



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, October 9, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2019 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, October 9, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

**Speaker:** We will proceed with the Order Paper. Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Today we are about to give a tribute to United Way Yukon, and I wonder if we could please all welcome Mr. Dave Whiteside, the president of United Way Yukon, and Jamie Boyd, the executive director. Also, just in behind them are Deputy Minister of Community Services Matt King and the Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture, who were the hosts for this year, Val Royle. If we could welcome them, please.

*Applause*

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I would like my colleagues to help me welcome Jacqueline Bedard to the Legislative Assembly today. She is here for a very special bill that we will be introducing later. Thank you for coming.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of United Way Yukon

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I rise on behalf of the government and the Third Party to pay tribute to United Way Month, which takes place every October. United Way contributes to the lives and well-being of Yukoners. Since 1994 — 25 years — United Way Yukon has raised more than \$2.5 million to assist local charities through a variety of fundraising activities. United Way Yukon's mission is to improve lives and build community by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action.

As United Way has supported Yukoners, Yukoners have supported United Way. On September 7, the second annual Air North plane-pull contest was held, which raised over \$9,000 in additional funds — and that is what I call mobilizing collective action, Mr. Speaker.

At our most recent United Way breakfast on September 27, we raised over \$22,000. Supporting this annual event is an important part of Yukon government's partnership with and commitment to United Way Yukon. Best of all, all of the money donated by Yukoners stays in the Yukon.

Thanks to our co-chairs James Paterson and Claire Daitch for their commitment and leadership and also to Hillery Blower and the whole organizing committee. Thank you to all of the sponsors, donors, attendees, media partners, and volunteers who made the event possible. Thank you as well to the servers

who took time out of their busy schedule to support the breakfast. The Premier and Senator Duncan were serving pancakes and I saw the Leader of the NDP greeting folks as they came in with a smile and were handing out plates.

By the way, this was a zero-waste event, and I would like to give a shout-out to all those Yukoners who brought their own plates and cutlery. It was the most that I have ever seen at a United Way breakfast.

I also want to thank the entertainers, Remy Rodden, Clayton Chapman, and the Fiddleheads, who delivered fantastic performances. The Fiddleheads delivered that performance taking up the full stage.

On behalf of the Department of Community Services, we want to acknowledge the support of the Department of Tourism and Culture for their leadership in making this event a reality. The theme of this year's breakfast was "Caring and Connected". This theme is very appropriate, as United Way Yukon is all about coming together and offering compassionate support to our fellow Yukoners, whether that support is in housing, employment, or food. Speaking of food — I understand that the Leader of the Official Opposition was serving bacon at the breakfast.

The Government of Yukon is proud to support United Way and to celebrate this month. We want to wish the staff and volunteers at United Way Yukon all the best with their important efforts and recognize their hard work and dedication to building a better Yukon.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to United Way Yukon for the help they provide to many charity organizations that fund programs and projects throughout the territory.

The priorities are slated into three categories: all that kids can be; from poverty to possibility; and healthy people, strong communities — all self explanatory.

United Way Yukon is an umbrella organization and, with the recognizable name, is a major fund-raiser in Yukon. They then receive applications for funding support for grants up to \$10,000. Decisions have to be made as to which worthy project is included each year. These incredible projects and programs would not be possible if it wasn't for the generosity of Yukoners.

Yukoners come out every year to organize and volunteer for fun community events during the United Way Yukon fundraising campaign. The 2019 plane-pull hosted by Air North, Yukon's airline, was a great success, and I hear that, for the second year in a row, NVD/Yukon Brewing secured bragging rights.

During the United Way breakfast, members of our caucus were excited to take part in serving Yukoners a hot meal for a great cause. This event is probably the best known. While I was sad to miss this year due to other commitments, I was told the turnout was incredible.

Thank you to the staff of the Department of Community Services and Department of Tourism and Culture for the wonderful job they did in organizing this important fundraiser.

To all of the staff and volunteers who worked to serve up breakfast, get auction items, and provide very early morning entertainment — thank you.

There are many ways to become involved with United Way, become a workplace volunteer, organize an interesting event, or become a member. Events in the past have included — and I am only naming a few — a millennium walk hosted by the RCMP, a baking/cooking contest hosted by Northwestel, and a mixed curling bonspiel hosted by EBA. I would like to acknowledge all who get involved in any way, as the need for support is always great.

I will leave you with the United Way Yukon mission statement — quote: “We envision a Yukon where people and their families receive the support they need to live healthy and productive lives.” From our caucus: thank you, United Way Yukon, for all that you do for so many.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Week**

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute and acknowledge that this week is Mental Illness Awareness Week.

Mental Illness Awareness Week was created to help reduce the stigma associated with living with mental illness, and we want all Yukoners to know that it is okay to reach out for help when you need it.

There are many places to access help, and we want to reduce the barriers that prevent people from using the tools and services that are in place to assist with overcoming mental illness and mental health issues. One in four Canadians live with mental health issues, and often this reality looks much different from what we expect. From October 6 to 12, we invite Yukoners to learn about wellness strategies, to join the Canadian Mental Health Association Yukon’s free yoga and mindful meditation sessions, and to participate in an open house at the Sarah Steele Building on October 9 to learn more about the programming available to assist those struggling with mental health.

Mental illness affects all of us in profound and deeply personal ways, whether directly through depression, anxiety, PTSD, or the numerous other illnesses that exist or indirectly through seeing a loved one struggle with the effects that these illnesses can have if they are left untreated. To the mother with post-partum depression: we see you; to the teen with anxiety or suicidal thoughts: we are here to embrace you and support you. Many courageous Yukoners live with these issues and they inspire us to persevere, to rise up and work together to ensure that our communities rejuvenate, thrive, and grow.

Yukoners can access services through the Canadian Mental Health Association Yukon and All Genders Yukon Society, Health and Social Services, mental wellness and substance use hubs, as well as through many other workshops and programs that are offered through our government to support those who strive to improve their overall mental health and wellness.

Collectively, Yukon’s Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services provide a light through the dark with their counselling services and support groups, and are meant to help hubs in the communities ensure that help is available whenever Yukoners

are in need. This week and every other week, we will think of those around us who have hidden struggles and give them a hand. We will make sure that no one is left on their own.

*Applause*

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to recognize October 6 to 12 as Mental Illness Awareness Week across Canada, raising awareness of the fact that mental illness affects all of us in some way and working toward not disseminating the stigma that goes along with it. One in three Canadians will experience some form of mental illness or substance abuse problem in their life. Not all seek help and not all show signs of needing help.

Mental Illness Awareness Week is about showing those who are experiencing problems that they can ask for help. You are not weak. You are not different. What you are experiencing is something that many others are going through. There is help available to navigate and overcome mental illness and substance use disorders and it can get better.

It is the responsibility of government to ensure that services are provided to Yukoners to help them on their journey to mental wellness. Community mental health and addiction programs are key to seeing Yukoners thrive. We must ensure that these programs and services continue to meet the needs of Yukoners, but that responsibility goes beyond government. We each have a role to play in ensuring mental wellness. Check in on your family and friends. Mental wellness in individuals is key to a healthy community. If you or someone you know are facing issues related to mental health or substance abuse, please reach out. Have the conversation and know that there is a path forward. There is someone to talk to, there is help available, and there is a community behind you.

I would like to recognize each and every mental health professional and organization, past and present, for the work they do to keep our communities healthy.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Thank you. Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

### **PETITIONS**

#### **Petition No. 11 — response**

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I rise today as Acting Minister of Education to respond to a petition on school bus safety that was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on April 25, 2019. There were 129 Yukoners who signed a petition which called for dashboard cameras to be installed on school buses and consultations on legislative changes to increase penalties for illegally passing a school bus.

The health and safety of students and staff is always our first priority. The Government of Yukon is committed to providing students with safe, effective transportation to and from school every day. The departments of Education, Justice, and Highways and Public Works are working with the RCMP, Standard Bus, and school communities to address concerns

about bus safety along the highways and to promote safe driving near school buses and schools.

To date, this collaboration has resulted in actions such as a school bus safety information campaign, a dashboard camera pilot project, enhanced enforcement activities on targeted bus routes, and ongoing safety assessments on bus routes.

In March 2019, the Department of Education began a pilot project to determine the effectiveness of using dashboard cameras on school buses in the Whitehorse area. This pilot project is in partnership with the school bus contractor, Standard Bus. Dashboard cameras were installed on four school buses and are being used to record the exterior view from the school bus. Cameras are positioned to record vehicles passing the bus when the stop lights and arm are engaged. Footage captures the arm being activated and captures a full range or image of the vehicles passing. The pilot is to determine whether these cameras are effective in recording and providing evidence of incidents of illegal and dangerous driving around school buses, such as failing to stop for a school bus with flashing lights.

The camera recordings can also provide us with more information on where, when, and how often incidents may occur. The cameras have functioned well so far, and we determined we need to further assess how the cameras function year-round in the Yukon, including during low light, snowy and cold weather conditions. Therefore, the pilot has been extended to the end of the 2019-20 school year. We want to ensure we are investing in the right tools to enforce safety on Yukon highways and to protect our students.

In addition to the pilot, the Government of Yukon is also working with partners at the national level. The Government of Canada sets the regulations for physical safety requirements on school buses, including seating. Yukon school buses meet these national standards.

The Government of Yukon is part of a Transportation Canada review of school bus safety measures in Canada and part of the established task force on school bus safety. The task force is reviewing data on school bus safety and will identify potential ways to strengthen school bus safety across Canada.

On the call for public consultation on legislative changes to increase penalties for illegally passing school buses, the Government of Yukon is working on a new *Motor Vehicles Act*. This is an important piece of legislation that protects everyone on Yukon roads, including students in school buses. In March of 2019, the Government of Yukon increased the penalties for failing to stop for a school bus to the maximum currently allowed. Fines have been increased from \$200 to \$500 and demerit points increased from five to eight.

The new *Motor Vehicles Act* will address a number of emerging and long-standing traffic safety issues, including improvements to school bus safety. Part of the work to modernize the act included a public survey from April to May of 2019 for Yukoners to provide their input. In the survey, we asked the public for feedback about how we can further strengthen penalties for failing to stop for a school bus. We look forward to introducing further improvements to safety with the new *Motor Vehicles Act*.

I will take this opportunity to remind everyone that we all share the responsibility for keeping students and bus drivers safe when they are on the road. All Yukoners must do their part to remind friends and family to drive safely near school buses, stop when they see the red blinking lights of a school bus, and follow the rules of the road.

Thanks to everyone who took the time to express themselves on this important issue.

**Speaker:** Are there any bills to be introduced?

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 2: *Yukon University Act* — Introduction and First Reading

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I move that Bill No. 2, entitled *Yukon University Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Acting Minister of Education that Bill No. 2, entitled *Yukon University Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 2 agreed to*

### Bill No. 7: *Technical Amendments Act, 2019* — Introduction and First Reading

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** As Acting Minister of Justice, I move that Bill No. 7, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2019*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Acting Minister of Justice that Bill No. 7, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2019*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 7 agreed to*

**Speaker:** Are there any further bills for introduction?  
Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House endorses the implementation of the 2018 *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*.

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

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the 10-year capital plan for schools that was promised by the Minister of Education in the 2017 Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to work with the communities of Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay, Haines Junction, Canyon Creek, Champagne, Mendenhall, and Takhini to improve the current standard of highway vegetation control, as requested by

those communities, in order to address safety concerns and improve visibility.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to do a review of highway maintenance practices, including:

(1) reviewing the resources for each maintenance camp to ensure that they are adequate, including financial resources and necessary training and equipment;

(2) reviewing and improving maintenance coverage times, including overnight maintenance to ensure that roads are safe for truck drivers and other travellers;

(3) ensuring public safety on highways for emergency vehicles, school buses, long-haul vehicles, tourists, and the general public;

(4) seeking input from front-line employees who maintain Yukon's highways; and

(5) ensuring that there are suitable and sufficient resources to adequately address issues including ice, snow, change in weather patterns, sightline visibility, permafrost issues, water adjacent to the road, traffic volumes, and BST and pavement degradation.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to commit to developing communications infrastructure in rural Yukon, including partnering with the private sector to expand cellular phone coverage to people without service in areas including Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fox Lake, Ibex Valley, Junction 37, Champagne, Mendenhall, and the north Alaska Highway.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### 40 Developmental Assets Model

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, our Liberal government is committed to Yukoners living healthier, happier lives, and this work begins with our youth. Our children and our youth are our greatest assets and they are the future of the Yukon. Their development, mental wellness, mental health, and education are of primary importance to our Liberal government. We are always working to enhance and to support services available for our Yukon youth in all of our communities.

Today I'm very excited to discuss the latest initiative launched by the Government of Yukon's Youth Directorate, and that is the 40 developmental assets model. The Youth Directorate is delivering workshops on Yukon's new youth-focused 40 developmental assets model in eight communities this month. This is in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Yukon and it will help adults in those communities understand how to best support our youth.

The workshops focus on 40 "assets", which is a term used for factors deemed essential for youth to succeed. These assets are key traits, values, and experiences that young people need in order to be healthy, be successful, and reach their full

potential. They are building blocks or assets that are grounded in research on child and adolescent development, risk prevention, and resiliency. When a young person increases the number of assets they have, research shows that they become happier and more resilient.

While we refer to it as a program or a model, it is really more of a mindset. It is intended to help parents, coaches, and community members better mentor and nurture our youth. At the core of it, we are trying to focus on promoting and building up the strengths of our youth to empower them to overcome challenges and problems that they and their families will face growing up.

Our Youth Directorate adapted this model from the Minneapolis-based Search Institute and their Canadian counterpart, Lions Quest Canada, making sure that it was relevant to the unique needs of Yukoners. This Yukonized version incorporates wisdom and experiences of Yukon elders and rural First Nation communities, such as the importance of spending time on the land and connecting with nature. External assets include family supports, empowerment, boundaries, expectations, and how to use time constructively. Internal assets include commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Young people need to feel that they have control over what happens in their lives. They need to have high self-esteem, including a connection to their families, culture, customs, and traditional ways. They need to have a sense of purpose in life and be optimistic about the future. To achieve these goals, young people also need a community that supports them, and that is where the rest of us step in.

A young person needs a wide support network that has foundations throughout the community. We need to support and encourage our youth and provide them with the tools that they need to achieve their dreams while we model responsible behaviour for them. It is also vital for young people that their support networks extend beyond their immediate family. Teachers, coaches, and other parents and volunteers all have a role to play in ensuring that our youth are confident and successful.

First Nation communities across the territory already exemplify the communal approach to child raising, and that is something that we can learn from. There are many factors that influence a young person's development, and we can hardly limit them to 40.

This is just one way that we are supporting our youth, and I look forward to seeing results from these workshops.

**Mr. Hassard:** It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement. According to the Yukon government's partner, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Yukon — and I quote: "With over 20 years of research, the Search Institute of Minnesota has found 40 factors that are essential to young people's success. They are traits, values and experiences that all young people need to be healthy, successful and reach their full potential regardless of gender, ethnic heritage, socioeconomic status, or geographic location. The Youth Directorate has adopted" — as the Premier said — "the

‘Yukonized’ version of the assets, approved by the Search Institute by incorporating the wisdom of elders and rural Yukon First Nations.” These are important goals that we support and we look forward to hearing the outcomes of the workshops.

We do have a few questions about this project that we hope the Premier can answer when he is back on his feet. We have noticed that some Yukon communities appear to have been excluded from the workshops — Ross River, Old Crow, Pelly Crossing, and Beaver Creek, to name a few — so we are wondering if the Premier can tell us why the Liberals are not hosting workshops in all Yukon communities.

As well, Mr. Speaker, another question that we have for the Premier is about how the government will measure the success of this program. Does baseline data for Yukon youth exist for these 40 developmental assets so that we know where we are starting from and what the goals are for the program so that we know where we are planning to go? How will other departments, such as Education and Health and Social Services, be involved in this work? Finally, while we respect the work that Big Brothers Big Sisters does here in the Yukon, there are other NGOs that offer services to youth as well. Was there a process for other NGOs to be able to submit to be Yukon’s partner in this project?

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will just thank you. We look forward to hearing the results of this work and hope that the government will consider including all Yukon communities.

**Ms. Hanson:** The Yukon New Democratic Party is always pleased to hear about developments or ideas that have the potential to improve the lives of Yukon youth. While we appreciate that the 40 developmental assets model will be disseminated throughout the Yukon through training, we have a number of questions regarding the model and how the largely descriptive assets are intended to go beyond the aspirational.

While the developmental assets lay out a number of factors that are important to young people’s success, many of them rely on the presence of a strong community and a supportive family. This is unfortunately a luxury that not all Yukon youth have, and it is these youth who need our help the most. That is why we hope that the rollout of this model places an increased emphasis on reducing barriers to participation and improving conditions for inclusion for marginalized and excluded youth. Removing barriers to participation like cost and transportation can help get youth in the door, but it is just as important that our models are structured in a way so as to create an inclusive space to keep them there.

From all accounts, there is no better way to develop youth support training and models than actually engaging with Yukon’s youth and hearing directly from them what they believe are the most important factors for their development. A key component of youth inclusion — or perhaps the key component — is getting to know youth on a one-to-one level. There is no shortcut to youth participation, and there is no replacement for good, honest conversation.

We noticed that this training was Yukonized, with engagement with elders and rural First Nation communities. This is a great first step, but it seems like not including the voice

of youth in the creation of their own developmental model is a huge missed opportunity. We will be looking to the Premier to provide further information on what financial commitments to this project entail — whether it is a one-year commitment or multi-year commitment, what evaluation criteria are to be put in place to determine the efficacy of this program, and whether it has had a measurably positive impact on the livelihoods of Yukon youth.

As the Premier said, this is a matter that is worthy of conversation. It’s unfortunate that it’s being done in a back-and-forth simply by having a reaction to a statement as opposed to creating an environment for a conversation in the Legislative Assembly on this important issue. So, while we are supportive of the intent of this work, we believe it cannot be considered “Yukonized” until Yukon youth have had their say.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thank you to the members opposite for their comments today.

I would say that this conversation might be the first time that we’ve had this conversation in the Legislative Assembly, but it doesn’t limit us to not increasing that conversation when we talk in Committee of the Whole in my department — the Executive Council Office, in which the Youth Directorate lives — or when the members opposite ask questions in Question Period about this as well.

To say that youth were not consulted on this — again, this initiative did not necessarily come from the political people you see here in front of you. It came from the Youth Directorate, and the Youth Directorate’s job is to work with youth. Again, when we’re looking at the best model moving forward, who better to pick this model than the people in the government who work hands-on with our youth on a daily basis? I want to thank the small but mighty department of the Youth Directorate for their initiative to get out, engage with the stakeholders, and talk about this particular initiative.

The complete goal of this, Mr. Speaker — to be frank — is that there is a certain threshold of these 40 assets. I believe the number is 15, but I will check back with the Youth Directorate again. With all the partnerships and all the different types of support that we offer to our youth in the communities and in Whitehorse — whether it be through BYTE, the Boys and Girls Club of Yukon, individual youth centres, teachers, or coaches — if we can all be on the same ground, have the same assessment network, and allow ourselves to concentrate on allowing the largest breadth of these 15 to 40 assessments, then you are going to pretty much guarantee a better life for these kids and youths. It has been tried, tested, and true in other jurisdictions.

There are lots of other models we could have picked. The Youth Directorate, through their coordination with other associations here in Yukon — and also in Canada and beyond — have gone with this because it works. This is just the first of that conversation. We have identified the 40 assets that are crucial to youth development. We are better understanding the factors that influence the positive development of our youth and we are better able to now support the NGOs, the community partners, and the service providers to deliver the services that

the youth need. This guides us. It guides our support. It guides a coordinated effort, taking the concept of a whole-of-government approach to now a whole-of-community approach, working intergovernmentally with other governments in the Yukon — working with the support crews, whether through the schools or the different agencies and NGOs. This guide is going to help us and it will, in turn, support our youth.

I want to say a big thank you to the Youth Directorate for leading this. I want to say a big thank you to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Yukon for their continued support on this — also Lions Quest Canada and the Search Institute and also community partners such as the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre and others. I want to thank the members opposite for the time today to have this conversation about our most important asset, which is our youth.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Budget estimates and spending

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberals tabled a supplementary budget taking the Yukon further into deficit. The Premier tried to blame this on forest fires but glossed over the fact that the supplementary budget included \$63.8 million in new spending and most of it appears to be for unbudgeted infrastructure projects associated with rushed federal pre-election spending. The federal Liberal government spent the months before the election campaigning with taxpayers' money as they rolled out photo op after photo op across the country with Liberal MPs. Many already view this desperate federal pre-election spending as questionable, and it looks like tens of millions of increased spending in this supplementary budget are due to the territorial government supporting this pre-election spending.

It appears that a big part of why the Yukon is going further into deficit is that the territorial Liberals are effectively using taxpayers' money to support pre-election campaign announcements for the Trudeau Liberals.

Why did the Premier neglect to mention this yesterday?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, what we have here is an open and accountable government that gives more information, not less. The pages of the supplementary estimates show exactly what this government has been doing to find efficiencies, to work with the federal government to find flexibility on federal dollars, to maximize our ability to work with other governments when it comes to that flexibility — for example, working with First Nation governments to be able to stack funding is something that we're excited about, and the possibilities therein — and working trilaterally with municipalities, First Nation governments, and this government as well to address the fact that we are in a boom and we need to make sure that we have the assets out the door that are necessary.

I am very proud of the work that the Minister of Community Services has done — and Minister of Highways and Public Works and others — to make sure that we maximize

these dollars, and a lot of the money that is being spent in the supplementary budget are recoverable through federal dollars.

But it is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that we had to spend a lot more money this year on forest fires, and that's where the majority of this supplementary budget comes from. Mr. Speaker, again, I am happy with the financial acumen of the Department of Finance to be able to account for most of our spending in the spring as opposed to having two budgets each year. I think that we've done a lot to make some more transparent and accountable financial processes for Yukoners to see.

**Mr. Cathers:** The Premier might want to check his math. Of the \$63.8 million in increased spending in his budget, the vast majority has nothing to do with forest fires.

The fact of the matter is that the Liberals in the Yukon are taking the territory further into deficit, and it appears that much of this new spending is an attempt to try to get the Trudeau Liberals re-elected. This is an inappropriate use of the Yukon's finances. This money belongs to Yukon taxpayers, not to the Liberal Party. If this spending was so urgent and so important, then why did the Liberals wait until the eve of the federal election to spend it? Why didn't they include it in the Premier's budget that we debated only five months ago? It appears that the Liberals are running the Yukon's finances further into the red to support the federal Liberal re-election campaign by rushing the spending out the door.

Does the Premier believe this is appropriate, and if so, why?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will have to look back on how long ago it was, but I'm sure it's over a year ago that we announced an additional \$600 million over the next 10 years through the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. That's on top of the \$342 million for the small communities fund and the nearly \$69 million in the clean water and waste-water fund. All of these funds — when we add them up — if we want to invest and to reinvest in the infrastructure across this territory, that's a great deal of spending.

The news here is that once again the Department of Community Services was able to get more projects going this year, and I will stand up happily and defend that during the budget debates.

We've been working in partnership with municipalities and First Nations on infrastructure and priorities across the whole of the Yukon in all communities. I'm curious as to which one of those projects the member opposite thinks we shouldn't be doing. I'm happy to get a list.

The investment that we are making now is because we were able to get the funds going and go further with our infrastructure dollars using an envelope approach. We're very excited about it for all of our communities.

**Mr. Cathers:** The minister and the Premier know full well this has everything to do with the timing of this rushed spending and the fact that it's a whopping \$63.8 million more than they budgeted this spring. The Premier infamously took a record amount of time to call the Legislature back after an election and, when asked about it, claimed he needed extra time because he was going to have the best budgets ever and his



forecasting would be far more accurate — he claimed — with small variances in there. Now when it comes time for the federal election campaign, we find out that promise came with a very big red asterisk.

The Liberals' projected deficit of \$5.6 million has now ballooned to a deficit of \$20 million. They rushed infrastructure projects out the door that were not in the budget this spring. It appears that as much as \$35.6 million in questionable new spending is related to rushed pre-election campaign announcements with the Trudeau Liberals. It appears the primary purpose for rushing this spending was to support the federal Liberal election campaign.

Can the Premier tell us why, if his budgets were supposed to be so accurate, we see a whopping \$63.8 —

**Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** With all due respect to the members opposite, I will not take financial advice from the Yukon Party, which used the financial department as merely a budgeting rubber stamp.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud of the relationship that we have with all governments, including Ottawa, because with a positive relationship, you see flexibility for federal dollars that actually identify and deal with the fact that the north is a different jurisdiction from the other provinces. As opposed to the Yukon Party — when their guy in Ottawa was dragging low in the polls, so they decided to leave him at the airport in Whitehorse without even as much as a hello — we are creating positive relationships with Ottawa as a government, and we are making sure that those positive relationships — whether they be with First Nation governments, municipality governments, or the federal government — actually help the financial bottom line of this territory, which is what should be our absolutely guiding principle of working as the Minister of Finance.

We do most of our budgeting up front. It's pretty rich to hear the member opposite talking about how big our supplementary budget is compared to their supplementary budgets over their time frame. Again, we have put the money where we need to put it, with the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel and with bolstering up the Department of Finance so that it has the financial scrutiny of every dollar of taxpayer money that we have the honour and the privilege of working with.

#### **Question re: Canadian Armed Forces health care reimbursement**

**Ms. McLeod:** While civilians in Canada have access to health services through provincial and territorial health care plans, the *Canada Health Act* excludes Canadian Armed Forces members from these plans. The Canadian Armed Forces have set up arrangements with other governments to reimburse their health care system so they provide health care services for service members.

Yesterday, *Global News* broke a story indicating that the federal Liberal government has made massive cuts to these reimbursements for health care for members of the Armed Forces. In response to the news story, the Department of National Defence sent a statement to *Global News* stating —

and I quote: We have been working with provincial and territorial governments with respect to recent billing changes.

Can the minister tell us what discussions the territorial government has had with the Department of National Defence specifically to discuss these cuts?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We value the different levels of government that exist within this country and here at home. Here's the second question in a row where the members opposite want us to focus in on a federal election. Members of this House were elected to focus their attention on matters that fall under our jurisdiction, such as health care, for sure — and we've been talking about the programs that are currently happening in health care right now with this government — or maybe let's discuss some of the financings of the Health and Social Services budget that we are here to be discussing.

But the members opposite seem to be more interested in fighting the upcoming federal election here on the floor of this Legislative Assembly. I am more than happy to answer questions about initiatives of the Government of Yukon, if the members opposite have any.

**Ms. McLeod:** I think the question was to the minister about what discussions the territorial government has had with the DND. According to the *Global News* report, the federal Liberal government has made major cuts to health care reimbursements for service members. They have cut the amount covered for an ER visit by 75 percent. For day surgery, they are cutting the amount covered by 96 percent. The Liberals will no longer cover MRI or CT procedures for service members.

So last night, the Minister of National Defence's office issued a statement saying that "The Canadian Forces Health Services Group has been actively working with provincial and territorial governments..." on this issue. Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us how many people in the Yukon are affected by these Liberal cuts to health care for members of the Armed Forces?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite want to fight a federal battle here with the federal government. The members opposite know very well that this initiative did mention once the territorial government in the whole — if they cared to actually listen to the answer to the question — they would much rather have a conversation about the federal government initiatives, the federal Liberal Party.

This is a territorial Liberal Party. If there is anything to update the members opposite on about specific initiatives when it comes to flexibility on health care or about the great work that the Minister of Health and Social Services has done to get flexible funding and alternative funding to help support programs here in the Yukon, we will definitely have that conversation.

But it is obvious what the members opposite are doing — they are not listening to us right now because they want to have a conversation about the federal election here. We are going to have a conversation about the initiatives here in the Yukon, and if we had an update on anything else from the federal government's perspective, we will wait and see which government is going to be in afterwards.

**Ms. McLeod:** If the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services don't know the answer to the questions, maybe they should just say so.

It has been indicated to us that these Liberal cuts to health care for service members may also impact Yukon military service members.

Can the minister confirm this? And will her government write to Ottawa to ask them to reverse these massive cuts to health care for members of the Canadian Armed Forces?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would be happy to rise today to speak to the question. As the Premier indicated, the decisions that are made at the federal level — those are the decisions that they make. Our responsibility really is to look at the care that we provide for Yukoners. The Canadian Armed Forces, as I understand it, unilaterally changed the funding arrangements for health care billing. The changes are being worked through at a technical level — at the DM level — and as the member opposite may know — given that she has heard it on the news — Saskatchewan takes the lead for Canada and through the technical level to have those discussions.

Certainly, we will want to ensure that every Yukoner, every person who resides in Yukon, is given appropriate health care, supports, and services. We will continue to do that and I am proud of that work. At the moment, as I understand it, we are not looking at cuts. We are not looking at any amendments until we have completed our assessments here in the Yukon.

#### **Question re: Internet connectivity**

**Ms. Hanson:** This spring, MTA Fiber, an Alaska-based telecommunications company, announced that they would be constructing a 100-terabit-per-second fibre optic line that would provide overland fibre redundancy to Alaska via the Alaska Highway. The line, built in partnership with Northwestel, will run from central Alaska to the Yukon border and down the Alaska Highway.

This announcement came as a surprise to many in the Yukon, coming on the heels of the Yukon government announcement of building a fibre line along the Dempster to Inuvik at a cost of \$79 million. The MTA fibre line will be completed a year ahead of the Dempster line. Many people question why Yukon did not take advantage of this opportunity to provide Yukon with fibre redundancy at no cost to the government.

Can the minister explain why he was not aware of this possibility of this diverse fibre line and why it was not considered prior to awarding the contract to Northwestel?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Access to the Internet is no longer a luxury. In today's increasingly interconnected world, it is necessary for a strong economy, quality health care, and reliable air travel. Yukon currently depends on a single fibre optic line, and when service on that line goes down, the territory is largely cut off from the digital world, which is one of the reasons why we committed to making a redundant loop in the territory. Working with the federal government, our partners in the Northwest Territories, First Nations, and Northwestel, we are delivering on our commitment to build a fibre optic loop in the territory. Reliable telecommunications are vital to

diversifying our economy and they will help Yukon participate fully in the digital economy. It is one of the initiatives we are doing — there are many others that we are exploring right now.

I thank the member opposite for her question. The fact remains that Alaska is an American state. There are interests in Alaska that are private. They deal with Northwestel — they are two businesses — and sometimes governments are not party to the conversations between two private corporations.

**Ms. Hanson:** The question was about a missed opportunity about a line running through the Yukon. In an interview with the *Yukon News* after the announcement of the Alaska-Yukon fibre line, Northwestel argued that this line would not be an option for fibre redundancy because it would be — and I quote: "... exorbitantly expensive to lease the undersea cables required to create a fibre loop..."

Not only does this statement indicate that the Alaska-Yukon fibre optic route would be an option for Yukon's fibre redundancy, but it also begs the question of whether this government did any comparative cost analysis of this fibre corridor versus the Dempster line — because, as the minister well knows, the alternative is an \$80-million, 777-kilometre-long fibre extension along one of the most remote highways in the world in an area subject to discontinuous permafrost.

Since the Alaska connection was announced, what analysis did the minister undertake to determine whether or not this 100-terabit-per-second fibre line could provide the redundancy that Yukon needs?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Member from Whitehorse Centre for the question. Actually, in the preamble to the second question, she answered her own question.

After the announcement, we reached out to them. This project was not something that was announced or any of the parties were aware of previous to making the decision on redundancy here in Yukon.

Actually, why MTA Fiber is selecting this route is twofold: one, there was a contractor who had successfully bid in the US, and part of the terms of their contract was that they had to provide redundancy out of Alaska. But number two was because the inefficiency and costs that are related with the underwater cable system has led them to actually go through Yukon. So it again shows that the due diligence that was done by the Department of Economic Development was correct when we made the decision to look at the Dempster versus moving through Skagway and the unreliable cable system that was laid on the ocean floor.

Secondly, this may be a third opportunity for us for redundancy, but once again, the cost associated with moving data through Alaska — again, that is something that is just not feasible for our companies.

**Ms. Hanson:** So I take it from this that anybody can build anything in the Yukon without Yukon oversight.

It's difficult for members of this Legislative Assembly or the public to make their own assessment of Yukon's fibre redundancy project because the government's feasibility studies have not been shared publicly. For years, the Yukon has had some of the slowest and most expensive Internet costs in

Canada. It is well-known that faster and cheaper Internet can contribute to innovation, and while the Dempster fibre option will eliminate the possibility of fibre outages, according to the Yukon government's own report, it will not increase Internet speeds or reduce costs.

We appreciate that this government has made investing in innovation and tech industries a priority. Yet Internet costs are higher and speeds continue to lag behind the rest of Canada.

What consideration did this government give to actively seeking competitive bids that guaranteed reduced costs and higher speeds for consumers? Higher speeds reduce costs, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am so happy to talk about this, this afternoon. I really am. There are some really exciting initiatives underway. Just yesterday, Northwestel announced that it was launching what I'm calling "Connect Yukon 2.0" which is a plan through the CRTC and an application of the CRTC to raise bandwidth throughout the territory to 50 megabits down and 10 up. This is an absolutely incredible initiative and we're looking forward to seeing what the CRTC does with the submission from Northwestel, but it will greatly enhance Internet connectivity in the territory to something that hitherto could not have been considered. We're really happy with that now.

The member opposite was talking about redundant fibre, and of course we did our due diligence. Economic Development did an analysis of the various options. We actually put it out for bid to see if anyone was willing to provide bids on the redundant fibre line. We didn't get any solid applications on that process, so we went with an all-Canadian route up the Dempster. Our Liberal government secured a funding agreement with the Government of Canada for nearly \$60 million to build that line. We negotiated a deal with Northwestel to operate and maintain that line at no cost to government. It is a good deal.

#### **Question re: Coffee Gold project**

**Mr. Kent:** In yesterday's 2019-20 interim fiscal and economic update tabled by the Premier, there was a statement about the Coffee Gold project near Dawson City. The report says — and I quote: "The recent merger of Gold Corp. and Newmont Mining Corp. has created uncertainty about the development timeline of the Coffee Gold mine."

Can the Premier tell this House what source was used to arrive at this statement?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I believe what was referred to was — in April 2019, Newmont Mining Corporation and Gold Corp. announced the successful completion of their merger, making Newmont Gold Corp. the largest gold-mining company in the world. The Government of Yukon has always been encouraged by Newmont Mining Corporation and Gold Corp. — their investment in the Coffee Gold project in Yukon. We look forward, of course, to continuing this good relationship under the new corporate merger.

The proposed Coffee Gold mine is currently in the environmental and socio-economic assessment process, and the company is working on responding to the information requests that have arisen from this.

I look forward to questions 2 and 3. I believe that what the Premier spoke to was the fact that this merger has happened, and producing and non-producing assets are being reviewed by the Newmont corporation as they make decisions to move forward.

**Mr. Kent:** The interim fiscal and economic update report goes on to say — and I will quote: "With questions about the newly formed Newmont Gold Corp.'s plans for Coffee, development may not proceed as currently envisioned." We are unable to find any public statements made by the company that indicate that this statement is accurate.

Can the Premier tell us where this information came from and why it was included in the report if it is not accurate?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** As the interim fiscal and economic outlook says, mining sector activity remains predominant in our economic outlook, supported largely by the start of the Eagle Gold mine, which is the largest gold mine in Yukon history. The uncertainty that we speak of — we had a past where a previous government would, if there was any glimmer of hope of a mine to happen, put that in their forecast, and a lot of times their forecasts were pretty unreliable.

Based on statements from the company, we are not hedging any particular bets and we are making sure that we are open and accountable as far as the realities of a merger entail.

The good news is, Mr. Speaker, that the chief of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has called me several times, asking me to definitely continue to make this a priority. The company has been doing outstanding work to work with all affected First Nations. They have an amazing partnership with Sid and the team at Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Again, we are not picking winners and losers. What we are doing is making sure that Yukoners know the full story when it comes to mergers, and we are not trying to make it seem like our forecasts are overly ambitious. We actually want to make sure that Yukoners have more information as opposed to fewer details.

**Mr. Kent:** I think it is also important that, when you are making these types of predictions, they are based on statements that publicly traded companies put out. I'm sure the Premier knows that statements about private companies or those that are publicly traded by governments do have the possibility of having a negative impact on the company in question.

Again, we cannot find any statements made by the company that would lead the Liberals to include these previous two statements in their interim update. Will the Premier remove these unconfirmed statements from this update since it appears to be pure speculation on his part?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Once again, it is not anticipated, of course, that this merger will affect the assessment of the proposed Coffee Gold mine. The team continues on. They just met with us two weeks ago. On March 11, 2019, Barrick Gold and Newmont Mining signed a joint venture agreement combining the respective mining operations' assets and reserves and talent in Nevada, and Barrick abandoned its hostile bid for Newmont.

Once again, development and production from two new mines are key drivers in the outlook for real GDP. Following growth of 2.7 percent in 2018, the real GDP is expected to grow

by three percent in 2019, with growth averaging almost three percent over 2019 to 2023. We see that the Conference Board of Canada also put out those very positive remarks.

We will continue to speak with the Newmont team, as I did just a couple of weeks ago at the Denver Gold Forum, letting them know that we are here to support and help the good work that they do.

They had a great exploration project south of Mayo — on Goldstrike — and the reclamation was absolutely exceptional. We continue to want to support such a professional company.

### Question re: Energy supply and demand

**Mr. Istchenko:** Yesterday the government announced that they were cancelling their plans for a 20-megawatt power generation facility. I asked a number of questions to the minister, and he was unable to respond at the time, so I'm hoping he can respond today.

The Yukon, as we know, has been growing for a long time and it's grown a lot over the last several years. The population is increasing — the new community of Whistle Bend is massive and there is a large mine that will be connecting to the territorial grid. We need to have enough energy in case of an emergency — such as if one of our existing facilities experiences a failure. We know the government is planning on renting a number of diesel generators to address this issue. Can the minister tell us how many diesel generators they are renting this year? What is the total cost of those rentals?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** During the winter of 2017, Yukon Energy Corporation rented four two-megawatt portable diesel generators for four months to ensure of course that the corporation had enough capacity to meet Yukoners' electricity needs under emergency conditions.

Also, the Member for Kluane will know that of course many of these watersheds as well are putting increased pressure on us — whether it be the watershed in his riding or Mayo Lake or even the Southern Lakes. These are some really challenging situations we have, so it's very important for us to have this emergency backup.

During the winter of 2018, Yukon Energy rented six two-megawatt portable diesel generators for the same consideration. This year, the corporation is looking to rent nine two-megawatt portable diesel generators. The rental diesels are available in emergency situations — for example, should there be a loss of the Aishihik hydro plant or the Aishihik transmission line — and to meet the daily peaks.

I appreciate the leadership and guidance not just from the Yukon Energy Corporation board, but also from the staff who are amazing — the operation staff. I know there are a couple former ministers who were in charge of Yukon Energy. These were not precautions that they had in place if we had an N-1 scenario, so I very much appreciate the —

**Speaker:** Order, please. Order.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I'm not sure — the minister did answer part of that question, but I was looking for the cost of the rental also.

Winter is on our doorstep and Yukoners want to know what we're going to have and have enough power available if

it's needed. A number of houses in the Yukon, especially those in our new community of Whistle Bend, are heated by electricity. Of course, nobody wants to be in the situation at minus 35 in the middle of January where they can't heat their home.

With the diesel generators that they are renting — the Government of Yukon — can the minister tell us where they are renting them from and what the cost of the shipping is to the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The Member for Kluane brings up a very good point. There are scenarios that can happen. What I touched on in my last answer was N-1. Really, what that means is when your largest asset-producing energy — if it, for some particular reason, goes down, what do you do? Once again, I would have asked just — I guess we're going back in history, but what was the plan previously? What was the plan before 2017, if one of these situations occurred? What would have happened if Aishihik — so of course it's great for the members opposite to ask me this question now. I look back and wonder why they didn't have a strategy or plan, but we do. Really, it's because of the great leadership and the operational team at Yukon Energy — people like Guy Morgan — just phenomenally professional individuals who have spent a professional career ensuring that Yukoners' lights are on, that they are warm, and that they're looked after.

So this year, the cost to this will be \$2.2 million. That does not include the fuel. We believe it's a good investment. In the same light, we hope, over the next number of days here in the Legislative Assembly, to talk about almost a dozen different projects that are in different phases for renewable energy that will also help us meet our future energy needs.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I was wondering where they are renting them from and the cost of the shipping there.

I guess a couple other questions would be: How long is the government going to plan on renting these diesel generators? Has the government done an assessment on the impacts of the territory's greenhouse gas emissions?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yukon Energy's most recent tender — three companies bid on the work and the winning bid was from Finning Canada — the same company that supplied the units to Yukon Energy over the last few winters.

Also, Yukon Energy of course has the necessary air emissions permit to operate these units. The goal is to not operate the units. The idea behind it is to, for the most part, have these units as an emergency measure. We do from time to time have the ability within our contract, for a short part of the month, to run these units. The reason that the team does run those units is to reduce the maintenance and pressure on some of the older existing units.

The goal moving forward — as we spoke to yesterday — is to take a look at all the existing infrastructure. Infrastructure that is past its best-before date, we will look to remove and replace with more efficient and modern infrastructure, at the same time integrating an overall renewable strategy — things that we look forward to speaking about throughout the fall — and part of our overall plan — the climate change adaptation,

renewable energy, and green economy strategy, which will be going out to the public very shortly.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

##### Motion No. 19

**Clerk:** Motion No. 19, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Watson Lake:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize the needs of Yukon citizens by taking steps to enhance and modernize supports provided under the medical travel program, including:

(1) introducing in the House amendments to the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act* to increase flexibility and reduce wait times;

(2) increasing per diems for travel Outside from the current rate of \$75 per day after consulting with the public as part of determining an appropriate new level;

(3) increasing per diems for travel inside Yukon from the current rate of \$75 per day after consulting with the public as part of determining an appropriate new level;

(4) increasing the subsidy for non-emergency medical travel within Yukon from its current level of 30 cents per kilometre after consulting with the public as part of setting the new rate;

(5) amending the regulations to add Kelowna and Victoria to the list of cities covered by the regulations under the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act*;

(6) reviewing the provisions pertaining to escorts for medical travel;

(7) improving administrative coordination to make it easier for people in rural Yukon to schedule several appointments in Whitehorse for the same trip, rather than having to travel multiple times for appointments;

(8) reviewing the provisions in the regulations under "Travel to benefit others" to determine whether they are adequately assisting people who donate an organ to someone else; and

(9) ensuring that, following a medevac for treatment outside of Yukon, Yukoners whose travel may be covered by the Government of Canada are automatically able to return home with the assistance of Yukon's medical travel program and leave the issue of cost for the two governments to deal with later.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker — and good work on the reading of that motion. I think I will waive reading it again.

Mr. Speaker, I introduced a similar motion in March 2018, and in that motion, it was urged that the Government of Yukon

initiate a review of the medical travel program to ensure that it was meeting the needs of all Yukoners. This seemed to be a simple concept. It acknowledged that it was time for a review. I feel that, as legislators, that is what we are here for. It is our job to identify the gaps in service delivery and ensure that changes are made to fill these gaps, to listen to those who elected us to this House, and to ensure that their concerns are brought forward, acknowledged, and addressed.

Rather than agreeing to undertake this necessary review, it was amended by the Minister of Health and Social Services to say it would be ruled into the comprehensive review of Health and Social Services. This, Mr. Speaker, is not sufficient. We have not seen evidence that consideration is being given to improving these gaps in medical travel for Yukoners. On the contrary, a preliminary recommendation was given to not increase medical travel rates to bring them in line with current costs, but rather to scale back medical travel assistance for rural Yukoners.

I said it before, Mr. Speaker, and I will say it again: Yukoners are not happy. We need to hear from them. We need to know what they think. We need to know whether they are able to afford medical care outside their community or territory based on \$75 per day, starting on the second day. We need to hear what additional costs they face when they travel for medical appointments or procedures. Medical travel rates have not been increased since 2006 under a Yukon Party government. Prior to that, Yukoners had to wait until the fourth day of medical travel for per diems to kick in, which were also considerably lower at the time.

Since that increase and the change made to have per diems begin on the second day of medical travel, we have seen costs skyrocket. Yukoners pay out of pocket, over and above what they are reimbursed by the government for per diems and mileage. They pay astronomical accommodation costs. Gas prices have gone up and food costs right along with them.

\$75 a day on the second day of out-patient services is simply not enough to cover food, accommodations, travel, and incidentals. We need to start consulting with Yukoners and work from there on a cost analysis to find out what would be an appropriate dollar amount for per diems. It needs to be reviewed for rural Yukoners travelling to Whitehorse, in addition to those who have to travel outside of Yukon for treatment. Rural Yukoners are not spared expenses simply by not having to fly out of the territory. Hotels, meals, mileages — all costs need to be reviewed.

In November of last year, after weeks of steady questioning from the Official Opposition and growing media pressure, the government finally announced a plan to address the growing wait-list for cataract surgery. This was a great relief to the hundreds of Yukoners who were facing a wait that was upwards of three years for surgery. Now there are people who are considered not emergent inside and outside of Whitehorse on a wait-list to make an appointment in order to schedule an appointment for an MRI — a wait-list on top of a wait-list.

We have an MRI machine that is in use and technicians who are trained and full-time, yet we have a wait-list of months

for non-emergent patients to schedule an appointment for an MRI. We can do better. There are parents with children and multiple appointments in Vancouver who, rather than having appointments conveniently scheduled, are told they must fly out with one child, return to Whitehorse, then fly out with another child. This not only compounds the cost for parents but increases stress on the family due to having to find alternative child care for siblings and having to take maybe more time off work, not to mention that this increases the cost to the department.

I have spoken with Yukoners who have had trouble accessing medical care outside of Vancouver, Edmonton, or Calgary. We have direct flights to Kelowna and Victoria multiple times a week. It's time to ensure that Yukoners have the opportunity to access services in these cities. There are specialist clinics in either of these destinations that Yukoners have had to pay out-of-pocket to attend.

My colleagues and I have spoken with Yukoners who have had to fight, sometimes for months, to have an escort covered under medical travel — people who have had a doctor specify that they're required to have an escort with them at all times during the visit. I don't know if it's a misinterpretation of the policy, but one would think that, when a medical professional or specialist states that someone must escort a patient on their medical travel, there would be no question about this.

We have spoken to rural Yukoners who have travelled to Whitehorse for medical appointments only to be told that they have been rescheduled and have to return at a later date. We have spoken to Yukoners who have had to travel to Whitehorse or Outside multiple times, rather than having their trip coordinated to cover multiple appointments in just one trip.

In some cases, Yukoners are forced to travel for consultations, pre-operative visits, procedures, and sometimes follow-up visits. Considering the cost to the department, one would think that it would be in the best interest of all parties to improve administrative coordination and cut down on travel.

I have included in this motion a call for the review of the revisions in the regulations under "Travel to benefit others". It has been brought to my attention that these regulations are not clear as to whether the system is adequately supporting those who may be travelling for this purpose.

Lastly, we understand that there have been issues of people, including federal employees, who have been medevaced for an urgent reason but were told by the territorial government that it would not book return travel. So after being sent out of the territory by the government, they were left to coordinate their return travel, as it should have been covered by their employer. I ask that the government include this in the review because it should not be left up to the patient to find a way home. This should be booked through medical travel, and the cost can be worked out between the federal and territorial governments after the fact.

Let me ask this of the members of the House: Is a review of something so important as medical travel really something that should be questioned? With the examples of concerns that have been and will be mentioned today, surely there is some recognition within government that there are gaps and they

must be addressed to the benefit of Yukoners. Surely the opposition members are not the only members to have had visits from constituents telling them of a broken system for medical travel. Surely the Minister of Health and Social Services has had a phone call or a letter from a parent who has been denied coverage for an escort or is unable to visit a specialist clinic that was referred to them because it is outside of the prescribed cities.

When will this Liberal government realize that these are true and valid concerns brought to us by Yukoners and that something needs to be done?

I ask the government to take this motion seriously.

Amending this motion really does nothing more than jeopardize the integrity. Folding a review of medical travel into a comprehensive review of the largest department in the Yukon government does nothing more than jeopardize its importance and delay providing assistance to Yukoners.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I rise today to speak to Motion No. 19 brought forward by the Member for Watson Lake. The Health and Social Services comprehensive review was first introduced through a recommendation of the 2017 Yukon Financial Advisory Panel which reads: "Consider a comprehensive review of the healthcare sector akin to the one done in 2008, focusing on the factors driving costs and on the quality of the outcomes being delivered to Yukoners."

The comprehensive health review of health programs and services systems focused on how to improve the health and wellness of Yukoners, to make sure patients, clients, families, and providers have positive experiences and provide better value for money. This includes looking at medical travel, Mr. Speaker.

The Member for Watson Lake is well-aware that the comprehensive health review includes a review of medical travel. On October 3, 2018, the Member for Watson Lake put forward a motion which all of our members voted in favour of, stating "THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow through on the review of the medical travel program as part of the comprehensive Health and Social Services review."

I am proud to say that we are doing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

That work of the independent expert panel, appointed by the government to conduct the review, is well underway. In June, members of the panel held more than 40 meetings with health care professionals, non-governmental organizations providing services, community groups representing seniors, children and youth, and people with chronic diseases — to name just a few — as well as Yukoners with lived experiences and members of the public accessing health and social programs and services.

The panel is now commencing phase 2 of this public engagement. It is holding a series of public meetings to hear Yukoners' thoughts on building a system that is effective and sustainable for decades to come. This includes feedback on Yukon's medical travel.

Motion No. 19, brought forward by the Member for Watson Lake, would have us take a series of unilateral

decisions that would pre-empt the work of the comprehensive health review and undermine the integrity of the public consultation process. I am concerned that, on the one hand, they request that medical travel be a part of the comprehensive health review. On the other hand, they say that we should make unilateral decisions on the topic before the public has had their say and before the independent expert panel can provide its recommendations to our government. While I am concerned by this approach, I suppose I am not surprised, considering that the previous government had no quorums over its 14 years in government, was circumventing public consultation, and doing exactly what they wanted. This government is committed to taking a different, evidence-based approach — one that factors in the voices of all Yukoners and waits until it has the facts to make decisions that will affect people of this territory.

I am disheartened, Mr. Speaker, by the opposition's continued attempts to discredit and undermine the independent process of the comprehensive health review. Only yesterday, the Member for Watson Lake tried to present the online engagement phase of the comprehensive health review's public engagement as looking at adopting a \$900-a-year premium. In fact, the survey asks "whether or not" Yukoners support a premium geared to income. The \$900 figure is just one of several examples from BC.

Furthermore, the opposition is aware that, in 2008, a former Yukon Party Minister of Health and Social Services recommended that the government should consider the introduction of health care premiums to assist in financing the increasing costs of existing health care services in Yukon. Perhaps the mover of the motion should speak to her colleagues about her government's decision to consider health care premiums. The opposition's argument seems to be that, when the Yukon Party does it, it's a good idea. When the Liberals consider it, it's a bad idea. I will leave it to the public, Mr. Speaker, to decide what makes more sense.

The independent expert panel tasked with the comprehensive health review is just that — independent. We will wait to hear their recommendations before we respond.

Yukoners concerned about medical travel should know that their feedback is being periodically looked at by the independent expert panel, who have requested specific feedback on Yukoners' experience with medical travel.

In collaboration with the independent expert panel, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Bureau of Statistics are working together to finalize a survey that will be distributed to Yukoners who travelled for medical reasons in the past year. In addition, we will be offering focus groups for interested survey respondents in late November and early December, to further share their experiences. We want to hear from Yukoners who travelled for medical purposes or chose not to do so because of travel costs, as well as those who have been medevaced. This work is being done to further inform the work of the independent expert panel, who strive to understand the experiences and challenges that Yukoners face when travelling outside of their home community to receive medical services.

Out of respect to Yukoners — who have a right to engage in the comprehensive health review, to have their experiences and feedback heard, and to have that factored into the government's decision-making — I cannot in good conscience support the opposition's motion which circumvents process and prescribes an outcome and will therefore be voting against it.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I am rising today to speak to the motion from my colleague. There are always concerns about this particular part of our health care system — medical travel — that and prescription drugs, which are becoming increasingly unaffordable for many Yukoners.

I personally have had calls from constituents who are pensioners and who have recently been diagnosed with an unexpected illness and they need to travel outside of the territory for specific care. But, if they are not transferred directly into a hospital setting for their stay, they must cover their expenses while they are attending appointments and getting clinical work done. The government travel program, which was set up to alleviate the burden, provides the \$75 per day, starting on the second day of arrival at their destination. So, if you were out for five days, you would receive \$300.

As the Member for Watson Lake noted, rates for medical travel have not increased since 2006, but costs sure have. I can't imagine having to pay out of pocket while on medical travel as the member indicated. It is hard to cover expenses on that first day for many Yukoners.

For one particular elder, they were unable to cover all of the costs as they did not have any insurance coverage nor the extra funds to pay for added medical expenses plus the bills to maintain their home expenses.

Most Yukoners have travelled Outside for a variety of reasons, but unexpected — or even expected — medical travel is usually not a happy time. It is the air travel, the taxis, the hotels, the need to eat several times a day, the stress of finding your way about, the worry of what and why and how you will receive treatment — it begins to add another unhealthy, stressful layer. In our robust medical care system in Yukon, it is our job to ensure that it continues to be what it needs to be for everyone.

The revisit to medical care travel is timely, as our population is growing and says it is needed. It is time to step up and help wherever we can. The taxes that people pay — and even pensioners pay taxes on their income — need to be used for essential services such as this important part of their lives. We do know and understand that this is a huge drain on budgets, but this is when it hits home — when people are vulnerable, ill, and scared of outcomes. We must try to provide a safety blanket that will alleviate some of these stressors.

The cost of doing business must be considered, of course, but we spend money on so many things that I don't think I would get an argument that a loved one's health is money well spent.

The inequity in the system can be stopped, both in and out of Yukon, with travel allowances that can be adjusted to meet particular needs. Why we need to have policies that are so rigid — that's the way it is always done — it just leaves me cold.

There must be a need to look on a case-by-case basis so that the benefits we offer can be given easily and without bias, because our individual stories are vital. Understanding them is vital to make it all work. Not everyone fits in one slot or under one category, so let's be innovative and step up and be leaders on this.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I am pleased to rise to Motion No. 19 put forward by the Member for Watson Lake. I just want to say a few short things about each number in this motion and give a really rural perspective to this. Number one is introducing to the House amendments to the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act* to increase flexibility and reduce wait times. If you live in Beaver Creek or Destruction Bay or Haines Junction — it is 40 below, your car won't start — it's a long way to go. You take a full day off from work — you will hear this as I speak to these other ones — when you take a full day off from work, there has to be some increased flexibility — and when you get there, sometimes you can wait and wait, and you book two or three appointments that same day because you are trying to get there to cover as much as you can and you only have so much holiday time.

Number two is increasing the per diems for travel Outside from the current rate of \$75 per day after consulting with the public as part of determining an appropriate new level. Consulting with the public — yes, let's go talk to rural Yukon and find out what the actual costs are to leave from Mayo, Watson Lake or wherever. It is very important.

Number three is increasing per diems for travel inside Yukon from the current rate of \$75 per day after consulting with the public. It's the exact same thing as I said before. It is a lot more expensive and it costs a lot more. It takes a lot more time when you live in rural Yukon.

Increasing the subsidy for non-emergency medical travel within Yukon from its current level of 30 cents per kilometre after consulting with the public — again, 30 cents per kilometre. The price of fuel — 30 cents per kilometre — that number has been there for awhile. The price of fuel — with our new fancy carbon tax, which is another four cents — it costs a lot of money to drive, and we don't have another option.

Number five is amending the regulations to add Kelowna and Victoria to the list of cities covered by regulations under the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act*. I can tell you from personal experience — from friends and constituents — that the only option and the only treatment for them was in Kelowna and Victoria. Some of them had to go out of pocket to get it done. This just totally makes sense — you want to go where the best treatment is for people.

Reviewing the provisions pertaining to escorts for medical travel — most people, when they have a little issue and decide to go see the doctor — I can speak from personal experience. My blood pressure goes crazy. I get so nervous and stressed. Having someone go with you sometimes means a lot. I am pretty sure there are a few of us in here who are like that.

Number seven is improving administrative coordination to make it easier for people in rural Yukon to schedule several appointments. I spoke a little bit about that in the first one. If

you have to take a day off from work — if you live in Beaver Creek, it is a day off from work — and you drive to Whitehorse, and when you are done that day, you stay overnight and then have to turn around and you have to come all the way back. So that is two days from work. You look and you think, "Well, I'm going to pull the kids out of school and see if I can get Susie an optometrist appointment at the same time", and you try to do as much as you can.

Number eight is reviewing the provisions in the regulations under "Travel to benefit others" to determine whether they are adequately assisting people who donate an organ to someone else. Organ donation is a wonderful thing, and any way that we can adequately assist them, I think is also very important. It's good to have that conversation.

The last one is ensuring that, following a medevac for treatment outside of Yukon, Yukoners whose travel may be covered by the Government of Canada are automatically able to return home. That has been in the media. That has been discussed. I just think it's time that we have that conversation, and we need to deal with that rather than deal with it later.

Those are just a few comments from rural Yukon. I'm pretty sure my constituents would be happy that I rose today — especially when we talk about private members' day where we get to bring motions forward that are important to us — especially us in rural Yukon and members of the House.

I want to thank my fellow colleague from Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward, and I look forward to comments from some of the other rural members in the House and other members.

**Mr. Hutton:** I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Motion No. 19. This will be the third time I have participated in a debate regarding medical travel brought forward by the Member for Watson Lake.

For the benefit of those listening in today, I'll provide a brief summary: March 14, 2018, the Member for Watson Lake brought forward Motion No. 45 that urged the Government of Yukon to initiate a review of the medical travel program.

During the debate, an amendment was proposed and was later withdrawn after Yukon Liberal caucus members discussed and agreed to let the Member for Watson Lake's motion stand.

As I stated last October when I reviewed this history, this action confirmed that this Liberal caucus and government value the health and well-being of Yukoners by committing to include a review of the medical travel program in the comprehensive review of Health and Social Services.

I too am a voice for rural Yukon. I can speak for the residents in Mayo and I can tell you that they're happy that this review is finally taking place. The last one that was done in 2008 generated no results between 2008 and 2015. All the issues that my colleagues opposite have mentioned certainly didn't start the day before yesterday. They have been with us since at least 2008. I can only wish the member was as passionate from 2008 to 2015 about moving this issue forward as she is now.

I recognize that there has been some criticism in this House about the status of the comprehensive review and the release of



that report. I also understand that the panel is now in phase 2 of its public engagement. As part of phase 2, meetings will be held in 14 Yukon communities, so they are absolutely going to hear from the rural citizens out there without having to hear it through the voices of their elected representatives here. I am very happy to see this level of engagement happening, particularly with rural Yukoners who are reliant on our medical travel system.

It is worth noting that medical travel rates did not increase in this territory between 2006 and 2016. It has been an issue with my residents in Mayo for that whole decade, so I'm really happy that we finally have a government in here that is going to deal with that issue.

I am hopeful that our government is going to continue its work to modernize many aspects of our health care services. The need for medical travel from communities can be reduced. I have seen a lot of good work on this to date, including the addition of nurse practitioners to rural Yukon communities. It is having an impact. Less people have to travel because we have a nurse practitioner in Mayo. It may not be the same for Watson Lake, but I'm happy that at least some parts of rural Yukon appreciate the services that they get. Initially, people were a little unsure and didn't know what to expect. The idea of change can cause some anxiety, but ultimately the nurse practitioner has been an amazing addition to our community. I haven't heard a single bad word from any person who has been to that office.

I understand a meeting was also held in Pelly Crossing recently to discuss the Mayo nurse practitioner starting clinic visits there in the near future. Again, this is a community that has totally been ignored when it comes to previous governments assisting Pelly Crossing with anything, so I'm very happy that people in Pelly are going to get some attention from our government.

I am also very happy that the Old Crow Health Centre is being replaced. Again, this is long overdue and it is another rural community that suffered for many years because there was just no vision outside of Whitehorse with the last government. It is wonderful to see rural Yukon communities receiving these very well-deserved and long overdue infrastructure investments. We are also seeing the addition of some specialist services.

We have increased orthopaedic surgeon visits. A resident orthopaedic surgeon began practising in 2017, which has had a dramatic impact on a number of patients waiting for an orthopaedic consult. It has also reduced the need for out-of-territory medevacs. Just this fall, a second resident orthopaedic surgeon started, which will help to further improve orthopaedic care for Yukoners and result in a decreased need for visiting orthopaedic specialists from 20 weeks to two weeks a year.

We have seen access to drugs such as Mifegymiso expanded to rural Yukon hospitals, including Dawson City and Watson Lake. We also have a comprehensive Yukon children's dental program, which is unique across Canada. All Yukon students — from kindergarten to grade 8 in Whitehorse and to grade 12 in the communities — will continue to be offered enrolment in this program. Steps are being taken to promote

healthy living and therefore reduce the need for medical attention.

Implementing proactive measures, including the introduction of vaping legislation — as we heard yesterday, vaping is causing some very serious health issues worldwide. I am glad that we are taking proactive measures through legislation to deal with these issues. Another example is the Yukon opioid strategy. Last year, we released Yukon's opioid action plan, which responds to the current crisis and looks at the bigger picture of prevention. We also saw the release of the Yukon fetal alcohol spectrum disorder action plan this fall. This action plan provides the vision, principles, goals, and actions for improving Yukon's response to FASD. I can tell you that this is an extremely important issue in every one of my communities. I am so happy that we have embarked on this initiative. The mental wellness hubs and substance use services expansion is another example of increased access to health services in our rural communities, with a focus on proactive measures.

I would like to wrap up by saying that I am very proud of the work that my colleague is doing to improve access to health care in rural Yukon. I do look forward to the results of the comprehensive health care review. I am patient. I got my patience waiting for the last government to do the review, so waiting for another year is not a big deal once you've waited for a decade already.

**Mr. Cathers:** I'm pleased to rise today in support of this motion. I would like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this forward as well as the fact that, in her motion, she has reflected a number of the issues that colleagues, including me, have heard from constituents. I would like to thank her again for championing this issue, which really is important to Yukoners.

I'm not going to spend a lot of time rebutting what the Liberal backbencher from Mayo-Tatchun noted, but I would point out that claiming to act on something and then being three years into your mandate with still no sign of action is not what Yukoners want and it's not what they expected when this Liberal government sought their vote in 2016.

People who are having trouble being able to afford the costs of travel for medical treatment are asking for help. When they are having those difficulties, they don't want to see government push it out for another year — or more, based on the way it has gone so far — for a health care review to be finished. I point out that, contrary to what the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and others on the Liberal side were suggesting, what is contained within the current health care review by the government's panel is not talking about increasing assistance for medical travel. They're actually talking about cutting it and making it income-tested so that it will be available for fewer Yukoners. That is something that the Yukon Party Official Opposition absolutely disagrees with.

I would note that the issues around medical travel are something that I know, like my colleagues in the Official Opposition Yukon Party caucus — we hear from constituents regularly on these issues. For example, just within the last

week, I was talking to a constituent who would have been affected by the constructive proposals contained in this motion if in fact those changes had been made already — and hearing from people like that about the problems they've experienced is why we have come forward with a list of constructive suggestions tabled by my colleague — the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services — that are aimed at helping these people and helping them get better access to health care.

I would note in fact another example — again, within just the past week, I was talking to a constituent last night who had issues around the coverage for a medical escort that had been recommended by a doctor and was then not covered by Yukon health care.

We've proposed a list of constructive suggestions including: urging the government to introduce amendments to the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act* to increase flexibility and reduce wait times; and increasing the per diems for travel Outside from the current rate of \$75 per day after consulting with the public as part of determining an appropriate new level. I would point out in fact that providing \$75 a day on day two is something that was instituted under me as Minister of Health and Social Services. The rates had not been increased for a long time prior to that. It was only available on the fourth day of travel outside the territory. But even when we made that increase — back in 2006, I believe it was — that did not fully cover the costs. The costs of hotel rooms, food, and so on have increased since that time, which is why we are saying that enough time has gone by that the government should review this and that amount should be increased.

Now, we recognize there are always fiscal considerations, but ultimately, if we support the necessity of a public health care system and believe in the principle that people should have access to the health care they need when they need it, regardless of the ability to pay, it is important to ensure that we're adequately providing for situations where people are facing costs that are not strictly health costs but which have to be paid by someone for them to receive that treatment. That is why we are calling for these rates to be increased.

Secondly, the per diems for travel inside the territory were also increased during my time as Health and Social Services minister. That amount did not fully cover the costs when it was introduced, and the costs of hotel rooms and other incidentals — including food and so on — have only gone up since that time.

As well, the proposal contained in the motion brought forward by my colleague, which would increase the subsidy for non-emergency medical travel within the Yukon — again, this was increased during my time as Minister of Health and Social Services. I was proud to introduce those changes. But the cost of fuel has increased substantially since that time, and this Liberal government has only made it worse through supporting the introduction of a carbon tax which makes it more expensive for Yukoners to travel, and is effectively, some might say, a tax on medical travel for rural Yukon.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, the Premier disagrees with that. I can hear his off-mic comments. But again, Mr. Speaker, the introduction of a carbon tax applies to Yukoners who are travelling from rural Yukon to Whitehorse. The fact that this travel is not exempt from the carbon tax nor compensated by an offsetting increase in what the government provides is effectively the introduction of a tax on medical travel from rural Yukon to Whitehorse. So we're calling for that rate to be reviewed and to increase.

As well, the addition of Kelowna and Victoria as cities to travel to under the regulations of the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act* is something that I believe would be appropriate. Those regulations were amended to create more flexibility during my time as Minister of Health and Social Services, but at that point — there have been changes since that time. Back when we made those changes, Kelowna and Victoria were not part of the cities to which there was regular air traffic from the Yukon, and that is why those amendments are being proposed.

The provisions related to the escorts for medical travel — there is a long list of issues. My colleague for Kluane touched on some of them, as I believe did my colleague for Watson Lake, our critic for Health and Social Services. This has affected many Yukoners. I have heard from parents who have had challenges while travelling outside the territory with having escorts approved to ensure that they were able to properly care for their children at the time. There have been issues such as the one I mentioned earlier, where, despite a doctor recommending that someone have an escort, the coverage was declined. Without getting into the specifics of the situation, it seems to me from that case — as well as some others I have heard — that there were times where, because of the current wording of the regulations and the way they're being interpreted, coverage that should be approved for escorts to ensure that we're helping Yukoners who are in a fragile situation needing medical treatment — there are times when that coverage — what is being approved now — is just simply not enough.

The reference to improving administrative coordination to make it easier for people in rural Yukon to schedule several appointments in Whitehorse for the same trip rather than having to travel multiple times — that is an area where, although not likely something that would need changes specifically in the regulations, it would probably require government to coordinate with non-governmental employees who are provided health care to ensure that the coordination occurs. There is clearly an opportunity to reduce the number of times that people in rural Yukon have to drive into Whitehorse, cancelling whatever else was going on in their life, for tests or specialist appointments and so on and then, related to the same matter, travel back in again for another appointment.

That's a significant amount of impact on their life. In many cases, it's also — I should note to the government — a loss of productivity, as those people are not able to continue with their job during the time they have to take time off to come into Whitehorse. So it has an economic effect, in addition to the health effect.

Additionally, the proposal of reviewing the provisions under the regulations for "Travel to benefit others" to determine

whether they're adequately assisting people who are donating an organ to someone else is an area we believe is worthy of review to ensure that those people are being adequately assisted.

If government is trying to encourage organ donation, then there is a need to ensure that we have the system set up in a way that is both smart and effective in helping people who choose to do that.

Last but not least on the list in the motion, ensuring that, following medevac for treatment outside the Yukon, Yukoners whose travel may be covered by the Government of Canada are automatically able to return home with the assistance of Yukon's medical travel program and leave the issue of cost for the two governments to deal with later — that does come from a real-life situation involving a Yukoner who brought this to our attention. I would note that, in a case where treatment is necessary and assistance is necessary — while we're not arguing that government should just pay for people, including federal government employees whose bills would ultimately be covered by the federal government — we are suggesting that, when they are in a situation of medical need and a potentially fragile health situation, that rather than them having to do a lot of additional legwork themselves, the Yukon government should ensure that it has an arrangement with Canada where — just as with most citizens of the territory receiving treatment outside of the Yukon — the return flight following an emergency medevac is booked by medical travel — by staff at Insured Health and Hearing Services — and that the issue of who is finally paying the bill be dealt with between the two governments later, rather than putting that person in a difficult situation, when often they may be in a situation of not the greatest health, not feeling that well, and potentially not even capable of handling that at that point in time.

So this is, again, a case of priorities. We have heard the Liberals suggesting that they are dealing with these matters, but punting it off to the health care review after initially agreeing to our proposal to review medical travel — which my colleague brought forward over a year and a half ago — is simply not dealing with the issue.

This government has squandered roughly three years of its mandate and has still failed to take action on medical travel despite specific and reasonable proposals that have come forward from the Official Opposition. That's disappointing. We're hoping that they will see the error of their ways and agree to support this motion and agree to take action on these issues. But from the comments so far, we're not overly hopeful that this will be the case.

This is from a government of course that has found money for other things it sees as apparently burning priorities, such as spending — wasting — hundreds of thousands of dollars spraying water into the air hoping for ice — quite literally — at Dawson City. They found money to give the Premier a raise. They found money as well to spend over half a million dollars on updating the logo and the website of the Yukon government. But for people who are asking for more assistance in medical travel both in and outside the territory, their pleas have fallen on deaf ears and this Liberal government has absolutely failed

to take action on this issue despite our repeated constructive suggestions.

We will continue to hold them to account for that. We will also continue to bring forward constructive proposals for addressing the health care needs of Yukon citizens, which is an area where I believe this Liberal government has utterly failed in its responsibility to respond to the health care needs of Yukon citizens. Examples of this include their failure to provide the hospital with enough money to even keep up with the rate of inflation in terms of the growth of O&M costs — despite the issues we've heard from the Hospital Corporation witnesses here in this Assembly about the massive increase in chemotherapy costs, increased volume in medical imaging and lab, and the increased costs in the hospital associated with the delays in opening up the continuing care facility and the fact that the hospital has been at times running at over 100 percent bed capacity.

Again, these matters are important and Yukoners elected the Liberal government to respond to their needs. They voted for them, in some cases, based on the Liberals' election slogan of "Be Heard", but on the issue of medical travel and health care, Yukoners are not being heard by this Liberal government. The Official Opposition is listening and we will continue to bring forward these constructive suggestions on behalf of Yukon citizens.

Mr. Speaker, in wrapping up my comments, I would note as well that this government was able to — despite its past bold words on accuracy in budgeting, they were able to find \$64.3 million to increase the budget for a single department from what they had in the spring of this year.

While some of that was due to forest fires, the bulk of it appears to be connected to rushing projects out the door for pre-election announcements with the federal Liberals. That represents, again, an increase of some \$35.6 million in questionable spending, but we see not a dime in increases to medical travel.

So, Mr. Speaker, in wrapping up my remarks, I would encourage the Yukon Liberal government to listen to what people are saying. I am sure that members on that side have heard from constituents, as we have. We have outlined a specific list of issues in the motion brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, where we are making some specific proposals. We are proposing specific areas in need of review, and we have made what I think any reasonable person would see as a list of constructive suggestions for improving medical travel to better support the health care needs of Yukon citizens.

I hope the government will see it in its heart to support these positive changes.

**Ms. White:** What I am going to start with is — I am going to ask everybody just to take a deep breath, because right now, the conversation has veered away from what I think everybody's intention is. I have sat and I have listened to people speak today, but what I want to remember is that we are looking at Yukon citizens. We are looking at people who are going through traumatic incidents, who are leaving the territory — not

by choice, often; sometimes you don't have that choice. I just want to slow us down a bit. I want to change the perspective a little bit.

I want to talk about friends of mine who have a son with a disability — when he gets medevaced — because the family is already picked up by Health and Social Services — it requires us from the office to go and pick up additional payments so that they can afford to stay while they are there for medical treatment. I want to talk about my friend whose husband had a severe heart attack, but she wasn't allowed to travel down south, although the outlook wasn't great — because on page 11 of the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act*, under compassionate travel, it talks about parents with a critically ill child who is under 18 years old. Imagine your spouse is medevaced out. It is really dicey, you don't know what is going to happen — and you're not allowed to go.

So when we talk about medical travel, what we're talking about is really real things. We're talking about people, we're talking about stress, and we're talking about times that are not ideal. So I, along with a few others members in this House recently — we were at Niagara-on-the-Lake for a conference. It turns out that Niagara-on-the-Lake is a really expensive place to go and I never would have ended up there, had it not been for this conference. I remember gasping when I realized that my five-night stay would be equivalent to my monthly mortgage payment — five nights were the same as my mortgage payment. But guess what — my hotel was covered because I was travelling for work.

I — like many people in this House — drive often for work. I drive to Watson Lake or I drive to Dawson City or I drive to other communities in between. I drive all over the place for work. When I submit my travel expense — let me just find the right piece of paper here — it is 61.5 cents a kilometre for me to drive my private vehicle. I could drive to Haines Junction, Beaver Creek, or Dawson City — and this isn't under stress or duress; this is me travelling for work — 61.5 cents a kilometre. But knowing that if a person is coming in for medical travel from a community — I think we heard the number recently, and I highlighted it — but it is under the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act*. It is on page 6, in section 4 — and it says: "... where bus transport is not available..." — well, welcome to the Yukon, no bus transport anymore unless you are coming from Watson Lake and can take First Kaska or if you are between Dawson and Whitehorse and you can take the Husky Bus.

So it says: "... where bus transport is not available and reasonable in the circumstances, a private automobile may be authorized, in which case an allowance shall be paid at the rate of 30 cents per kilometre..." So I can travel for work — not under stress or duress — and I can get 60.5 cents per kilometre in return. But if I lived in a community and I needed to drive to Whitehorse for a medical appointment — keeping in mind, of course, that often we don't want to and that is not ideal — I could get half that much — 30 cents per kilometre. I just want to bring that into focus.

I was looking at the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act* — and this is an order-in-council from 1986. I grew up in the

territory and I remember what was referred to — I didn't really know any better — as "milk flights" — the delivery flights. There didn't used to be the Whitehorse general airport; there used to be a Quonset hut. I remember that there was a Quonset hut, your luggage was driven in on carts, and then you took it out of the Quonset hut. You didn't used to have the airwalk — you used to go up on the outside of the airplane — and you would fly from Whitehorse. You would land in Watson Lake or Fort St. John — and at Fort St. John, it depended on which direction you were going — if you were going to British Columbia or to Alberta. My dad's family is all from Edmonton so, as a kid, I would make that hop — slow way — toward Edmonton quite often. This is from 1986, and I believe that at that time — we were just trying to figure out the timeline — there were still less direct routes than there are now.

If we go to this document — the application for travel — it talks in part 2 about the certified name of the patient, that they require travel from — you can put the community and point of origin — and to Whitehorse, Vancouver, or Edmonton. Last time we debated this motion, I talked about a friend of mine who has severe sleep issues — severe sleep issues. We share a house and I moved across the hall and built a super-insulated wall because her sleep issues affected my sleep issues, and I couldn't be mad because she never slept. How can you be mad about someone's lack of sleep? When I finally encouraged her to go to the doctor, she was directed to a sleep clinic in Kelowna. This is the beauty with medical travel: She could get off the plane in Kelowna because the plane went from Whitehorse to Kelowna to Vancouver, so it covered her to get to Kelowna because it was the first stop of the airplane, and she had to pay out of pocket to get home because it is not included as a destination on this form, despite the fact that when we send people to sleep clinics, the major sleep clinic we send people to is in Kelowna.

This sheet from 1986 — reminding you that I used to get on a plane and it would stop multiple times before we got to where we were going — includes Vancouver, Edmonton, and Whitehorse as destinations. I would say that we all support Air North and Air North is good to us, and when we travel Outside for medical travel, we go on Air North. Well, Air North has expanded. Aren't we lucky? Aren't we lucky that we can go to Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna, or Calgary? Aren't we lucky?

Then we talk about how important it is for us, as humans, to be able to make decisions about our own destination, our own being. If I had a specific medical issue, I would like to think that my colleagues here would support me if I chose a different doctor than the one I could get to in one of the named places. I hope that if I said that I actually have called this clinic and I have had a conversation with this practitioner, and this is where I would feel most comfortable — I would hope that I wouldn't be challenged. I hope I would be supported, especially if we were talking about some of the really challenging and scary things that people get sent out of town for. I have to say that going for medical travel — I mean, yes, we all hear about the people who talk about how it's like a day vacation, but for most people it is very stressful.

I had a lovely friend. She was about 93 when she passed away, but she was 93 too when she broke her hip. She had been married for more than 30 years to my friend. When she broke her hip and was medevaced out, it was the first time that they had been apart. He didn't even know what to do with himself. At that point in time when I was trying to figure out what was going on, we didn't know how long she would be in Vancouver. I knew that I couldn't send him down on a commercial flight to end up in Vancouver and try to make his way to St. Paul's Hospital to be by her side. I can't even imagine how that would have worked out. In the end, the doctors in Vancouver decided that she should be medevaced back up so they could be closer together because that would be better for both of them. That was the first separation that they had had in 30-something years, and they were in their late 80s and their 90s.

When we talk about medical travel, what we are really talking about is people. I hear the government say that this review was done in 2008 and nothing happened until the election in 2016, because I sat on this side of the Chamber for five years when we tried to talk about things like medical travel, when we tried to talk about compassion and making things different. I was here for that, and it was awful. I understand why you want to turn the key a little bit — you want to poke back a little bit. I understand.

What can I say about my colleagues on this side who all of a sudden have developed a social conscience? It is kind of weird, but let's celebrate it for what it is. We are talking about Yukoners; we are talking about Yukoners from communities; we are talking about people from Whitehorse. You can have a conversation — I mean, I can introduce you if you are interested — with a parent who has children with complex needs. Complex needs — multiple appointments are required in Vancouver. This parent just wants to get as many appointments done as possible in one trip because the stress of leaving the other children and the other parent behind as they try to tackle these issues is too much. Instead of trying to schedule the appointments so they are on the same day or a day after the day, sometimes that parent flies out of the territory, is gone for 36 hours and then comes back, and two weeks later they have to fly again. The disruption to that family is intense.

We've heard from the Member for Kluane about having to drive in from Destruction Bay. I've talked before about the idea of having to drive a 10-hour round trip for groceries. That's insane. A 10-hour round trip for a medical appointment is equally insane, and if you stay over, it's two days' work — it's all these things.

Let's remember that ultimately, no matter how we feel about where the motion is coming from, what we're trying to talk about is Yukon citizens. What I want to focus on is Yukon citizens. When I looked today — I read the legislation — because I think last time maybe I didn't, so apologies to anyone who had read the legislation before — and I was flabbergasted by some of it. I was super surprised. I didn't know about compassion travel. I was like, "Oh, this is why my friends whose spouses have been dying haven't been allowed to leave the territory. Well, man, that's something we should look at." It's shocking to know that I get 60.5 cents per kilometre but

with medical travel we would only get 30 cents. It's \$75 per day. It's interesting to hear the previous Minister of Health and Social Services on this side talk about how they acknowledge that they didn't increase it when they could. Well, that's something. That's saying you should have done something and you didn't.

But here's this opportunity — here is this opportunity. We're going through this health care review right now, and I have reservations about it but I'm optimistic. I am nothing if not optimistic. It's the way I've survived so long, being optimistic. I live in constant optimism.

I can appreciate that maybe we're uncomfortable where the motion has come from or maybe we don't like the wording or maybe we think "You were in power for 15 years so why didn't you do something?" I don't disagree. I don't, because I've had this conversation before — well, actually, I didn't; it was Jan Stick who was the Health and Social Services critic at the time — but we have had this conversation in this House before — long before the 34<sup>th</sup>. I would guess it was in the 32<sup>nd</sup> and in the 31<sup>st</sup> Assembly. This is not a new topic. But what is new is that you as members are sitting on that side of the floor. That's what's new. That's what's different.

I am hopeful that we can understand that there are things you might not like, but you have to understand that this is coming from a position and a side of caring about people in Yukon. There is no way that any of us in this Chamber would do this job if we did not care about people in the Yukon. There is no way. We couldn't possibly be here if we didn't care about it, because I tell you, it was way easier in my life, Mr. Speaker, to be a baker.

I had success every day, and anytime I gave something to someone, they were happy about it. It's not how I feel about politics all the time. So, I just want to remind us that none of us are here because it's easy, but we're all here because we care.

Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, I would like to propose an amendment, and I'm going to ask you to bear with me — that the Chamber bear with me, especially Hansard — because it is a mouthful.

*Amendment proposed*

**Ms. White:** I move:

THAT Motion No. 19 be amended by, after the first "THAT", adding "pending the outcome of the health care review that" and after the phrase "taking steps to" add "provide interim measures to";

And after "(2)", adding the word "by";

And remove "after consulting with the public as part of determining an appropriate new level:" and add "to provide assistance consistent with Yukon government travel directives for Yukon Government Employees";

And in (3), remove "after consulting with the public as part of determining an appropriate new level:" and add "to provide assistance consistent with Yukon Government travel directives for Yukon Government Employees";

And in (4), remove "after consulting with the public as part of setting the new rate" and add "to assistance consistent with

Yukon government travel directives for Yukon Government Employees”;

And after (5), add “Given the expanded Air North schedule” and after “Kelowna” add “Calgary”;

And replace (6) with “Determine provisions for escorts for medical travel on a case-by-case basis”;

And replace (9) with “Pending negotiations between Yukon and Canada for a cost-recovery program for Yukoners medevaced who are normally eligible for federal coverage, that Yukon cover the cost in a manner similar to the Jordan’s Principle.”

**Speaker:** Thank you. We have a proposed amendment on the floor. The pages will distribute copies to all members for their review and I will review the proposed amendments as well.

The Clerks-at-the-Table are working on the proposed amendment. Madam Clerk of Committees is trying to type up a clean version. If I had an estimate, I would suggest that perhaps we should have five minutes. I can time five minutes, if people wish to attend to other business briefly. I can time five minutes, if that’s what you wish to do.

I have the clock on at five minutes.

Order, please.

Thank you for the House’s indulgence to enable the Clerks-at-the-Table to draft an amendment to Motion No. 19 that incorporated all of the proposed changes. First of all, I can advise that it’s procedurally in order.

It is moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, Leader of the Third Party:

THAT Motion No. 19 be amended by:

(1) inserting the phrase “pending the outcome of the Health Care Review that” after the phrase “urges the Government of Yukon”;

(2) inserting the phrase “provide interim measures to” after the phrase “taking steps to”;

(3) deleting the phrase “after consulting with the public as part of determining an appropriate new level” and inserting the phrase “to provide assistance consistent with Yukon government travel directives for Yukon Government Employees”;

(4) in item (3), deleting the phrase “after consulting with the public as part of determining an appropriate new level” and inserting “to provide assistance consistent with Yukon government travel directives for Yukon Government Employees”;

(5) in item (4), deleting the phrase “after consulting with the public as part of setting the new rate” and inserting “to assistance consistent with Yukon government travel directives for Yukon Government Employees”;

(6) inserting the word “, Calgary” after the word “Kelowna”;

(7) in item (5), inserting the phrase “, given the expanded Air North schedule,” after the phrase “list of cities covered by the regulations under the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act*”;

(8) deleting item (6) and inserting “(6) determine provisions for escorts for medical travel on a case-by-case basis”;

(9) deleting item (9) and inserting “(9) pending negotiations between Yukon and Canada for a cost-recovery program for Yukoners medevaced who are normally eligible for federal coverage, that Yukon cover the cost in a manner similar to the Jordan’s Principle.”

**Ms. White:** Thank you very much to the Clerks-at-the-Table. It was not my intention to make this so complicated. My intention was to bring back the focus to people in the Yukon. It is important that we talk about the definition of “pending” — so it is as we await the results of the health care review. I understand that the health care review will have recommendations. I also know that, in this House, there hasn’t been a single review that has made recommendations that have been instantaneous in the changes. If the health care review comes back with the recommendations in the spring of 2020, we probably won’t see them take effect until 2021, and I just think about the people in that time.

The other important definition is the word “interim”. I say that in all honesty only because I really want to be sure that we understand that it is temporary. It is only provisional until the changes that are made under the recommendations of the health care review are put forward.

I think it’s important that we recognize that sometimes there is bias, even if we don’t mean to. We may not mean the bias, but when we compare someone on medical travel as being different from a Yukon government employee, there is that bias. There is the privilege — if you don’t have to worry about how you are going to pay for the travel or that you can cover that cost until you are reimbursed — that’s a gift that not every Yukoner has; that’s a privilege.

What we want to do is try to equalize this and try to make it as fair as possible for all Yukoners who need to be sent Outside for medical travel.

I know that getting here wasn’t easy. I am hopeful that, in response, we can talk about the importance of what we are talking about as interim measures for people of the Yukon. I know that the health care review is coming and I know that it is going to make recommendations, but if we don’t see those recommendations until 2021, it means that people will still suffer, they will have travel insecurity, they will have payment insecurity, and they will have the stress that is associated with medical travel.

My hope is that this is what we can use in the interim — that we can view people travelling for medical travel similar to Yukon government employees. It means essentially treating people like we would treat ourselves. I really believe that what we desire for ourselves, we wish for everyone.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I am rising to speak today to the amendment to the motion by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

I do want to talk a little bit about where we are. I want to thank the member for the stories that she shared from concerned

constituents. All of us in the Yukon — all of us here — know of someone who knows of someone. We have a lot of stories that tell us about maybe some of the inequities, when we look at medical services and supports across the Yukon. We can go back in time to the last review and what happened then. Prior to that, we had devolution of health transfer agreements. Prior to that, we had individuals who were caught in the system and perhaps did not get the supports that were needed.

We have come a long way since the time when my parents had to pay for medical services for me as a non-indigenous person — which is right, because under the previous RDG and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, those services were not rendered equitably and fairly. Where we are at this time is that we have advanced government structures. Our partnerships have advanced to such a place where we want to have respectful dialogues about transparency and equity when we look at all services that we provide to Yukoners. Every Yukoner deserves to have their story told and have an opportunity to be heard. The comprehensive health review will do just that. I will give Yukoners their time to share their stories.

Of course, as the Member for Lake Laberge so describes “constructive criticism” — well, the constructive criticisms that we hear — those are factors that we always take into consideration, that we hear from Yukoners. That is why the Financial Advisory Panel recommended that we do this review. In fact, when we look at insurance premiums, we look at the biggest cost-drivers in government, and we look at programs and services and how we deliver services — recognizing that our medical services and medical travel are some of the best in the country. We provide \$75 a day. We provide it to the patient and the escort.

There were some notes — and I just want to clear up for the record that the medical travel escorts, as directed by the resident physician, is supported when the physician recommends that to take effect. It’s done on a case-by-case basis and there are no questions about whether we support that or not. It automatically is what it is, and we support the patient and of course ensuring that we provide the necessary supports.

I want to talk a little bit about the collaborative health care model — because it’s not about how much more we can pay in medical travel. It’s about how we can bring medical services to our constituencies across the Yukon — our members who are in rural Yukon communities.

So how, in effect, do we look at our travel program? We can’t look at it alone. We have to look at how we provide the services in our communities. A good example would be the two rural hospitals — Dawson City and Watson Lake, for an example — ensuring that we bring the specialized supports to those regions.

We’ve incorporated our mental wellness hubs to ensure that we bring the clinical services, the psychiatric services, and the counselling services to our communities to eliminate those travel times.

We’ve also looked at options when we included collaborative models.

It’s really about looking at putting some measures in place during our time in office, but then allowing future consideration

with Yukoners. The recommendations of putting interim measures into effect — it is going to cost more to provide those interim measures. But what we’re trying to do, Mr. Speaker, is really look at allowing the independent expert panel to seek input from Yukoners. We’re not going to pre-empt, nor are we going to prescribe, the outcome of that process.

The Member for Watson Lake indicated earlier — when the Member for Mayo-Tatchun spoke about the nurse practitioner and the off-mic comment was, “Well, only in your community.” Well, the fact of the matter is we’re looking at collaborative care. We’re looking at bringing in nurse practitioners to our communities that have never seen the supports historically. We’re trying to eliminate travel time. We’re trying to bring the services to the clients — services in a new modernized health care model.

The review that was done in 2008 — I believe it was under section 3(g), but I will have to verify that — “The government should consider introduction of health care premiums to assist in financing the increasing costs of existing health care services in Yukon and to fund the expansion of any new health care services.” That was the recommendation that came from the then-Minister of Health and Social Services, who happens to be sitting in this Legislative Assembly. The medical travel did not increase then. Essential services, specialized supports, and connectivity to our Yukon communities were not considered. We have now worked with our good colleagues in Highways and Public Works and of course the Hospital Corporation to look at an expanded medicare system — a system where physicians and nurse practitioners can directly access the specialized support they need in time, through an advanced system of technology.

We will continue to work with them through the collaborative model. Of course, we want to take into consideration all aspects of feedback. I want to just take a moment to also thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for presenting us with some great recommendations. We would be happy to share that with the panel. I also want to just say that there were perhaps some stories that were shared and some feedback. What I would encourage is that, if Members of the Legislative Assembly have some information that should be shared with the panel, then I encourage that we try to get Yukoners — we encourage our friends and our colleagues and we encourage Yukoners to please participate in the process that will then give them a voice in making this Yukon a better place for them to live happily — better health care services within the communities in which they reside.

That is my feedback. At this time, I am not so keen about supporting the amendment to the motion because it pre-empts a motion that we have already established.

**Ms. Hanson:** I just rise to indicate at the outset that I am disappointed — not surprised — at the response by the Minister of Health and Social Services. I am disappointed on a couple of levels, Mr. Speaker. One is the failure to be cautious with respect to personalizing responses. I would just point out that we, as the New Democrats, do not make references to public servants. If the member opposite had issues or concerns with a

previous director general of Indian and Northern Affairs, she might want to raise that outside of this Legislative Assembly and not in this Legislative Assembly.

She would also be mindful in doing that — when you single out public servants, you are ignoring the fact that it is ministers, governments, and Cabinets who make the policies and the laws. It is not the public servants who do so. We're respectful of that, and that's why I'm surprised and kind of disappointed to hear that coming from a minister of this Liberal government.

I too grew up — I mean, I can remember as a child having rheumatic fever and having the doctor come to the house. This was before medicare — because that's how old I am, Mr. Speaker. My mother had to pay for that doctor to come to the house, because in those days, doctors didn't come because there was no health care coverage. I understand the difficulties of families — growing up in a family of six kids with a mom on very minimal income.

I have heard a lot — an awful lot — from this minister and from this government about the work that has been done over the course of the last 18 months or what toward establishing, then establishing, then talking about the work of the health care review and the changing mandate of that — that's future tense. We understand that some work has been done on an ongoing basis pending the outcome of that. The minister has spoken about the work that has been done by the department under her direction to work toward creating more of a collaborative care model, but that is still pending the outcomes. The government is prepared to make some changes pending the outcome of a comprehensive care review. So the government has within its power — if it has the political will — to do things to make some interim changes — some changes that may become part of the overall health care system in this territory — pending the outcome of this comprehensive health care review.

What my colleague is saying and recommending to us as members of the Legislative Assembly is that we not just call these “stories” and ask those stories to be punted off to a health care review, but actually listen to the human beings — the conditions and the situations that they find themselves in.

Yes — you know what? We may get to the day where we have a really great operating collaborative care system, but there will always be circumstances where, if you are in a medically threatening situation, you will demand that you get access to the proper health care.

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

### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Member for Mayo-Tatchun, on a point of order.

**Mr. Hutton:** 17(1).

**Speaker:** The Member for Mayo-Tatchun will stand up — so if you could please elucidate or provide some detail.

**Mr. Hutton:** Every member desiring — sorry, Mr. Speaker — every member desiring to speak shall rise in his or her place and address the Speaker.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** Yes, this has — not just with respect to the Member for Whitehorse Centre, but in general — of course, the Westminster model is set up to have, where possible, depersonalized debates. The idea behind that, which all members will know — I'm not going to waste a lot of the members' time here — is that therefore the debate is provided or directed via the Speaker. You have a bit of a triangle. I call it a triangle when I speak to students and adults who are not in the Assembly — a bit of a deflecting triangle.

So yes, in this instance, I will certainly ask the Member for Whitehorse Centre to be mindful that generally her submissions, or what she is providing in debate for the amendment to Motion No. 19, is provided via the Speaker and to avoid, I suppose, where possible, the appearance that you are speaking directly to members opposite or members of the Official Opposition.

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

As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, I would urge this government to listen to the tenor of what was put forward by my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King. She was not asking for this government to justify what it's doing now. She is not asking to have us request that those individuals who are in dire circumstances, who are facing health crises, — to punt those stories to a health care review. To suggest so is rather heartless.

What I am suggesting, Mr. Speaker — and what my colleague attempted to do when she put this forward — and she kept it on a very high level. She talked about compassion and she talked about equity. The basis of what she has proposed and what we are proposing to this House today is that, until we can sort it out, let's not drag the misery of individuals and families out longer. Until we can sort out how we are going to — as a territory and as a community — provide for those in medical need who do not have the financial circumstances to cover all the costs and are not necessarily covered by a federal health care plan and are not necessarily covered by one of the health care plans that you and I benefit from or have access to — that we simply also look at it from an equity point of view. If we think that the wear and tear on my vehicle or your vehicle, Mr. Speaker — when you use it for government business — warrants a certain kind of recompense, why would we not want to say to an individual who has way less access to financial resources — and I'm not talking about the most affluent individuals, if the government needs to put some terms on it — but we are looking at a way to try to address the kinds of situations that we see and that I know every member in this Legislative Assembly hears about from constituents.

The motion was brought forward with a view to dealing with and recognizing that it will take time for the work of this commission to be completed and that, even with that, the work of the commission, once completed, will then lead to Cabinet deliberations, potential legislation, potential regulation changes — you are looking at another couple of years. If the government is then saying to those citizens, “Fine, we don't believe in equity. We don't care, really, that there are people who are facing really challenging circumstances and having to make



very difficult decisions,” then fine. That will be on the record, and we will live with that. Those citizens may have another voice at another time. Our job today is to make those concerns known in this Legislature on their behalf.

I believe that my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King has made a very sincere and honest attempt to explain and get all members onside with what I thought was a pretty reasonable approach — an interim approach based on equity, pending the outcome of the health care review.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to share my perspective on a few comments that we have just heard. First, in my time sitting across from the Member for Whitehorse Centre, one thing that seems to trend over and over again is that, in many cases, the other Members of the Legislative Assembly — all of us — maybe other than the individual making the statement and the individual who is the direct colleague — that the rest of the individuals in the Legislative Assembly simply don’t care. We heard it just a couple of minutes ago. There was the highlight of “you just don’t care”. I think that this is inappropriate. I think it is a real injustice to everybody here. Over and over again, everybody in this Legislative Assembly — although we don’t get along from time to time —

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

#### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Leader of the Third Party, on a point of order.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, right now, it’s imputing false motives to the Member for Whitehorse Centre — so 19(g) — so right now, they are imputing false motives to the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

**Speaker:** The Hon. Premier, on the point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that what the minister is outlining is exactly that — the Member for Whitehorse Centre did exactly that to us — to basically say that — the false motive of “we do not care”. As opposed to doing it as a Standing Order, he is merely pointing that out as he speaks to this amendment.

#### Speaker’s ruling

**Speaker:** I can return to the House with my thoughts about Standing Order 19(g) as I have previously, but in my recollection, the false motives and unavowed motives that are generally alleged and completely offside and not in order for members are when issues of corruption, illegality, bribery, or some sort of financial gain is being alleged. That is my recollection of the rulings that I have made over the course of the last two and a half years.

What is happening right now is really, once again, a characterization of debate, and it’s a characterization of the manner in which members are presenting their perspectives. That, in my view, is really the essence of the freedom of speech in the Westminster model.

As I said, I will review what I have said previously, but just looking at the annotations and the edits in our annotated rules

and my recollection of what I have said previously with respect to Standing Order 19(g), these concerns do not fall within that Standing Order. I will certainly return to the House if I need to correct myself.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I will take that direction and use the space that you have provided as to the ability to use that to speak and have the right to speak here in the Assembly. Simply, I’m getting up because I was sitting here and listening to the comments that were coming from across the way. I will paraphrase, but I believe the comment was “If you don’t care, this will be on the record, and the people who are affected will have an opportunity to hear that.”

It becomes this sort of cumulative impact over time here, where you listen to these comments. I have heard the characterization of the previous government; I have heard it about myself and my colleagues — and I just don’t think it is appropriate. I think that every member of this Legislative Assembly may, from time to time, disagree, but I truly think that everybody cares about the people they represent. I know they do. They did tremendous work before they were elected to the Legislative Assembly in their own right — whether it was in the community of Watson Lake or Lake Laberge — wherever it may have been. I find it intriguing that somebody would have the audacity to carve out this particular space where they feel that they are the only person inside the Legislative Assembly who cares. I just wanted to highlight that.

Over and above that, I also believe —

#### Speaker’s statement

**Speaker:** One moment. I suppose that both the Member for Whitehorse Centre and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources have been provided some latitude to characterize how they perceive that they are conducting themselves in the Assembly. That’s great. However, now we are getting to some issues of relevancy, so I would just ask the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to focus his comments going forward.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The other key point in the description that was laid out just moments ago — we talk about the amendments to the motion, and as the Health and Social Services minister has stated, there are lots of very valuable points, ideas, and concepts to be mulled over and discussed and for the panel doing the health review to take into consideration.

But just in those previous statements is the exact reason that the Legislative Assembly cannot make decisions on the fly based on the information ahead. There were significant amendments that were made to the original motion, and I think that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King did a very effective job in bringing in both the amendments and a document that showed the inclusion of those amendments. Then, just moments ago, the Member for Whitehorse Centre tabled the potential of a means test, essentially, and said, “Well, maybe it’s not for everybody, but maybe some people — and you can look at it.” So these are significant decisions that lead to, you know, having the point — we have a fiduciary responsibility. It is difficult for anybody in this Assembly who has had a responsibility where,

from time to time, there is a motion that is connected to those decisions and there is a responsibility to do right for all individuals in the future who are affected by these particular outcomes and to not, here today, be in a situation — as the concepts and ideas evolve — I think that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King did a strong job. Where it pivoted was just a moment ago where now we were going to have different particular categories of individuals — which we didn't even have an opportunity to speak about. It was not in the original amendment, but now the member is saying that there may be certain individuals who would receive —

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

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I have to say that the award for speaking off-mic today should be given. This is the best that I've seen since I started. I will leave it to you, Mr. Speaker, to make a decision on that.

With that being said, I think we have a perfect example of why significant decisions — although they may be difficult — have to be made from time to time, and sometimes it's best to communicate and understand what your colleague, the leader, is putting forward and to have that discussion before coming in and twisting on the fly and adding another element to a very significant decision.

**Ms. McLeod:** I always feel like we were in two different rooms, because I didn't really hear that coming from the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

But I do want to thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing forward this amendment. For me, it's a classic example of an amendment that strengthens the motion. So, for that, I want to thank her.

I'm not getting a sense that the government's going to support anything we say here today in any regard, but the minister has gone on a number of times about the comprehensive health review and why she can't consider anything in this regard. Now, the inability, I guess, of the government to consider helping Yukoners out in a shorter time frame than an extended health review might provide for is a little bit problematic, I think.

When the review — the panel went around and did their first round of consultations, I went to that. It was very poorly advertised. I did advise them of that at the time, so I'm not telling tales out of school here. It wasn't as well-attended as events normally are. There was a list of items on the wall that the panel wanted to talk about, or were prepared to talk about, that evening. I can tell you that medical travel wasn't part of that, but 95 percent of what the people in that room wanted to talk about was medical travel.

There are a lot of things going on in the health department that people are very happy with. Medical travel is not one of them. It's an item that's very important to Yukoners, and I'm just disappointed that the members across the way seem to feel that they can't make a decision until this review is done and implemented — who the heck knows when. I say that because there have been — the Financial Advisory Panel came out with other recommendations and — poof — just like that, things were taken off the table by the Premier. Certainly, he didn't

have to wait. But maybe there is a different role for the Minister of Health and Social Services. I'm not sure about that.

So today, it almost seemed — when I was listening to the Minister of Health and Social Services first respond — that as soon as the minister sees “Member for Watson Lake” — she quit reading because the minister went on about how people needed to be consulted — and, you know, obviously that's what the motion said in the first place and it continues to say that in the amendment. So I will be supporting this amendment. I think it's a good amendment. I want to thank again the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and I look forward to seeing what the government is going to do.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I just want to voice a few thoughts here on the amendment, and I do want to thank the members opposite for putting forth some fantastic recommendations.

I think what you heard from the Minister of Health and Social Services was that these are — in here, there are some great recommendations — absolutely. For example, medical travel is very important to Yukoners. I completely agree with the Member for Watson Lake. I really do. I think it's a very important concept.

I also believe in a process. I don't know if that's noticed or not, but we really like to see process. The member opposite makes it seem like, when it came to the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel, that we made some decisions before the panel actually finalized the report. I beg to differ with the member opposite. That's actually not correct. What we did was we waited until the report came in and then we took the leadership to go through the recommendations and make decisions based upon the mandate that we were giving to the ministers, based upon the platform that we were elected upon, and we made hard decisions at that time. Yes, they're right, we did at that time — after the recommendations came in — make a decision — made some tough decisions about what we will not do and what we are willing to do. We are continuing to go down that road. We will do the exact same thing with the panel's decisions and recommendations in this case as well.

Now, I'm hearing a narrative here as well — and I'm sure I'll see it on the Yukon Party's social media as well — that somehow, because we are waiting for a process, that (a) we're not going to accept any of these recommendations or (b) that the minister and her team are not doing anything in the interim. Oh my goodness, Mr. Speaker, I have to say — on the contrary, the amount of work that Health and Social Services is doing currently on their mandate is astounding. The amount of work that they have done on mental health alone — comparing ourselves to where we were five years ago when it comes to mental health — and the Member for Whitehorse Centre can not listen and she can talk off-mic all she wants. This is important information and I want to get it on the record.

We have done lots of work and we continue — in the field of Health and Social Services — to improve the system and to work effectively. The Yukon Party would have you think that it is all about the bottom line and it is all about cost-savings or cutting. It's not. It's about how do we make sure we can provide the programs and services that Yukoners have come to rely on

and even make them better. I will say with mental health alone — to go from two rural mental health nurses to serve all of the rural communities to mental wellness hubs with 22 different health care providers throughout the rural communities — you cannot sit here and say we do not care. You cannot sit here and say we're not doing anything or that because we were given a motion a few short days ago and we're not going to act upon it today in the Legislative Assembly, that these aren't good recommendations. All of that is not true, Mr. Speaker.

What we will do is we will continue the process. We look forward to the independent panel coming forth with recommendations. We also look forward to continuing to work every day on improving people's lives through our health and social services system.

**Mr. Hassard:** It is interesting listening to all of these comments this afternoon. I think that it is really becoming more and more apparent all the time that this Liberal government is becoming more and more known as being a no-decision government. I think a very good line that I heard last year was "paralysis by analysis." It seems that any decisions that need to be made that the government may find controversial or difficult, they create a panel, and (a) it appears to me that they either don't make the decision, or don't want to make a decision, or aren't able to make a decision, or (b) this way, they have a scapegoat, so if the panel recommends something that people are unhappy with, then the government can say, "Well, gee whiz. You know, it wasn't our decision."

Then we hear the Premier say, "We do a lot of work. There is a lot of work to do, and we're doing this work." But yet the work that we're talking about in this motion and this amendment doesn't appear to be work that the government is able to do. So it's a little bit confusing, I guess, as to why some things, they say, "Boy, we're working hard and we can get the work done." Yet other things, they say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa — we can't do that."

It's very interesting that the Premier didn't need to create a panel to decide whether he should get a raise or not — you know that — boom — just the drop of a hat. Let's get the Premier a raise. I recently talked to a constituent who — and I really regret that I didn't have the opportunity to speak to her much sooner — but she, in fact, chose not to take treatment for cancer because she couldn't afford it, so instead, you know, she passed on. Something as important as making decisions like this, the government doesn't appear to be interested in doing it. The Premier is over here pointing at me. Mr. Speaker, he is the Premier — he has been in government; he has been the Premier for — well, in a couple of weeks, it will be three years. I don't think this is something to point fingers about. I think this is something —

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

**Mr. Hassard:** And now apparently that is a joke. I think we have heard the Speaker and the members from the government complaining that people aren't speaking through the Speaker, yet we have the government now doing the very same thing. Apparently, it is okay for some and not for others.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order. The Member for Mayo-Tatchun brought a point of order with respect to the Member for Whitehorse Centre about addressing the Speaker during debate when they are on their feet. In the last three years, there has certainly been — on a different topic completely — in the last three years, there has certainly been a certain degree of off-mic commentary from all members — well, that's not true — from some members, back and forth. That's a different issue.

Of course, whether it is in the Yukon Legislative Assembly, the House of Commons, or Westminster, or BC — wherever — a certain degree of the back and forth off-mic is tolerated. It would be quite an antiseptic, sterile environment if a Speaker were put in a position where he or she had to say, "We are in church. We're in a church-like environment, and there will be no off-mic commentary." This could include no thumping of tables — or, in Ontario these days, apparently standing ovations are quite popular — I certainly would not encourage our members to start that, but I will cross that bridge when and if necessary. I hope it will not be necessary.

With all due respect to the Leader of the Official Opposition, those are two different issues. The first issue is that, when a member is on his or her feet, generally speaking, the debate goes via the Speaker — usually started with "Mr. Speaker" or "Madam Speaker". The second issue is a different and discrete issue, and that is the issue of the modest amount of off-mic commentary that exists in this House and that I deem so far to be not particularly disruptive to date.

Thank you for your time.

**Mr. Hassard:** As I was saying, we see a lot of the blame game. The government doesn't appear to be interested in doing something in the interim, and I think that really is a challenge here today. We have the government saying that we have to take time, we have to study this and review this, and we have to see what panels decide. They are the government. They were elected to make decisions. Had we been given the opportunity to actually debate Health and Social Services properly in the spring, maybe we would have been able to have these discussions and maybe we wouldn't have had to send this to a panel to decide. Maybe the government actually would have been in a position to make a decision for itself.

I think it is very unfortunate, and I do appreciate the amendment from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, the Leader of the Third Party. I certainly would be in favour of voting in favour of this amendment.

**Mr. Cathers:** In rising to speak to the proposed amendment brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, I would like to again thank the Member for Watson Lake, the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, who proposed the original motion. I note that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, in coming forward, is also bringing forward her perspective on this. In the interest of collaboration, we have of course agreed to accept her amendments. I note as well that I think she was trying to find some middle ground between our position and that of the

government in an attempt to make it more palatable to them by making the list of specific changes that we suggested interim measures until the outcome of the health review occurs, recognizing the position that the Liberal government was stating — that they wouldn't do anything until the health review was done. I hope that I am not drawing conclusions that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King doesn't agree with, but it seems to me that she was trying to find a middle ground between our proposal for specific areas of action and the government's preference for inaction.

In speaking to the proposed amendment here, I would note as well that the reference brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King — in referencing item 9, which, in the original motion, was worded as saying: "... ensuring that following a medevac for treatment outside of the Yukon, Yukoners whose travel may be covered by the Government of Canada are automatically able to return home with the assistance of Yukon's medical travel program, and leave the issue of cost for the two governments to deal with later." In her proposed amendment, referencing — covering the cost in a manner similar to Jordan's Principle — that was not the way that we had worded it but, in fact, is exactly what we were referring to in the original motion — of accepting, similar to Jordan's Principle, the principle that first and foremost should be the patient, in this case — they should be assisted first and then governments should worry about jurisdictional issues after the care of that individual is taken care of first.

Again, we are supportive of the amendment brought forward by the Member for Takhini Kopper-King, our colleague in the Third Party.

I do have to just briefly mention some of the comments made by members of the Liberal government during their comments on the proposed amendment. The Minister of Health and Social Services seems to be fixated on dredging up the old health review done over a decade ago and suggests that recommendations that were contained within that review which were rejected by the government of the day somehow reflected the agenda of the government of the day and of the current Yukon Party caucus. Of course, that is a ridiculous assertion.

The review did come up with a number of recommendations. Although the review was announced by the government of the day, we specifically and clearly rejected a number of its recommendations, including any possibility of health care premiums or co-pay, with which we strongly disagreed with then and disagree with now.

We see in this area — which was necessitated by this government's lack of action on medical travel — we've brought forward our perspective. The Third Party caucus has brought forward their suggestions in this area. We are presenting specific, constructive ideas. This Liberal government is three years into its mandate and it has done nothing on medical travel. In contrast, when I took over as Minister of Health and Social Services — as most members will be aware, late during the year of 2005 — I believe it was mid-December 2005 — we had less than a year before an election. Well, within about six months of taking office, not only had I heard the issues around medical travel, but I had announced,

with the full support of my colleagues, increases that we actually made to the medical travel program. The work was done. The work was not under consideration. We acted. We had limited resources at the time. In response to a comment made by the Leader of the Third Party: We were limited in the financial resources that we had, but we acted. We increased the rates for medical travel. We increased the per diems.

This government has had many, many, many more months than I did to consider this issue and respond to the Official Opposition's suggestions. My colleague — the Official Opposition Health and Social Services critic — has brought forward these suggestions on numerous occasions, dating back to at least over a year and a half ago, when this matter was raised specifically by way of motion. The government keeps kicking the can down the road and failing to take any action while Yukoners are calling for action —

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order, please. If members of the government can either wrap up their discussions or take their useful discussions outside of the House, that would be — thank you.

**Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do again, in speaking to this amendment, feel that it's important to note that Yukoners elect governments to take action, not simply to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars upon hundreds of thousands of dollars on reviews by independent panels that they set up to — as it appears to some, including us — avoid making a decision at all, or if a decision is made, to be able to blame anything unpopular on someone else.

The Financial Advisory Panel — again, the government commissioned it. They ignored most of its recommendations, but they really seem to like the proposal on raising fees and fines. The health care review was a recommendation that came out of that. The health care review has been fumbled since the start. It has gone on and on —

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

### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Minister of Community Services, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I just want to try to stay on the topic of the amendment. Everything seems to drift across to the Financial Advisory Panel, to past budgets, et cetera. I just want stay listening to the amendment as introduced by the Member for Takhini Kopper-King.

**Speaker:** You are referring to which Standing Order?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** It is Standing Order 19(b)(ii): "... speaks to matters other than... a motion or amendment..." It is that one right there.

**Speaker:** The Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

**Mr. Cathers:** On the point of order, one of the matters where the minister suggested I was not speaking to the amendment was my reference to the health care review. I would point out that the health care review was actually specifically

included by the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Third Party. I believe that I am very much speaking to the matter at hand, and I don't believe that there is a point of order. I think perhaps the minister was either not listening to what I was saying or not reading the proposed amendment.

**Speaker:** The Hon. Premier, on the point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Clearly what we're talking about is the fee and fine review, not the Health and Social Services part.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** I will listen closely to the further submissions by the Member for Lake Laberge, but of course the Member for Lake Laberge will be familiar with Standing Order 35(b), where when taking part in a debate on an amendment to a motion, "... a member, other than the mover, shall confine debate to the subject of the amendment." But I will listen closely, going forward.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do want to point out that the health care review — which of course is specifically referenced in the proposed amendment brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King — a part of the health review — in the working papers they have released, the "what we heard" document, and the survey, they are specifically talking about fees and fines, including their own survey that is currently online on the government website which is proposing a health care premium — which again ties specifically into some of the matters that came out of the Financial Advisory Panel report, recommending government look at fees and fines including matters such as health co-pay. The Financial Advisory Panel report — one of the few recommendations that the government has acted on is to do a health care review. So, the fact that the Premier doesn't see the connection between the two is very disturbing and raises serious questions about whether the Premier understands projects that have been commissioned under his watch and reviews that have been set up under this specific direction.

Again, in speaking to the amendment brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, I note that there are interim measures reflected. The members also suggested and pointed out the discrepancy between what a Member of the Legislative Assembly or government employee would be paid for travel inside the territory and pointed out that the rate of 30 cents a kilometre — which is the current rate, implemented when I was Health and Social Services minister back quite some time ago — that this rate is very different from what government employees are paid. It's about half of that rate.

As I mentioned, it's also something that — by supporting the addition of a carbon tax that is paid by every citizen from rural Yukon who has to drive into Whitehorse, the government has effectively supported a tax on health care. In our view, we view the proposal in the survey put forward by the health care review as — not only, I should point out, is the health care review suggesting some proposals that are disturbing to us, such as making medical travel subject to an income test or a means test — there is also the specific reference to a \$900 per person, per year health care premium — or they specifically ask

about a premium but they float specifically the example of \$900 per person, per year. For a lot of Yukon families, paying \$900 per person, per year in a premium would prevent them from accessing care. I believe I heard a colleague referencing someone who was not taking cancer treatment because of the cost and their personal finances. These are the areas where again we're concerned.

I appreciate as well that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King in her amendment had a different perspective on some of the specific issues and had brought forward suggestions that are very similar in spirit and in content to the proposed changes that we had proposed in a motion brought forward by my colleague the Member for Watson Lake and Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services.

In talking about the amendment to this motion and how it would be if accepted, it's also important to note, in the context of the health care review, that clearly the government drafted the terms of reference specifically to allow for the consideration of health care premiums and fees which were rejected by the government in office during the last time that the health care review was done — because again — fully respecting the chair of the committee — if you appoint a chair or a board that gave you a recommendation in the past and you don't tell them that you don't want them to recommend what they previously did, there's a good chance that they are going to recommend some of the things they did before. It again seems to us like this Liberal government is not only not willing to consider this motion on medical travel or the amendment brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, but it appears to be very seriously interested in implementing a health care premium for Yukoners, which we view as effectively a health care tax.

Mr. Speaker, I should note as well that when we're talking about priorities of government — we're now three years into the Liberal government. We have a third throne speech, which has taken up the start of this Sitting. This is our first opportunity, through this motion, to discuss matters that we've proposed. Again, we see and appreciate the fact that the Third Party is also interested in seeing improvements to medical travel, and we appreciate the amendment brought forward by the Third Party to amend the motion proposed by the Member for Watson Lake, my colleague.

We see, as referenced by the Leader of the Official Opposition, while the government was unable to see a path clear to increasing medical travel, they did find money for the Premier to get a raise. They didn't need to take much more time to consider that. Other examples of priorities that we believe are far less important than medical travel include the \$500,000 they spent on a new logo and a new website, the \$300,000 on the FAP report that they appear to be ignoring, \$120,000 —

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

### Point of order

**Speaker:** There's a point of order. The Member for Lake Laberge will sit down, please.

Minister of Community Services.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** While we talk about websites, I don't believe that pertains to the amendment as proposed by the

Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and that, I guess, is referring again to 35(b).

**Speaker:** The Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

**Mr. Cathers:** I think the minister may not have understood that I was noting that the items in the main motion and in the proposed amendment comparatively are priorities that we see as more important than other items the government has chosen to fund. So I believe it's very relevant for Members of the Legislative Assembly to make comparisons of government spending decisions and say what they would have done, if in government, related to those matters.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** It's difficult, on the fly, for the Speaker — due to the number and breadth of the amendments that have been proposed — to necessarily be in a position to link relevancy, particularly as I don't have a clean copy of what the new amended motion looks like. I understand the Member for Lake Laberge's position, but probably the relevance is starting to become a bit of an issue — as I said, even without the benefit of a fully cleaned up amended motion.

**Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would just again, in speaking to the amendment — I will speak more specifically to the wording, as you have instructed. I would just note that the references that we included in the original motion, as well as the references brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, do reflect a proposal that would result in increased spending by government in specific areas.

Now, I would also argue that, with the motion that we proposed — as well as the amendments brought forward by the Third Party — while there may be an increase in cost to medical travel, providing people with timely access to health care and ensuring that they're not deterred by financial reasons also has a benefit. It has been proven across the country that in fact access to medical care within a timely manner is important to reducing health care costs.

So these specific proposals — while we can't point to them and say that there will be an increase in medical travel but there will be an offsetting decrease in specific costs, it is, I think, fair to make the general characterization that, with providing services that are related to health care — those being the assistance through medical travel, both in and outside of the territory, and the per diems — if it helps Yukoners receive the treatment that they would otherwise potentially not be able to financially afford, that is definitely having a positive outcome for that patient.

Improved health care outcomes — not just the dollars and cents — should be the objective of government in considering health policy. Whether it's with the motion we have brought forward or the amendment that has been brought forward or in the context of the broader health care review — or even annually, in terms of budgets — government should be focused on trying to provide high-quality health care to Yukoners in a timely manner.

I believe — and I think most Yukoners would agree — that providing health care, including providing support and medical travel, should be a far higher priority for government than spending \$120,000 spraying water in the air hoping for ice at Dawson City, \$105,000 on personal electronics for Cabinet and staff and MLAs of the Liberal caucus, and \$40,000 on Cabinet renovations to their office. We do feel that we need to make those comparisons when talking about this motion and talking about the amendment so that Yukoners may understand where our priorities differ from those of the government and where we believe that, contrary to what appears to be the assertion that they just can't afford to make the changes we're suggesting, in fact, if they change their spending priorities, they could have afforded to make these improvements to the medical travel program — not only here today in this Assembly, but earlier in the mandate — if they had prioritized these matters among the list that I provided — the Premier's raise and so on and so forth.

It is concerning that, in their response to the motion and to the amendment, the government has been — members who have spoken to it — have been very dismissive in their approach to it. They have offered the assurance that of course they care as much about medical travel and the needs of Yukoners as we do. But, at the end of the day, if they vote against the amendment and they vote against the motion, they are choosing, yet again — three years into this Liberal mandate — perhaps only a year before the next election — and the sand is fast running out of the Liberal hourglass — to fail to take action.

So a vote against the proposed amendment or a vote against the motion, if the amendment passes — or if the amendment is defeated, a vote against the original motion — is an indication by this Liberal government that, yet again, they are choosing not to act on medical travel, while apparently they can find an extra \$64 million for the Department of Community Services, between the spring and the fall, in increased spending — much of which appears to be related to photo ops with the federal government and federal pre-election spending — but we see medical travel is apparently — unless the government has a change of heart — it appears that this motion is set to be defeated here today.

The government wasn't really clear on whether they are going to defeat the amendment and defeat the main motion, or support the amendment and defeat the main motion. They haven't given that indication, but certainly they seem to be the only party in this Assembly — the only caucus — that is not supportive of making these changes now. We are concerned by that, and we strongly disagree with it.

If, in speaking to this motion today, members have felt at any point that I — on either the amendment or the motion — got impassioned on this issue, it is because, when I hear from constituents and others who have had trouble or are currently are having trouble with medical travel, I am very concerned and sympathetic toward their situation. Within the extent that we can, I want to see those people helped.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to begin by thanking the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for this amendment. I

agree with the Member for Whitehorse Centre that it felt to me like a very sincere thing. I have listened to her words and I have listened to several members of the opposition, and I believe — let me turn back to the words that began the comments from the Member for Whitehorse Centre wherein she spoke about all MLAs as caring about Yukoners. I share that belief to my core. I think everyone in this Legislature — and I suspect everyone who comes in to listen to this Legislature — cares about Yukoners and is trying our deep-down best to come up with the best decisions to help all Yukoners to make life as good as it can be. Just to the point from the Member for Lake Laberge — it is incredibly important to be concerned about health care outcomes and doing our best at all times to improve those.

Let me also begin by thanking the Member for Watson Lake. This is the third time that a motion like this has come to the floor, with a focus on medical travel. Clearly, she cares about her constituents and is expressing a very sincere concern about medical travel. I too have listened to citizens in Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes and have heard similar concerns about medical travel. I don't doubt for a second that all of us — and not just the rural MLAs, but all MLAs in this Legislature — have encountered real, personal stories where this matters to citizens of the Yukon. Not for a moment. I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for encouraging all of us to think about it from a personal perspective and to think about the people involved.

I have listened several times to the members of the Official Opposition suggest that, if we vote against this, somehow we are not supportive of improving medical travel — yet we have two motions that we have already approved where we have all agreed in this Legislature to try to improve medical travel and to build it into the review. That seems to be the sticking point. It is not about whether we wish to improve medical travel. My prediction of what will happen is that the Official Opposition will stand up and say that therefore we don't care about medical travel or we don't care about Yukoners. It just doesn't even come close to how I think each of us works in this Legislature.

There have been comments brought forward about an inability to make decisions, an inability to consider, no decisions — just this lack of action. Somehow, there seems to be something missing for me, which is that, as we talk about health, it is not just about medical travel. There are all sorts of things about health. In fact, from my perspective on health, I think of wellness and I think of questions around how we improve the lives of all Yukoners at all times. I don't think that it means that if you don't take the specific recommendations that are given here today, it somehow equates to not caring about medical travel or about Yukoners.

I agree — when the Premier spoke, he suggested that these were good suggestions. There are some great suggestions in here, both in the original motion and in the amendment which we are debating now. I think they are thoughtful suggestions and I think they should be part of it.

When I speak of “part of it”, for me, when I think about health and wellness, I don't just think about medical travel. I do think about aging in place. I think about things like home care.

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

### Point of order

**Acting Speaker (Mr. Adel):** Member for Whitehorse Centre, on a point of order.

**Ms. Hanson:** I do appreciate that the member opposite is thinking about other things. The amendment under debate is about medical travel, so the point of order that I would call would be that it speaks to matters other than the question under discussion — Standing Order 19(b)(i).

**Acting Speaker:** Member for Porter Creek Centre, on the point of order.

**Mr. Gallina:** As the Speaker pointed out with the Member for Lake Laberge, given the length and comprehensive nature of the amendment that was brought forward, the Speaker was finding it difficult to make a ruling, and there was a fair amount of grace given in allowing members to make their points as they related to the amendment that we are discussing here now.

### Acting Speaker's ruling

**Acting Speaker:** I will take this under advisement and talk to the Speaker. If he has any issues with this, he will bring them back to the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** This is a motion about health care. It is an amendment to a motion about health care. I will continue to —

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Travel — medical travel. Let me try that again, Mr. Acting Speaker. This is a motion on medical travel. It is the third such motion that we have had here in the Legislature, and this motion on medical travel is talking at its heart about whether or not we care about Yukoners. That's what I heard.

I think it is important to put it in the context of the health care review. That has been the previous two motions that were brought forward, and today the amendment is to try to say, “Well, actually, what we ought to do is something right now, in the interim.” There has been an indication from members opposite that to not do something right now is to not act. Yet when I think about —

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So here is the action. The action, as I understand it, is to put medical travel alongside of things like aging in place and alongside of things like home care.

Let me back up instead, Mr. Acting Speaker. Let me move in a different direction. My wife is a nurse. My wife, a real person, someone who I incredibly respect — I talk to her very often about the whole of our health care system and where we should focus our energies and efforts. She talks to me about the importance of moving away from acute care and moving toward wellness. As we try to do that, one of the things we can do, for example, is focus on aging in place, focus on home care, focus on collaborative care, focus on wellness — how we act on those ones. Is it that those are also important?

As it turns out, we believe they are important together. Terrific. I am so glad that everyone here believes that they're all important and that the way we have agreed to work on those,

so far, has been to take them as a whole unit and work at them together. Today, the amendment — and the motion, for that matter — are asking us to move, in the interim, on some decisions but not put them in the context of those other important pieces of work, not to see them in that context at all.

I think the important thing here is to take that decision to talk about them as a whole.

The Member for Watson Lake spoke about the Minister of Health and Social Services and talked about her not being concerned about these issues. Actually, the second trip I made to a community with the Minister of Health and Social Services happens to have been Watson Lake. I think the Member for Watson Lake was there at that meeting. We did meet with the community and we did talk about many issues that were broadly around wellness. I don't recall exactly whether medical travel came up, but I'm not going to be surprised if it did. The point I'm trying to make with this is that there was the Minister of Health and Social Services very specifically talking to citizens of Watson Lake about their wellness.

One of the things that is my hope, out of the whole review of the health care system, is that when we find solutions that will allow us to treat Yukoners more in their communities and to focus on them at home, it will reduce the overall need for medical travel, which will, in turn, free up the ability to support medical travel more. That is my hope. I'm not sure where it will land.

While I return to the beginning of my comments — it is my belief that everyone in this Legislature, including those who have moved the motion and the amendment, does so with a sincerity about supporting Yukoners — the process by which we get there is through the overall health care review. It is terrific, in my opinion, that the Yukon Party is now keen to see this. I did not see that in the 10 or 14 years — well, it was 14 years that they were in power, but 10 years since they updated the medical travel. It is terrific that it is now a concern for them. I agree that it is an issue. I think we have all said that in this Legislature. All we are debating about is the process by which to get there.

While I think the amendment improves the original motion, I don't want to give the sense that the motion as amended is something that I think is the right way to go. I think the right way to go is through the health care review.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have listened intently all afternoon to this wonderful debate — the conversation we are having in this House this afternoon between each other, which the Member for Whitehorse Centre has called for all week — we have heard about the need for discussion — and I just couldn't pass up the opportunity to take part in this conversation on medical travel this afternoon.

Medical travel is not in any way a new issue. I can tell you that medical travel has been the subject of media stories and public scrutiny for a long, long time. I can remember this issue being raised in the 1990s. That is when I was first introduced to it, and I can remember the issue being raised in 2008. In 2008, there was a health review that was launched. I am going to stop the wheel of time there. There the great wheel of time is ticking,

ticking, ticking. It's going to land on hypocrisy. Allow me to explain.

The Leader of the Official Opposition in this debate on medical travel just a few moments ago raised the issue of decision-making —

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

#### Point of order

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

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, when speaking about the issue — of course, under 19(b), speaking "... to matters other than... the question under discussion..." — the minister by his own admission said that he was "stopping the clock" back in 2008. The actions in 2008 — or what the government of the day did or didn't do or might have done or should have done — are clearly not in the amendment here. It does seem like the member is just trying to waste the time remaining in the day.

**Speaker:** The Minister of Community Services, on the point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I heard the Member for Whitehorse West talk about was the comments that came up by the Leader of the Official Opposition during the debate on this amendment, so that is what he is referencing. If somehow that was in order, how are we not able to respond to the comments that came forward from the Leader of the Official Opposition?

#### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** I did hear some comments from the Member for Lake Laberge in his submissions with respect to the amendment about decisions that he made in the mid- to late 2000s on that topic. I think the Minister of Community Services has a point, but I will listen carefully to the Minister of Highways and Public Works on his continued submission on the proposed amendment. I will certainly have an ear toward relevancy.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, the wheel of time — tick, tick, tick. Allow me to explain. The Leader of the Official Opposition, in the debate on medical travel, raised the issue of decision-making. It was decision-making, Mr. Speaker. He suggested that the comprehensive health review, which lies at the heart of the matters we are discussing today, was either a tool to fob off responsibility for difficult decisions to another party or was a scapegoat — a scapegoat, Mr. Speaker.

Not more than five minutes later, the Member for Lake Laberge spoke about his government's health review and how it was not supported by the government. It is almost as if it was created to either be a scapegoat or to push off a really difficult decision. The very thing the Leader of the Official Opposition was accusing us of doing, the Member for Lake Laberge validated — which I find really interesting in this debate about medical travel because it shows. It's a tell. It demonstrates how the opposition thinks. It reveals the way they govern.

They launched a health care review and then ignored the results — "didn't support it", in the words of the Member for



Lake Laberge. So, when they speak about establishing a review — it's illuminating. It's a tool to avoid making a decision, to waste time or perhaps as a scapegoat for those that — the committee made this report, but that's absurd and we're not doing that. Point made, Mr. Speaker — point made.

I want to say on the floor of this Legislative Assembly that's not the way we think. I can't even understand that perspective because it's foreign. We strike a comprehensive health care review — my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, strikes such a review to look at issues such as medical travel because it is important for us to get good information about complicated, difficult, long-standing issues and to move it outside the Health and Social Services department so that the Health and Social Services department can continue to do the good work it does and to free up resources so that we can continue to provide good resources — good health care to the people of the territory. We strike a comprehensive health care review to ensure that we have good information, not to delay difficult decisions and not to create some sort of scapegoat. That's incredible actually — that people think that way.

Once we get that good information from a comprehensive health care review, armed with that excellent information that it provides, we will take action. We will review the recommendations — see how they fit within our mandate letter, within our budgets, within the directions we're going — and then we'll take action. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, our record supports that — be it the Financial Advisory Panel or the passing of the *Coroner's Act* or ATIPP or tackling the *Motor Vehicles Act* or Alaska Highway improvements or land withdrawals by Energy, Mines and Resources, procurement — I could go on and on, but relevance would soon become an issue, Mr. Speaker, and we wouldn't want to do that.

So I will just say that the point is that this government gets stuff done, takes the hard decisions — and on the flip side, this opposition has revealed the way it thinks — its strategy — a strategy of scapegoat committees and delaying difficult decisions. That is borne out by the record.

This afternoon, we are talking about medical travel. There is an awful lot of good material here before us in this amendment that was brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

My colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, spoke a little while ago about compassion and caring. That was a really insightful remark — a good remark. There isn't a person in this room who doesn't care about Yukon and its citizens — not a one. I have to say that I respect my colleagues on both sides of the House because of that. We got into this work — and it's important work — because we care and because we want to do the best for our constituents — I have no doubt about that.

The question this afternoon is whether we do this on the fly, willy-nilly, fast and loose, without any consideration of the unintended consequences or cost implications — and that has been done in the past, I might add — or whether it's done in a planned way after a thorough review.

I remind the House that the road to hell is paved — and all that.

Let's take a little look at the amended motion — take a closer look. What we're discussing this afternoon is trying to get increased flexibility and reduced wait times. I don't think there's a person on the floor of this House who doesn't want that. By increasing per diems for travel Outside from the current rate of \$75 a day — of course, \$75 a day is not very much money. It could certainly be more. Increasing per diems for travel outside of Yukon from \$75 a day to provide assistance consistent with the travel directives for Yukon government employees — I don't know. That third point requires some thought and some review — but certainly per diems are low. But on that, I have to say that we have one of the best medical travel plans in the country — and my good colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, has made that point.

Increasing the subsidy for non-emergency medical travel within Yukon from its current level of 30 cents per kilometre to provide assistance — increasing it from 30 cents a kilometre. I think that deserves thorough review. I wouldn't be prepared to make that decision on the floor of the House right now, on the fly, willy-nilly, without some more information — and I don't think it would be responsible for any of us to do that, even on an interim basis, until our health care review takes effect.

Expanded Air North schedule — amending the regulations to add Kelowna, Calgary, and Victoria — the list of cities. The world is changing, Mr. Speaker. Communities are changing. The way we transport people into and out of the territory is changing. We have made a lot of investments in our airports lately. Things are doing well. That may be something we should look at. Again, what are the implications of that? Are we willing to make that decision on the fly, right here on the floor of the House? I certainly would like to look at it a little bit closer.

Determining the provision for escorts for medical travel on a case-by-case basis — Mr. Speaker, on this, I do not believe there is — if there is a case made for an escort, I don't think they are turned down, so I think that is already in effect. My colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, would be able to provide more detail, but my understanding is that we already do that because we are looking at improving this and have made decisions.

Improving administrative coordination to make it easier for people in rural Yukon to schedule several appointments for the same trip — that is an excellent suggestion — absolutely. Great.

Reviewing the provisions and the regulations under "Travel to benefit others" to determine whether they are adequately assisting people who donate an organ to someone else — of course. That is a great suggestion. What are the implications? How do you execute on something like that? It may be easy; it may be a little bit more difficult. I would like to have a more thorough discussion before I make a decision on such a thing. But on the surface, it's great.

Pending negotiations between Yukon and Canada for a cost-recovery program for Yukoners medevaced who are

normally eligible for federal coverage, that Yukon cover the cost in a manner similar to Jordan's Principle — again, that is a tremendous idea. How much will it cost? Is it millions of dollars, tens of thousands, dozens of dollars?

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

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Do you know? I don't know.

These are some of the reasons why I have a hard time supporting this amendment. I certainly accept and support its component parts in many ways, but I need more information before actually making a decision on such things. I think that is only responsible.

Earlier today as well, the Member for Lake Laberge talked about — the Leader of the Official Opposition talked about making decisions and that we should do something. The point has been made that, in the past, decisions could have been made and weren't, and I'm sure there were really good reasons for the delaying of those decisions. I wasn't there; it is going back in time. To stand here and try to make decisions on the fly when there is a comprehensive health review currently ongoing — that is going to take a good, hard look at all of these issues and many more besides to create synergies and cost-efficiencies. To make sure that these issues are dealt with in an organized, consistent, well-considered and thought-out manner seems to be the right approach. To subvert that process, even on an interim basis, by passing a resolution this afternoon on the fly, in haste — in a panic, perhaps — to deal with an issue that has been ongoing since at least the early 1990s seems a bit extreme, to be honest, despite the great material that is contained in the original motion and then amended for some clarity and a little bit more consistency in the amendment. It was nicely handled by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. Despite that, I really think that — as I said, good intentions aside — this is a government that is responsible for the citizens of the territory and their finances. There are an awful lot of moving pieces in health. The members of the Official Opposition who have been in government know how difficult and how chaotic it can be when you make off-the-cuff decisions, such as not honouring the *Umbrella Final Agreement* on the Peel. We see where that got us. That was a decision made —

**Speaker:** Order, please. The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow afternoon.

*Debate on Motion No. 19, and the amendment, accordingly adjourned*

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*