social assistance cases resided in Yukon Housing Corporation units, at a cost of just over \$40,000.

With respect to services to persons with disabilities, or the SPD unit programs, there are residential programs, day programming, respite, supported independent living, employment programs and case management services for those individuals with developmental disabilities. The caseloads as of March 2015 were 143 cases; 57 financial — in receipt of social assistance — and 86 non-financial.

With respect to residential care — and these stats are as of March 2015 — there were 50 individuals in residential care; 21 individuals in 17 approved caregiver homes; 18 individuals in four adult groups homes — those would be Aspen residents, Granger Place, St. Elias and Takhini Haven residents — and five individuals in staff supported living arrangements — so those are home-zoned or rented directly by the individuals, and supervision is provided by organizations like Teegatha'Oh Zheh and Challenge. There were six individuals with complex care needs in residential placements out of the territory and then individuals mandated by the Yukon Review Board. There were eight, two of whom are now residing outside of the territory.

The day programming caseload — and, again, these numbers are as of March 2015 — there were 26 individuals in three day programs — Helping Hands, Teegatha'Oh Zheh and Aspen. The average cost per individual per year is about \$50,000. For the supported independent living caseload, as of January 2015, there were 53 individuals in that program.

I hope I've answered the member opposite's question. Certainly this is an area that I pay a lot of attention to and



would also like to recognize the good work that has been done over the last decade with respect to providing supports and services to both children and adults who have intellectual disabilities. I do believe that Yukon is punching well above their weight when it comes to the services and supports that this Yukon Party government has invested in. I would like to thank my colleagues, past and present, and again thank the officials in the department doing the good work.

**Ms. Stick:** I thank the minister for that information. I just have a couple of quick questions coming out of that. One would be the Yukon supplementary allowance. It's at \$250 and has been at that for quite a number of years now. Everything else under the *Social Assistance Act* is indexed, but this one is not. Is that going to change?

Another question I have is: Are there any residential programs or services being provided outside of the Whitehorse in the territory?

This one is coming up more and more often for the parents who have adult children, are looking to do some long-term planning and are finding not a lot of openings to have those conversations and to do long-term residential planning. Looking ahead to when they perhaps are too old to care for their adult children or if there was an emergency or a medical emergency where a parent wasn't available, what is the planning going to be for those adults?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Again I do thank the member opposite for her questions pertaining to persons with disabilities.

The Yukon supplementary allowance, as the member opposite indicated, is not indexed; it remains at \$250. Those are things that we continue to review, but as the member opposite indicated, the base amount through social assistance is in fact indexed, so at this time I don't believe that increasing the supplementary allowance is something that we're committing to.

The member opposite talked about personal planning and transitioning, and certainly as a parent of a child with a disability this is something that I think about — the future needs of my son — and the number of people I have talked to and worked with over the last number of years — it is something that is front and centre in their minds.

Long-term planning can range from anything from transitioning from child to adulthood. It can include what happens when the parents of a child with a disability pass on. The member opposite said that if they had to leave the territory at some point in time — but what happens when the parents of the children pass on and where do their then perhaps adult children — what is left for them and what do their lives look like — so those are conversations that we do continue to have. Those are conversations that we have with parents and stakeholders, with NGOs — important conversations.

Certainly when we're looking at transition or bridging — so if we're going from children's services to adults' services, I recognize as a parent and as a former professional that services diminish quickly moving from children's services to adults' services. It is something that I have committed to work

on and look for opportunities to lighten the anxiety of moving into a different service delivery model. So there is more certainly to come with the transition or bridging from child to adult.

One of the other opportunities that parents have would be respite. I know that there has been a number of people who have had to travel south for medical purposes and they have utilized the respite services through the department as well, so we continue to look at new and emerging opportunities in that type of service to Yukoners. Again I suspect that — and in speaking with my colleagues — there will be more to come with the respite program, but it's certainly something about which we've had discussions with parents, with service providers and with people who have cognitive disabilities themselves.

As a minister, I've asked the department to really examine the full continuum of care for persons with disabilities. I know in my discussions with professionals and parents, it's something that is important to them. Long-term planning, as the member opposite had indicated, is certainly a responsibility on my part as a parent, and I would encourage other parents of children with disabilities and adult children with disabilities to really be personally involved in the long-term planning of their children. I don't necessarily believe that a government should always be the entity that's solely responsible for that type of long-term planning. In my situation with my son, I take full responsibility in working with my former partner in the way that we plan for the future for Jack.

To further enhance collaboration, department officials are meeting with the disability program's advisory committee, or DPAC, which is an advisory committee comprised of adults with disabilities, families of children and adults with disabilities, and department officials.

Again, I thank the member opposite for her question and look forward to further questions.

**Ms. Stick:** I'm just trying to go back on a few of those things. I would suggest that one of the things that committee might want to look at is the Yukon supplementary allowance. Given that the SA rates are not the greatest for individuals, an extra \$250 is still very welcome but doesn't leave a lot of money for people.

The question I also had asked was about residential services outside of Whitehorse, in the communities, and whether there are services being provided in any community for individuals with disabilities. I know there are families who are out there and want to be able to keep their adults close by, or in part of the same community they've grown up in — if I could get a response on that please.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I again thank the member opposite for her question. Outside the area of Whitehorse, there are no formal government group homes. There are no opportunities, to date, for non-profit organizations providing that type of care in Yukon communities, but what we do have are individuals who have stepped up to the plate to provide that level of service in their own homes. We'll continue to look at those arrangements and those relationships. To date they seem

to be working well, and I would encourage other Yukoners in communities, if they know of those types of opportunities where there may be an individual requiring 24-hour care or some level of care, to work with those families and have those discussions with department officials.

**Ms. Stick:** I thank the minister for that. One of the questions I want to go back to is about this DPAC. I'm wondering if there are any NGOs involved with this committee — as there are NGOs out there now providing residential services; others that are looking for a wider range of services that they might be able to provide to individuals and their families throughout the Yukon, not just in Whitehorse.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for her question. I know that in the past there have been individuals who had disabilities themselves and who were also from the NGO community. I don't necessarily know that there was a direct link — that they were there representing that specific NGO. It is certainly something that I can look into, but typically what we see are adults with disabilities, families with children or adult children with disabilities and department officials to provide that advisory level on that committee. Certainly we thank DPAC and the members who are meeting on it. Some of the work that has been done through DPAC has certainly been appreciated by, I know, the department and I — when parents of children or adult children with disabilities step up and advocate for their children, as well as those individuals who have disabilities themselves who bring their insight and their perspective forward.

**Mr. Silver:** I would like to thank the officials from the department for their time here today and, of course, the minister for answering our questions.

In 2014, the Yukon government released its clinical services report. According to the recent federal election debate, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association had not felt that this report received the attention that it should have. Can the minister let the House know what the status is of working toward implementation of this report?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** The clinical services implementation plan has been drafted and is currently being reviewed by senior department officials. The implementation plan provides Health and Social Services' response to the consultation recommendations and it outlines how the department will take action, prioritize and move forward on accepted recommendations. While the implementation plan is still being finalized, components and some recommendations from the clinical services plan are already being applied within the department. The plan will continue to evolve as system evolution in Health and Social Services is complex. The implementation is ongoing, and the department implementation is coming forward. I thank the member opposite for the question. I certainly thank YRNA for the work that they do in the territory and for working with us on reports like this and providing that level of support to the nurses in the territory.

**Mr. Silver:** Just to be sure, the minister said there was some implementation. Is he prepared to maybe expand a bit on what was being implemented at this time?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for the question on the report itself.

Some examples of the things that we're doing in the department are — some of the complex cases integrated in Watson Lake, for example, and the use of telehealth psychiatry assessment, so we know that the report was released in April 2014 and it sets a plan for the evolution of health and social services delivery in the territory. An implementation lead for the clinical services report was hired in May 2014 — which the member opposite will be well aware of — for one year to review the recommendations, consult with stakeholders across the territory and develop an implementation plan based on those recommendations by government.

We also have had recent interest from other jurisdictions looking to learn from the work that we do. As I indicated earlier, there is work to be done. There is a lot of good work that has been done, but certainly we will take action, prioritize and move forward on some of those accepted recommendations.

**Mr. Silver:** Thank you to the minister for expanding on that.

I'm going to move to the mental health strategy. Just for a little bit of background first — in 2011, the Premier did promise Yukoners that he would deliver a mental health strategy. In the spring of this year, I put forth a motion calling for a mental health strategy, and that received the unanimous support of this House.

Can the minister update us on the status of the strategy and when can Yukoners expect to see a mental health strategy?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** As the member opposite is well aware, mental health is a key focus area for the department and for me as minister. It is also a focus for the provincial and territorial premiers under the Council of the Federation who have asked ministers like me who are responsible for mental health to look at innovative ways to address the complex issues and service delivery challenges of mental wellness and mental health.

Yukon is working with the provincial and territorial ministers of Health to look at best ways to achieve a positive, collective impact on mental health and well-being of Canadians in the most equitable, efficient and effective ways possible. We also want to ensure that we are evidence-based in our decision-making and in assessing how system and delivery changes through implementation are impacting Yukoners.

The department, along with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and other health care providers, provides a range of services and supports to individuals and families with mental health illnesses, mental health challenges, concurrent disorders and addictions. We continue to look at our internal delivery and gaps in an integrated case management integration, transition points and effective utilization of our

own internal resources. We have also looked at where we have growing client needs and growing client pressures.

We have worked with McMaster University and were fortunate to benefit from this Yukon-specific research project funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. In our goal to learn from best practices and to be guided by evidence-based decision-making, we are looking at how to best provide child and youth mental health services and a piece of our mental health framework and clinical services report is to ensure we address those gaps and make best use of our resources, and certainly we want to improve outcomes. I should note that while this is a work in progress with McMaster University, we have had participation from First Nations, from youth, other agencies, service providers and family representatives. We will be working on what from the clinical services report will be our first priorities and, clearly, mental health and addictions are some of those.

We will be seeking input as work on implementation progresses, including how to maximize technology such as telehealth to increase access, the service continuum and certainly after-care. Internally and then with stakeholders, we're focusing on breaking down the silos of different providers and working collaboratively. We also need to ensure our system for the future is seamless for the individual and for the family, and we need supports for those who are dealing with mental health issues and their caregivers. There is still much to learn about the most suitable delivery in those types of interventions, but we're committed to making mental health and addictions a key focus and to continue learning from our provincial and territorial colleagues on best practices.

I can report to this House that I have seen a draft of the mental wellness plan that we're putting forward. We're awaiting approval from the researchers who have guided and worked with us on this plan, so there's more information that is imminent, but there has been a lot of work that has been put into this plan over the last couple of years. It is a big project, as the member opposite can fully appreciate. We want to make sure that when we finally have a document to table and provide to members in the community, it's a document that is accurate and that has good information and a good path forward.

I thank the member opposite. I know he has asked this question before in the House, but it's imminent. A plan is imminent, but we are just waiting for approval from some of the researchers.

**Mr. Silver:** I really do appreciate that update on the mental health strategy. It's definitely something that comes to our office quite a bit — that question — even in the community of Klondike. Surprising or not, it's one of those main issues that we keep hearing from my constituents. I do appreciate that there's movement forward on this and look forward to seeing a strategy or plan, as the minister says, in the future.

It does kind of transfer really well into the next question on the Conference Board of Canada and our ranking system therein. As you know, Madam Chair, the Conference Board of Canada bases the grades for every jurisdiction on a report card

on 10 different reports: life expectancy; premature mortality; infant mortality; self-reported health status; mortality due to cancer; mortality due to heart disease and stroke; mortality due to respiratory disease; mortality due to diabetes; and mortality due to diseases of the nervous system and suicides. They also evaluate the performance of both the provinces and the territories and Canada's overall performance on self-reported mental health.

We haven't received a great ranking from the Conference Board. I was wondering if the minister can expand on what actions the department is taking to respond to a lower score from the Conference Board of Canada.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for his question. We've talked about access to health care here in the Legislature before and, really, it's about receiving quality care when needed by an appropriate provider and in a manner that is sustainable. The more work that we do in this area will address and identify the numbers that the member opposite was talking about.

We continue to work with the Yukon Medical Association to ensure an adequate supply of health care professionals for the territory. Health and Social Services has a physician recruiter working closely with the Yukon Medical Association. What that does is address gaps for those individuals who perhaps are having a difficult time accessing a health care provider.

We have successfully recruited two nurse practitioners into Yukon's health care delivery system, and we're actively looking for more opportunities to introduce those nurse practitioners into current medical practices for the coming years. We've increased the use of telehealth as a way of interacting with patients. This service is used by psychiatrists and specialists who come to the territory.

As the member opposite can fully appreciate, we highly recommend that people do reach out and make a concerted effort to try to access or locate a family physician — certainly getting tested for things like prostate cancer and other ailments. Catching those early will be of great benefit to those Yukoners.

We have looked at the report and we've certainly discussed our numbers with the Conference Board of Canada. The key is how we are compared — we are not downtown Toronto, certainly — and look at some things in that report that align with the clinical services plan, as we feel that this will help with that rating. Really, this is about access to health care for residents; it's about being proactive. We spoke about healthy living and healthy lifestyles earlier and certainly we work with a number of departments — Community Services and Education — at promoting those types of healthier lifestyles, but I appreciate the question from the member opposite. We'll continue to work with the Conference Board of Canada and continue to review the numbers from the territory.

**Mr. Silver:** I guess — absolutely, proactive working with the other departments is extremely important. We assume this is an ongoing behaviour within the Department of Health and Social Services.

If the minister could speak specifically — are there any specific changes to the current system that the department is adapting or that is coming down the pike, past just proactively working with the other departments?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for his question.

Certainly, with the Conference Board of Canada report, we do have other reports that provide valuable information to the department. Many of those reports talk about the good work that is being done. Just a couple of examples for the member opposite, through the Yukon Medical Association, working with our stakeholders, we opened two collaborative care clinics — one for reproduction in one of the local clinics here in the territory. We certainly work with stakeholders in training physicians and medical service providers and front-line staff around mental health and some of the other items that the member opposite had indicated were in that report.

We will continue with those training opportunities. We'll continue working with the Yukon Medical Association to address the areas of the report that the member opposite speaks about — in areas where we can perhaps do a better job — but certainly other reports might indicate that the department is doing a very good job in the territory. With any reports, as the member opposite can appreciate, there are always going to be conflicting reports.

**Mr. Silver:** I'm going to assume from the minister's answer that the response to the report — to the D minus — would be to look at making what they're doing currently better as opposed to specific changes, so I will move on and thank the minister for that answer.

I'm going to move on to the Vimy project. The Vimy Heritage Housing Society has a proposal out there to build an independent living facility for seniors, and they have requested both seed money and also land from the government for this project. I was wondering what the Department of Health and Social Services is doing to support this project?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for his question. The member opposite is aware that the Vimy project has been handled, I guess — for lack of a better word — by a number of different departments. Highways and Public Works is, I believe, the lead on that project, so the member opposite might want to direct the question for Vimy specifically to Highways and Public Works. I know the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation has also done some work on that. We work with them but are not the lead for that project.

Across the department, we're looking at next steps with the proponent, but I think the question is better served through one of the other two departments.

**Mr. Silver:** Of course, I've already asked the minister responsible for Highways and Public Works this question. It's a great question to go across a bunch of different departments, and the question specifically to the minister responsible for Health and Social Services is about what support his department would be giving for this particular type of independent living. There are a lot of different options around there and a limited amount of money, I would imagine, for all

these different options — so if the minister can comment on specifically his department's support or, if they're not supportive — I don't know. If there's anything more he can add, I would be grateful.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for his question. As I indicated earlier, we've done some work through a number of different departments. Health and Social Services has met with the Vimy folks and provided them with some information on options that they may wish to look at, specifically around programming and around other models that we see across Canada.

I was in Vancouver and visited two programs down there and had tours of the facilities, just seeing how they operate. I know, at the end of the day, when a program like that is complete, a role for Health and Social Services would probably include things like home care. Certainly the Vimy model, as the member opposite is well aware, is a very independent model for seniors and those who are aging and who just need a little bit of assistance with cooking, maybe. I met one fellow down in Vancouver — he was 55 years old and moved into it just because he didn't want to cook. I mean, there are all sorts of different options there.

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

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** The Member for Klondike wants to be signed up and my name might be right after his.

When I went down to see the two programs in Vancouver, there was a representative from Vimy who was supposed to meet me down there but, as I understand it, there was a flight delay and that individual wouldn't have met the time so ended up not flying down. However, certainly staff from Health and Social Services has accompanied Vimy to see some of the models in British Columbia, and I think those were successful visits. It's interesting to see that model and how it may look up in the territory.

I know Yukon Housing Corporation, Highways and Public Works, and Health and Social Services continue to work with Vimy, as a non-profit organization, and we look forward to those discussions continuing.

**Mr. Silver:** Thank you to the minister for his response. I am going to move on to midwifery. I did send a letter to the minister asking about the current policy. As you know, if you are travelling to Whitehorse to see a midwife, the government will not recognize this as medical travel and, as a result, women are not eligible to claim the travel subsidy. We've had the debate on this floor many times about midwifery. It's not registered right now. I know that the minister is — and the previous minister — engaged with the midwifery society and looking to work forward on this. If that is the case, maybe an explanation as to why it is the case that midwifery services — we get it. We need to register. We need to move forward on registration, but women are still travelling down for this service in the Yukon and it does beg for an explanation as to why they couldn't get a travel subsidy if, in fact, the government is working forward on making this a registered method in the Yukon.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for his question. As the member opposite is well aware, the

government has struck a stakeholder-midwifery working group to examine the practice of midwifery here in the territory. Regulating a new profession requires time and resources. Yukon government just finished introducing nurse practitioners into our territory's health system in 2012, and we are currently undergoing a review of pharmacy and pharmacist legislation at this time. I certainly appreciate the individuals who have put their names forward to be involved in the midwifery advisory group. As I indicated, there is a lot of work that needs to be done, and I certainly wouldn't want to predetermine any of the suggestions or recommendations coming from that group. We'll continue to work with the midwifery group, and I certainly thank my colleagues who have spoken to this before — specifically the former Minister of Health and Social Services, now Minister of Education. As I indicated, we look forward to continuing to working with the group, but I certainly don't want to predetermine any potential outcomes and advice coming from that group.

**Mr. Silver:** I would suggest that it would be a sign of goodwill. Rural women who have to travel down to Whitehorse regardless — this is an option that more and more people are choosing. It definitely would show some goodwill from the government if they decided to fund the travel subsidy for these women.

I'm going to go on to Child Development. The Canadian Institute for Health Information says that the Yukon has the highest rate of vulnerability in the area of early development for jurisdictions reporting. I have heard from a number of Yukoners that there is a gap in funding for child development services in a specific area here.

Children who are under five can receive funding for play therapy, but there is a drop-off once they reach school age. If it's privately accessed, these services cost between \$125 to \$150 per hour. Parents who have access to these services have seen great improvements in behaviour.

I guess the question is: What is the government doing to help children who no longer qualify for subsidized services from the CDC?

Just to add some more information, there is also a six-month waiting period for children to be screened for mental health issues. Is the department looking at how to decrease waiting times for children who have undiagnosed issues?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for his question. I know this was certainly an area that I was involved in when my son Jack was moving from preschool into the school-age programs through the Department of Education.

I know that the departments of Health and Social Services and Education struck a group to look at early childhood education. I certainly recognize the supports that the Child Development Centre provided my family and provides many other families across the territory, but I also recognize that the Department of Education over the last decade has certainly stepped up to the plate and has provided more educational assistance support than we have ever seen in the territory.

I don't know that I have ever seen a decrease in services — moving Jack from the Child Development Centre into Education. I think it was streamlined very well between the

two departments. We continue to work in programs like applied behavioural analysis with him, and I have certainly spoken to other families that have had the same experience.

There are always going to be perhaps some families that may not access the resources that are available through Education — or the member opposite talked about waiting lists, and I know that both departments, Education and Health and Social Services, continue to look at wait times to try to mitigate some of those issues.

In response to a call for a new parenting — early childhood development resource centre's healthy families programming is being expanded into rural communities, and I think the member opposite is aware of that. The program is now available in Watson Lake and will be soon available in Carmacks and Pelly Crossing. This expansion includes the establishment of family resource offices, as I said, in Watson Lake and Carmacks. These offices will provide resources to support parenting and promote healthy child development aimed at assisting parents by providing resources, access to professionals and peer support.

The department recognizes the importance of our community partners and continues to work closely with a wide range of programs in providing services to children and families. We're also a partner in supporting parents and communities to raise healthy, resilient children. Parents and families are the first teachers and the loves in a child's life and have the primary responsibility for raising children. We're fortunate to have many programs and services available in Yukon. We want to make sure that they are coordinated and get the best outcome for our children.

The departments of Education and Health and Social Services, as I indicated earlier, are working together and with community-based resources to coordinate efforts on new initiatives, such as the Learning Together parent-child preschool program of Education and the expansion of the healthy families program to three rural communities by Health and Social Services, which I spoke to just a few moments ago.

In April of last year, the wellness plan for Yukon's children and families was released by Health and Social Services. That plan set out three evidence-based pathways to health and well-being, starting with giving all children a good start in life.

Madam Chair, also recognizing the importance of quality childcare and early childhood development, this government committed an additional \$4 million to address wages, training, subsidies and operational expenses of childcare programs over the last six years. Again, I can't thank my colleagues, both present and past, enough for their commitment on these initiatives.

Based on those reviews, our government has increased funding to the childcare subsidy program, which assists families with the costs of childcare. The Little Blue Early Child Care and Learning Centre, which the member opposite is well aware of, has submitted a consultant's report containing recommendations to the Child Care Services unit. We continue to work with that organization on that report,

looking for opportunities in Dawson City. I again thank the member opposite for his question — very important.

**Chair:** Would members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

We are resuming debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services.

**Mr. Silver:** I'm going to move on to the 2011 Office of the Auditor General report. That was a report on Yukon health care and it was from February 2011. The report issued a number of recommendations on areas to improve upon. I'm going to specify some specific ones here.

The report concludes that — and I'm quoting directly from the report: "100. The Department has not identified and formally documented its most important health priorities and, as a result, does not develop or modify programs and services to reflect these priorities. The Department needs to identify key departmental and program performance indicators and develop systems to collect the necessary information and monitor these indicators.

"101. The Department does not use and analyze data from all relevant sources to determine whether its programs and services are achieving their objectives and reaching those who need them; nor does it publicly report this to Yukoners. While workload and activity indicators are presented in the Main Estimates, the Department needs to expand its reporting to include performance indicators or comparative figures, explanation of variances, and trend analysis.

"102. The Department reports some qualitative data but does not determine the extent to which it has achieved its strategic and departmental goals and objectives or report on this in quantified terms. In addition, the Government of Yukon does not have an evaluation policy in place. Such a policy would help the Department to assess the effectiveness of its programs and services and to modify them accordingly."

Madam Chair, has the department implemented the recommendations of this report?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** The department agreed with all 11 of the Auditor General's recommendations. While some of the 2011 report recommendations will require ongoing attention and ongoing resources, all have been addressed and many have been fully implemented.

Department officials appeared before the Public Accounts Committee on October 17, 2012, regarding the 2011 health audit, at which time the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services presented the committee with updates on the status of the implementation of those recommendations. The department provided a progress report on work undertaken since the Public Accounts Committee on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Auditor General's 2011 Health Services and Programs Report.

The Public Accounts Committee has made an additional eight recommendations, and the department provided a response to these recommendations to the Public Accounts Committee.

The clinical services report helped to set priorities and the five-year strategic plan for Health and Social Services certainly aided and set outcome measures for that work.

We are doing continuous improvements to adjust the delivery, but the key really is the five-year strategic plan. The department will continue to work with that and address the issues that the member opposite has just raised.

**Mr. Silver:** I have some housekeeping questions here, so I am going to be all over the map.

I'm going to start with in-vitro fertilization. This fall, Ontario agreed to cover part of the costs of in-vitro fertilization and, in doing so, they became the second province in Canada to do that. Has the Yukon government considered funding for this procedure?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for his question.

I know I have had a constituent in the last year reach out to me about this very same thing. What we do know at present is that, as the member opposite had indicated, Quebec was one of the jurisdictions that provided this service to its constituents. Quebec, in the last year or two, has actually reduced the amount that people are able to apply for in that jurisdiction. They are relooking at the whole program as well. Ontario, although I know they made the commitment, as I understand it, the Minister of Health in Ontario has actually pulled back a little bit and is relooking at the program and how it might be delivered in that province. At present, this isn't something that we are considering, but certainly we continue to look at all jurisdictions across Canada. Our particular interest would be how Quebec and Ontario move forward with that program.

**Mr. Silver:** I heard from constituents that there used to be six suites in the hospital for out-of-town families to stay. Now these rooms have been changed, and I don't believe that they are being offered any longer to out-of-town residents. Can the minister confirm whether or not that's true? If it is the case, why was this change made?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for his question. As I understand it, those suites have not been utilized for a number of years. I know we do offer some suite-type services for women coming in from communities, but that is something I can commit to following up with the Hospital Corporation. I know they were here as witnesses last week. We could have asked them then, but I will commit to following up with the Hospital Corporation and get back to the member by tabling a letter or writing a letter or just in a verbal conversation.

**Mr. Silver:** Thank you to the minister for looking into that. I just have a couple more questions. In Dawson, Dr. Helmut Schoener recently raised the issue of reviving the dental therapist program for the Yukon. As you know, dental therapists were trained to do basic hygienic work in rural communities. In 2011, the National School of Dental Therapy, where many of the members of the Yukon program trained,

closed. The number of dental therapists is now down to one. Can the minister update us on what his department is doing to address this issue?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for his question. The member is accurate in his statement that the national therapist program was closed down a number of years ago. The number of dental therapists that we have seen across the north, which that program was initially created for — we've seen those positions decrease as there aren't any new people coming out of the program that no longer exists. The government and the Department of Health and Social Services continue to explore options on how we move forward.

I certainly haven't seen a business case come forward that would suggest a viable option to open up a dental therapist school in the territory here, especially following the closure of the program, just under the assumption that perhaps that model wasn't sustainable in Saskatchewan where it closed down. We've certainly continued dialogue with the other two territories as well as Labrador on the best possible steps forward.

We have worked with Community Services and I know I have had dialogue with the Minister of Community Services on the legislation surrounding the scope of dental hygienists and we'll continue to have those dialogues, but we certainly have identified that there is a need in the territory, whether it be having hygienists do some of that work or looking at other opportunities. Those are things that we're exploring right now. I don't have anything to report at this time other than those conversations are occurring and we recognize the importance of providing that dental care to children in the communities.

**Mr. Silver:** Just anecdotally — great program. In Dawson we saw Dawson citizens coming back and working in the school in the dental hygienist program. It was a wonderful success.

Last question — and with this I would like to thank the department officials for their time today. This question on McDonald Lodge — if the minister can provide any update on McDonald Lodge as to when it will be open and that will conclude my questions for Committee of the Whole for Health and Social Services.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the member opposite for his question. I am certainly looking forward to the opening of McDonald Lodge. I can report at this time that it will be early in 2016. We don't have a specific date yet, but we know that the residents will be moving into the new building in early 2016 after clearing, outfitting and the important training that needs to take place before staff and residents move from the old facility into the new facility.

I thank the member opposite for his question and his earlier questions. I do appreciate it — some good questions coming forward from the member opposite today. Thank you.

**Ms. Stick:** I would like to go back to a few more questions I still have remaining. One of them has to do with hearing services.

In the past there have been rather extensive wait times for adults, not so much for children, and I'm wondering if I could just get an update now on the staffing in the hearing services program. Are we still looking at wait times?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Certainly as Yukon's population continues to grow in age, so does the need for hearing services. Audiologists are in short supply across the country, so Yukon is in direct competition with the rest of Canada to attract those professionals that we require to meet our needs. Wait-lists for hearing assessments exist in many areas of Canada in that respect, so Yukon is not unique.

Requests for hearing tests are prioritized and emergencies are dealt with immediately. Children and referrals from the ear, nose and throat specialist are given priority for hearing assessments, as they may be an opportunity to stop hearing loss or reverse it at an early age. Any of these situations can affect wait times for other individuals who are waiting for those services.

In order to meet the needs of Yukoners, hearing services is recruiting a second resident audiologist and additional technical supports. We'll continue with that recruitment and we recognize and appreciate the work of the current audiologist, but also recognize the need for expanding on those services.

**Ms. Stick:** Do we have a wait time that the minister can share with us?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** As the member opposite can appreciate, wait times would change on a daily, maybe even hourly, basis, so I don't have the stats as of right here and now, but we can look into accessing that information.

**Ms. Stick:** Moving on then, I have a couple of questions around the chronic disease program. One would be the number of staff that is dedicated to this program and what the focus is. What chronic conditions are we looking at and focusing on these days?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for the question. Two of the key areas that Chronic Disease Management are focusing on — and the member opposite will appreciate this — COPD is one, and diabetes, because of the higher rate of diabetes across the north — that's another program that we're working on.

**Ms. Stick:** I'm wondering if we have better statistics now, particularly when we're looking at diabetes. I know we've asked in the past for a breakdown between type A and type B. I'm wondering if that information is available currently — sorry, type 1 and type 2.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** As the member opposite can appreciate, those would be sensitive medical records, but we look at diabetes as a whole and don't break those statistics down between type 1 and type 2.

**Ms. Stick:** I have a couple of questions also around the mental and health and addictions services. We see more and more that this is being grouped together. We hear it from this government as well. I'm wondering if there was any consideration of closer work between these two departments when designing the new Sarah Steele Building and finding

ways for Mental Health Services and ADS to work more collaboratively.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** As we move forward with the Sarah Steele Building and move forward with programming and issues pertaining to mental health, we look at best practices across the country. Best practices tell us that integrating those services is beneficial for the individuals who are using them — and looking at a variety of different referrals coming from other agencies. That is something that we are addressing as we move forward with the new Sarah Steele Building and something that we are interested in as we move forward with a mental wellness strategy.

**Ms. Stick:** I am going to move on. Under communicable disease, we still see that our territorial rates for hepatitis C are still well above the national ones. I am aware of a new medication that is a new drug regime and is showing much better success — up to and over 95-percent success rate. It also involves less time spent for the treatment itself. It is expensive, and I understand that. Right now, individuals who are going to Communicable Disease Control Unit to look at participating in a treatment program that would eliminate hepatitis C are being told that, because of the cost, they are looking to treat individuals who are already showing symptoms of the disease and who are becoming sick. I have a couple of questions around this. One is: Are we looking at ways, under pharmacare programs, of sharing these costs across different jurisdictions to help bring the costs down? Do we see a time when this treatment will be available, not just to those who are showing the symptoms of the disease, but in a proactive way for those who already have it?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** In addressing the member opposite, pertaining to the drug that she specifically spoke to, that drug company is not yet fully cleared with government, so we continue to have those discussions to see how we move forward with that company and that particular drug. It comes down to the nephrologist, who would identify what patient would be best suited for any suite of drugs that are available throughout the country. I know the Premier has had similar discussions on the pharmaceutical aspect of it through discussions with the Prime Minister and COF — the other premiers from Canada. There is work that is being done on a case-by-case basis. Certainly, if any individual felt that this might be a drug that would be suited to them, then they would have to have that discussion with the nephrologist and then those referrals would come forward.

We'll continue to work with the drug company to get that drug cleared and see if there are potential opportunities here in the territory on a move-forward basis.

**Ms. Stick:** It's my understanding that there was approval for this medication. In fact, the last medication, or drug regime, they were using for the treatment of hepatitis C has been stopped, so that one is no longer available and this one is the current one. Individuals — and I've spoken to a few — have been told, unless their private insurance company covers it, that they will not be and that there's not the option of looking at the previous treatment method either.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** As the member opposite can fully appreciate, government would be the payer of last resort, so we would always reach out and negotiate those costs covered by private insurance companies first, rather than government stepping in right away to pay those coverages.

The member opposite talked about approval, and that approval was from Canada, not Yukon. Once Canada approves any drug, then negotiations on what the drug is going to cost will occur, and the next step is that the drug would end up on some sort of formulary before doctors in this area could prescribe that medication.

**Ms. Stick:** Moving on, my colleague brought up some questions around Vimy and what we're looking at in terms of timelines. The minister mentioned that he himself had gone and visited similar facilities in the Lower Mainland. We should note that ADMs from Health and Social Services, as well as EMR, went out in January and looked at facilities in Vancouver.

I think the discouraging part for the Vimy Heritage Housing Society is the amount of work they've put into this, in terms of needs assessments, surveys of Yukoners, people agreeing to sign up for this particular housing model of assisted living, and their sense that they have just sort of hit a wall and have not been able to move forward. I didn't hear a response or a clarification on what we're waiting for. The questions were asked in EMR and it has come back to the minister. What's the holdup here?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for the question. I certainly recognize the amount of work that Vimy has put into their business case. I know their business case has come forward a number of times and government has worked — particularly Finance — with Vimy on several models that they have brought forward in trying to strengthen their business case.

As we know, the Vimy model, especially in BC, is usually private funding. There may be some government funding in BC, but certainly not a government-funded program.

When the Member for Klondike asked the question, I deferred the answer to the two — I guess — more lead departments than Health and Social Services, and that is on the model itself. I will do the same — ask the Minister of Highways and Public Works and perhaps the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation where they are with respect to the building, land and those things. Health and Social Services is certainly interested in seeing how this project moves forward, and again I thank my colleagues on this side of the floor for working diligently within the Vimy society on their business case and seeing what the best way is for them to move forward.

**Ms. Stick:** To clarify, as the minister mentioned, this particular housing society is looking at land and some seed funding but then, after that, this would become a self-sufficient housing model in that the residents themselves would be carrying the costs of that. This is not to be confused with social housing. Individuals living there would be



required to pay their way and the total expenses of that building.

I'll move on. I had a question under mental health and the strategy. There was talk of hiring a mental health psychiatric nurse for Watson Lake, and I'm just wondering if I can have an update on that please.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I can report that mental health nurses have been recruited for Haines Junction and Dawson City, but I can say they are at different stages as to when they will be arriving and when they will start their duties, but the three positions have been recruited in those communities and Yukon is looking forward to that work being started.

**Ms. Stick:** It was my understanding that we already had a nurse in Haines Junction and one in Dawson City and that a third one — a new position — was to be recruited for Watson Lake. Can I just get confirmation of that? I know we did have one in the other communities — Watson Lake was the new position.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I can report that all three positions are new and that we have recruited three new individuals to provide that service in those three communities.

**Ms. Stick:** Moving on — vision testing — one of the questions I had from some constituents in a community outside of Whitehorse was about looking for optometrist services in the community. I'm just looking for information. Do we have optometrists travelling or a contract to go to every community outside of Whitehorse? I know some testing goes on in the schools for children, but this is more in particular for adults, seniors and elders in the communities who might not be travelling to Whitehorse to receive those services. I know that if an elder or a senior is coming to town, they try to roll in a number of appointments where necessary — whether it's dental or optometrists — but if I could have some information please about optometrist travel to the Yukon communities and how many individuals they're seeing.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** As the member opposite will be fully aware, optometrist services in the territory are not an insured service with respect to vision testing. Those are private business decisions that would be made. If an optometrist felt that there was a business case to reach out into the communities, that would be up to them to take that role and responsibility on as a business owner, but there are no services through government for — as I had indicated it is not an insured service. That would be a business case decision from an optometrist.

**Ms. Stick:** Is optometry not available for elders and seniors at all? I know hearing — but I would just like confirmation of that please.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** In addressing the member opposite, there may be some funding through First Nations for people receiving optometry services but not through Yukon government.

**Ms. Stick:** I have a couple of quick questions. Under YCD, they used to manage the Rick Hansen Institute funding and I'm wondering who has taken — I think it was around \$30,000 — over the handling of that and the disbursing of those funds?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I thank the member opposite for the question. I certainly had the pleasure of meeting Rick Hansen when he was here in the territory not long ago.

With respect to the funding I'm going to have to follow up with the member in writing if that's okay. I just don't have that information here at my fingertips.

**Ms. Stick:** I was interested in the physician recruitment and retention initiatives and that there has been quite an increase in that amount of funding. I'm just wondering if I can get an explanation for that and some outcomes from previous years in terms of new physicians in the territory.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Earlier I talked with the Member for Klondike about access to services within the territory. Physician recruitment, as you can appreciate, is an ongoing challenge in Yukon. Our population growth, our aging population and subsequent increase in chronic disease are the greatest drivers of the costs in our health care systems.

As physicians retire or leave the territory, Yukon competes with all other jurisdictions in its efforts to attract new doctors to practise here. That is a challenge. The Department of Health and Social Services continues to make the recruitment and retention of physicians to our territory a priority. We appreciate our relationship with the Yukon Medical Association. I would certainly like to recognize the incoming president and congratulate her on her new role, as well as the success that has resulted from our collaborative efforts with YMA.

We also recognize the efforts of individual physicians in attracting new physicians to practise here, and we look forward to working with them in the future.

For the member opposite, I can report that, since 2013, we have been able to recruit 13 new physicians to the territory but, as I've indicated, the greatest drivers of those costs are population growth, our aging population and the increase in chronic disease. We'll continue to work on that recruitment and I thank the member opposite for her question.

**Ms. Stick:** I had one more question. I was just trying to find where it was.

I think that's it, actually. I want to thank the officials for coming in today and thank you, Madam Chair.

**Chair:** Does any other person wish to speak in general debate?

We're going to move on to line-by-line debate.

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***On Corporate Services***

***Corporate Services in the amount of \$83,000 agreed to***

***On Adult Services***

***Adult Services in the amount of \$173,000 agreed to***

***On Health Services***

***Health Services in the amount of \$766,000 agreed to***

***On Continuing Care***

***Continuing Care in the amount of \$846,000 agreed to***

***On Yukon Hospital Services***

**Ms. Stick:** Could I have a breakdown of this line item please?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** The Yukon Hospital Corporation's pension solvency requires \$2,963,000 of supplementary funding based on the 2014 actuarial report.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation requires funding for the interest charge on the letter of credit of \$297,000 related to the pension solvency funding requirements and a total of \$159,000 in contract funding for the Whitehorse General Hospital is allocated for the teleradiology program.

***Yukon Hospital Services in the amount of \$3,419,000 agreed to***

*Total of Other Operation and Maintenance in the amount of nil cleared*

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$5,287,000 agreed to***

***On Capital Expenditures***

***On Corporate Services***

*On Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Workstations and Hardware/Network Equipment*

*Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Workstations and Hardware/Network Equipment in the amount of \$4,000 agreed to*

*On Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Systems Development — Canada Health Infoway: Panorama (Public Health Information)*

*Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Systems Development — Canada Health Infoway: Panorama (Public Health Information) in the amount of \$254,000 agreed to*

*On Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Canada Health Infoway: iEHR (Electronic Health Records)*

*Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Canada Health Infoway: iEHR (Electronic Health Records) in the amount of \$585,000 agreed to*

*On Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Canada Health Infoway: HIS-EMR Connect (Hospital Information System and Electronic Medical Recording Connect)*

*Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Canada Health Infoway: HIS-EMR Connect (Hospital Information System and Electronic Medical Recording Connect) in the amount of \$237,000 agreed to*

*On Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Various Systems Development Projects*

*Information Technology Equipment and Systems — Various Systems Development Projects in the amount of \$41,000 agreed to*

***On Family and Children's Services***

*On Young Offender Facilities — Building Maintenance, Renovations and Space*

*Young Offender Facilities — Building Maintenance, Renovations and Space in the amount of \$15,000 agreed to*

***On Adult Services***

*On Alcohol and Drug Services — Sarah Steele Building Replacement Project*

*Alcohol and Drug Services — Sarah Steele Building Replacement Project in the amount of \$167,000 agreed to*

*On Alcohol and Drug Services — Operational Equipment*

*Alcohol and Drug Services — Operational Equipment in the amount of \$8,000 agreed to*

*On Income Support — Building Maintenance, Renovations and Space*

**Ms. Stick:** I would like a breakdown on this. We see that what was voted to date has more than doubled with this supplementary bit.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** This area of supplementary funding of \$225,000 is requested for the Kluhini Building renovation project to complete security renovations and upgrades to the Social Assistance program offices.

*Income Support — Building Maintenance, Renovations and Space in the amount of \$225,000 agreed to*

*On Income Support — Operational Equipment*

*Income Support — Operational Equipment in the amount of \$20,000 agreed to*

*On Income Support — Office Furniture and Equipment*

*Income Support — Office Furniture and Equipment in the amount of \$4,000 agreed to*

*On Adult Residential Services — St. Elias Replacement Project*

*Adult Residential Services — St. Elias Replacement Project in the amount of \$184,000 agreed to*

***On Community and Program Support***

*On Office Furniture and Equipment*

*Office Furniture and Equipment in the amount of \$10,000 agreed to*

***On Health Services***

*On Insured Health, Hearing Services and Vital Statistics — Building Maintenance, Renovations and Space*

*Insured Health, Hearing Services and Vital Statistics — Building Maintenance, Renovations and Space in the amount of \$12,000 agreed to*

*On Community Health — Operational Equipment*

*Community Health — Operational Equipment in the amount of \$46,000 agreed to*

***On Continuing Care***

*On Copper Ridge Place — Energy Projects*

**Ms. Stick:** I am wondering if I would have an explanation as to what this is.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Copper Ridge Place renovations are a revote of \$126,000 and supplementary funding of \$4,000 requested to complete an energy audit at Copper Ridge Place.

**Ms. Stick:** Are we completing an energy audit or is this part of an energy retrofit?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** We are completing an energy audit.

*Copper Ridge Place — Energy Projects in the amount of \$130,000 agreed to*

*On McDonald Lodge — Operational Equipment*

*McDonald Lodge — Operational Equipment in the amount of \$168,000 agreed to*

*On McDonald Lodge — Replacement*

*McDonald Lodge — Replacement in the amount of \$6,000 agreed to*

*On New Whitehorse Continuing Care Facility*

**Ms. Stick:** I wonder if I could have a breakdown of this line item. I'm curious as to whether some of this money would

have gone to the three companies that were shortlisted in doing the planning for the project.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** The \$435,000 for the new Whitehorse continuing care facility planning for Whistle Bend — a revote of \$435,000 is requested to support the continuation of planning on the Whistle Bend continuing care facility project. As for specific funding for the proponents that have put bids forward, I'm going to have to get back to the member opposite.

*New Whitehorse Continuing Care Facility in the amount of \$435,000 agreed to*

*On 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Continuing Care Home*

*6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Continuing Care Home in the amount of \$420,000 agreed to*

**On Yukon Hospital Services**

*On Yukon Hospital Corporation — Old Watson Lake Hospital — Demolition*

**Ms. Stick:** I'm just wondering if I can ask a couple of questions around this. With the demolition and it being an older building, are we aware of asbestos in the old hospital? The second part of the question would be where all the demolition material will be heading.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** The \$900,000 increase for the Yukon Hospital Corporation is requested to demolish the old Watson Lake hospital. We — when I say “we” I'm talking about the Department of Community Services, the Department of Highways and Public Works — work closely with the contractor to mitigate any sort of issues that might come out of the demolition of a project like that, and when there are issues, like asbestos, that come up, how to deal with those issues and where those products would be placed.

The Minister of Community Services can speak at greater length as to the “where” question, and the Minister of Highways and Public Works would work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, as we will, on the “how” — and that's if there are issues like asbestos that come up, how we best mitigate those responsibilities.

I'm under the impression that any contractor taking down an old building would have an expectation placed on them to be aware and conscientious of those kinds of mitigating factors.

We continue to work with the Hospital Corporation on that demolition and this \$900,000 is really a commitment to the Town of Watson Lake and to you, Madam Chair, as the MLA for that area.

**Ms. Stick:** Do we anticipate that this \$900,000 will cover the complete demolition and removal of materials of the old Watson Lake hospital?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** To the best of our knowledge, the \$900,000 will be adequate to cover the costs. As with any other project, things can come up, but we don't anticipate that. We expect that the \$900,000 should be sufficient.

*Yukon Hospital Corporation — Old Watson Lake Hospital — Demolition in the amount of \$900,000 agreed to*  
*On Total of Other Capital*

*Total of Other Capital in the amount of nil cleared*

**Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$3,871,000 agreed to**

**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$9,158,000 agreed to**

**Department of Health and Social Services agreed to**

**Chair:** We are moving on to general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment. Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes.

*Recess*

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment.

**Department of Environment**

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Before I get started, I want to thank the department for all their hard work and I want to introduce Joe MacGillivray, the deputy minister, who is here to assist me today.

Before I get into the supplementary budget that I am presenting today, I just wanted to read a good news release that we put out a short time ago that was related to our supplementary estimates here.

“The Government of Yukon is investing \$522,000 this fiscal year to add more campsites to three campgrounds and to repair or replace facilities at up to 12 others...” That was announced by me. “This investment delivers on the government's mandate to expand camping opportunities through more campgrounds, more campsites and improved amenities... This work will not only help Yukon Parks deliver a better, safer camping experience but also provide economic and job opportunities for local businesses.

“The renewal and expansion project includes: \$237,000 (estimated) to build 22 new campsites in three heavily used campgrounds – Marsh Lake (six), Wolf Creek (nine) and Twin Lakes (seven)... \$185,000 (estimated) to undertake roof repairs, replace outhouse holding-tanks, fix boat launches and docks, replace broken fire rings, fix outhouses, remove hazardous trees and purchase bear-proof food lockers.

“This project complements the construction work underway at the new 35-site Conrad campground near Carcross, as well as the extended season now offered at 10 major campgrounds. The new ‘infill’ campsites will be ready for use in spring 2016. Construction and repair work on campground infrastructure will take place on a priority basis, with completion times dependent on the weather.

“The Yukon government's 41 roadside campgrounds are increasingly popular, posting a 13 per cent increase in visitation between 2012 and 2014. An estimated 34,000 daily permits and 2,200 annual campground permits were sold this season. At just \$12 a night, with free firewood, government campgrounds are an inexpensive way to get outside and enjoy nature.”

I just think that campgrounds are very popular in the Yukon — very popular with Yukoners — and I thought I

would read that out. I know Yukoners like this and were very happy when it came out.

Madam Chair, the supplementary budget that I am presenting today for the Department of Environment would result in an increase of \$552,000, or just over one percent of the \$41.166 million voted to date. Much of the \$552,000 net increase is due to capital improvements particular to our campground system.

This budget is a good example of the wide range of activities undertaken by the department in support of our mandate in actively implementing the provisions of First Nation final agreements, providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities in our parks and in our campgrounds, managing human impacts on fish and wildlife, addressing the challenge of global climate change, and taking the lead role in regulating and enforcing safe standards for our air, water and soil.

With respect to operation and maintenance expenditures, approval for a net decrease of \$68,000 is sought. In the Corporate Services area, a total of \$598,000 is required — \$535,000 in additional funding for four projects approved under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. These funds are 100-percent recoverable from Canada. The projects are the recently concluded North Slope conference, the ecological land classification project, the operations of the Wildlife Management Advisory Council on the North Slope, and the operations at Herschel Island Territorial Park. There is \$56,000 for completing all the actions set out in the 2014-15 workplan for the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. The recovery for these funds was recorded in the fiscal 2014-15 year.

There is \$7,000 in additional funding to complete the Arctic adaptation portal, developed by the Climate Change Secretariat in partnership with several government organizations. For those who are listening, if anybody hasn't gone to that website, they should look at it. It's incredible — some of the knowledge and sharing that goes on there.

In the environmental sustainability area, a total of \$221,000 is sought. \$142,000 is to be used for six fish and wildlife projects, including a wolf survey in game management zone 7 and a moose survey in the goldfields area. \$69,000 is needed to continue with the implementation of the *Yukon Water Strategy and Action Plan*, and \$10,000 is needed by the Standards and Approvals unit for a third-party technical review that is required for the assurance of *Environment Act* permits under the regulatory review process. There are recoveries associated with some of these activities, totalling \$100,000.

Lastly, approval is needed for a net decrease in operation and maintenance funds for the environmental liabilities and remediation area. First, a revote totalling \$113,000 is needed to complete three projects coordinated by the Site Assessment and Remediation unit. We have a \$1-million decrease in expenditures for the Marwell tar pit remediation project, because we had to defer work at this site to 2016-17. Rest assured that the work will be done. It will start a year later than we had first planned.

That concludes the changes requested to the operation and maintenance budget requirements for the Department of Environment.

With respect to the capital expenditures, the department seeks approval for an additional \$620,000 for 2015-16. In the area of environmental sustainability, a net increase of \$167,000 is needed. Most significant is the reallocation of \$522,000 in expenditures for the construction of the new campground on Atlin Lake. The project continues to be on hold due to the legal action by the Taku River Tlingit First Nation. Instead, the department plans to invest that \$522,000 in an ambitious campground renewal and expansion program.

First, there will be 22 new infill sites at these campgrounds — the equivalent of a new campground — spread over Twin Lakes, Wolf Creek and Marsh Lake campgrounds, which are some of our busiest campgrounds. Second, there will be infrastructure improvements that will result in better, safer camping experiences for Yukoners and visitors. New outhouses, required boat launches, new fire rings and much, much more are being dealt with.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

**Mr. Elias:** I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

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

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 91, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 20, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, and directed me to report progress.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**Mr. Elias:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.*

**Written notice was given of the following motion  
November 30, 2015:**

Motion No. 1099

Re: supporting infrastructure needs of the north (McLeod)